



MEMORANDUM

To: Chair, National Wildfire Coordinating Group

From: Chair, Safety and Health Working Team

Date: February 19, 2010

Subject: 2009 SAFETY GRAM

The 2009 SAFETY GRAM is attached. It summarizes reported wildland fire fatalities, burnovers/entrapments and other serious accidents for all wildland fire management organizations throughout the United States in 2009.

Fifteen fatalities occurred in 2009 when firefighters were performing wildland fire management activities. This is a substantial decrease from the twenty-five fatalities that were reported in 2008. The 2009 fatalities are listed by category below:

Driving – 3: One fatality occurred when two trucks collided head-on in dense smoke. Two fatalities occurred when a fire vehicle left the roadway and rolled down the mountain side in California.

Entrapment/Burnover – 0

Medical Emergencies – 5: Four of which were confirmed as heart attacks and one unknown cause of death.

Hazard Tree/Snag – 1: One fatality occurred when a firefighter was conducting tree felling training.

Aviation – 6: One fatality occurred when aircraft crashed while observing a fire in Wisconsin. Three fatalities occurred when retardant aircraft was mobilizing to a fire in New Mexico. One fatality occurred when a Single Engine Air Tanker (SEAT) aircraft crashed on a fire in Nevada. One fatality occurred when a firefighter was involved in a rappel proficiency test.

Accident prevention is enhanced when firefighters and fire managers are made aware of fatalities and serious accidents that have occurred the previous year. Please provide wide distribution of the 2009 SAFETY GRAM to your respective agencies and organizations. The SHWT will distribute the Safety Gram via NWCG Safety Alert System and post to the SHWT website at <http://www.nwcg.gov/teams/shwt/safetygram2.htm>

Please feel free to contact me at (208) 387-5175 or michelle_ryerson@nifc.blm.gov if you have any questions or need additional information.

Michelle A. Ryerson

Attachment

cc: Preparedness Branch Coordinator
Master SHWT File



SAFETY GRAM

Fatalities, Entrapments and Serious Accident Summary for 2009 (<http://www.nwcg.gov/teams/shwt/index2.htm>)

The following data indicate the fatalities, entrapments, burnovers and other life-threatening accidents associated with wildfire, wildland fire use and prescribed fire operations in calendar year 2009. The information was collected by the NWCG Safety & Health Working Team, with confirmation of the fatalities from the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA).

Date	Incident Name Jurisdiction Location	Activity	Agency/Entity of Personnel Involved	Type of Accident	Number of People	# Shelters Deployed	Fatalities	Injuries
1/03	Wesley Fire Atoka County OK	Driving Fighting a grass fire along road	VFD/Wesley Fire Department	Vehicle Accident Two trucks collided head-on due in dense smoke	3		1	1 FF suffered trunk & external injuries; 1 FF received head, leg & arm injuries
2/01	Crescent Fire Logan County OK	Firefighting Retreating from structure protection operations	VFD/Deer Creek Fire District	Entrapment Firefighters were burned over when brush truck stalled	2	0		1 FF suffered minor burns to face & neck; 1 FF received burns to arms, hands & face
2/18	Railroad Fire Railroad Right-A-Way Abilene, TX	Firefighting Direct attack of brush & railroad crossties	VFD/Abilene	Vehicle Accident Engine dipped into ravine and rolled over	3			3 FFs transported to medical center, treated & released
2/20	Mannford Fire Mannford, OK	Firefighting Collapsed after fighting fire all day	VFD/Silver City Fire Department	Medical Heart attack	1		1	
3/04	Route J south of Harrisburg Harrisburg, MO	Driving Responding to a grass fire	VFD/Boone County Fire District	Vehicle Accident Engine ran off roadway, over- corrected and rolled	1			Driver received minor head and neck injuries, treated and released from hospital

