



Safety and Health Working Team

National Wildland-Fire Coordinating Group



SAFETY GRAM

ACCIDENT/INCIDENT SUMMARY: FATALITIES AND ENTRAPMENTS 98-01

The following data indicate the 1997 fatalities, entrapments* and entrapment-related injuries associated with wildland and prescribed fire operations. There were 10 fatalities and 29 firefighters entrapped. The information was collected by the NWCG Safety & Health Working Team, with confirmation from the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA).

Date	Location	Type of Accident	Organization	Entrapped	Shelter Deployed	Shelter Not Deployed	Fatalities	Injuries *
04/20/97	Blair County, PA	Aircraft	State/Contract	n/a			2	
05/05/97	Fort Myers, FL	Burnover	State	2	1	1		None
05/09/97	Macon, GA	Snag (Rx)	State	n/a			1	
05/29/97	Fillbrook Fire, CA	Heat Stroke	State	n/a			1	
06/03/97	San Carlos, AZ	Aircraft	Federal/Contract	n/a			2	
07/06/97	Hemlock Fire, CA	Helicopter	Federal/Contract	n/a			1	
07/15/97	Estero, FL	Heat/Heart Attack	City/Contract	n/a			1	
08/05/97	Eagle Lake, CA	Vehicle	Federal	n/a			1	
08/06/97	Logan Fire, CA	Burnover-Engines/Crew	Federal/State	23	1			3 minor
08/07/97	Logan Fire, CA	Burnover-Dozers	Contract	4	2	2		None
11/13/97	Nye County, NV	Heart Attack (Rx)	Federal	n/a			1	
TOTALS				29			10	

These accidents reinforce the need for being continually alert to the "Situations That Shout Watch Out" and ensuring that all of the "10 Standard Fire Fighting Orders" are followed before initiating tactical operations.

A simple concept to remember and share with crew members is "L.C.E.S." The acronym stands for Lookouts, Communication, Escape Routes, and Safety Zones. If a fire crew has these four areas fully established and understood, they can anticipate a safer assignment.

Based on brief information received, New South Wales, Australia reported four firefighter fatalities and eight seriously injured firefighters in the last four week period of 1997. One fatality and several injuries occurred when the firefighters took refuge under fire blankets on the floor of their tanker truck. Australia is experiencing a very severe and extended drought which contributed to a disastrous fire season.

Timely reporting of entrapments or fatalities is necessary for the rapid dissemination of accurate information to the fire community. It also allows fire safety and equipment specialists to quickly respond to these events as appropriate. Completion of the Wildland Fire Entrapment/Fatality Initial Report (NFES 0869) accomplishes this need. This initial report is self explanatory and does not replace agency reporting or investigative responsibilities, policies or procedures.

The NWCG Safety & Health Working Team would appreciate Investigation Reports from agencies that experienced the above or other entrapments/ major accidents in 1997. Please forward to:

National Interagency Fire Center
NWCG/SHWT - Stan Palmer
3833 So. Development Ave.
Boise, ID 83705
spalmer@nifc.blm.gov

*Entrapment: A situation where personnel are unexpectedly caught in a fire behavior-related, life-threatening position where planned escape routes or safety zones are absent, inadequate, or have been compromised. An entrapment may or may not include deployment of a fire shelter for its intended purpose. These situations may or may not result in injury. They include "near misses."