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3/14	Outdoor Grass Fire Odessa Protection District Odessa, MO	Firefighting Advancing hose lines on active fire	Odessa Fire/Rescue Protection District	Medical Heart attack	1		1	
3/14	North of Pulaski IA	Driving Responding to a grass fire	City of Pulaski, Iowa	Vehicle Accident Fire apparatus attempted to pass pick up, struck driver's side door, and rolled over	3			2 FFs and 1 citizen transported to local hospitals; 1 FF serious condition
3/19	Prescribe Burn GA Forestry Commission GA	Prescribed Fire Firing Sureshot Very Pistol with fusee in barrel	Federal/FS	Very pistol explosion from fusee being inserted into barrel	1			Laceration to throat, requiring 10 stitches to close
3/21	Straight Gate Road Fire NC Division of Forestry Whitakers, NC	Firefighting Advancing hose lines on active fire	VFD/Salem Volunteer Fire Department	Medical Heart attack	1		1	FF collapsed, was airlifted, passed away later at Wake Medical Center
4/3	Live Oak Fire Lagarto VFD Lagarto, TX	Firefighting Structure protection	VFD/Lagarto	Burnover Firefighter was burned	3	0		1 FF suffered 2 nd degree burns and 2 FF suffered minor injuries
4/6	Arrowrock Reservoir BLM, Boise District ID	Training Physical fitness hike	Federal/BLM	Medical Heat related illness	2			IV's started in field, admitted, treated and released on 4/9 & 10 from regional hospital
4/8	Fire # 30 Wisconsin DNR Marshfield, WI	Aviation Cessna, Skymaster 337	State/Wisconsin DNR Air Attack Pilot	Aircraft Accident Conducting aerial observation	1		1	
4/9	Wellston Fire Wellston, OK	Firefighting	Iowa Tribal Firefighters	Entrapment Truck became stuck; Firefighters overrun before reaching safety zone	2	0		1 FF suffered 2 nd and 3 rd degree burns; other FF received moderate burns to ears & nose, treated and released

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4/9	Christian Creek Fire NC Forest Service Swanannoa, NC	Firefighting Mop-up operations	State/North Carolina	Lightning Struck ground near firefighters	3			1 FF knocked to ground; 1 FF felt tingling in shoulder, all FFs transported to hospital
4/10	Grenda County MS	Firefighting	VFD/Elliot Fire Department	Electrocution Firefighter stepped on downed power line	1			3 rd degree burns from neck down, blown out hip socket
4/21	Hudson Road Fire KS	Driving Returning to station following a grass fire	VFD/Stafford County Fire Dept	Medical Heart attack	1		1	
4/22	Highway 31 Fire SC Forestry Commission Horry County, SC	Firefighting Tractor/plows constructing fire line	State/South Carolina Forestry	Entrapment 2 firefighters deployed fire shelters in wet area near tractors	2	2		No injuries to firefighters
4/22	Highway 31 Fire SC Forestry Commission Horry County, SC	Firefighting Off loading a tractor/plow unit	State/South Carolina Forestry	Burnover of tractor/ transport; significantly damaged	1			No injuries to firefighter
4/25	Northern Utah Oquirrh Mountains UT	Aviation P2V, retardant plane	Contractor/ Aviation	Aviation Accident Retardant plane was in transit to a fire in New Mexico	3		3	
5/6	Jesusita Fire Spyglass Ridge Road Santa Barbara County Santa Barbara, CA	Firefighting Structure protection	County/ Ventura County	Entrapment Firefighters took refuge in structure, then forced out	3	0		2 FFs suffered 2 nd and 3 rd degree burns; 1 FF received smoke inhalation
5/18	Okanogan-Wenatchee NF WA	Training Physical fitness hike	Federal/FS	Medical Heat exhaustion and dehydration	1			FF hospitalized for six days

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6/9	Motorcycle Hill Susanville Forestry Fire Training Center Susanville, CA	Training Physical fitness hike	State/Inmate firefighter	Medical Firefighter trainee collapsed; staff conducted CPR	1		1	
6/22	Goose Paddle Fire Walker County Huntsville, TX	Firefighting Initial Attack tractor/plow operation	State/Texas Forest Service Operator	Entrapment Firefighter deployed on side of dozer at deployment site	5	1		FF suffered heat exhaustion and smoke inhalation, treated and released
6/26	Medicine Bow-Routt NF Freeman Reservoir Recreation Area Craig, CO	Training Top part of leaning tree fell back on the faller/ trainer	Federal/BLM	Hazard tree A 3-person felling team was training when the fatality occurred	1		1	
7/09	Logging Slash Fire Alaska Division of Forestry AK	Firefighting Water pumping operation utilizing Mark 3 pump	Federal/FS	Medical (burns) When fuel tank was opened it sprayed fuel on firefighter and ignited a flash fire	1			FF received 2 nd & 3 rd degree burns to hand, arm and face, transferred to Seattle Burn Center
7/18	Pamo Fire Cleveland NF CA	Firefighting Assisting with a hose lay	State/CAL FIRE	Medical Heat exhaustion and dehydration	1			Admitted to hospital 7/18, treated for severe electrolyte imbalance and released 7/21
7/21	Backbone Fire Willow Creek Helibase Six Rivers NF Will Creek, CA	Training Rappel proficiency test	Federal/FS	Aviation Accident Rappeller fell while descending from helicopter	1		1	
8/3	Muddy Creek Fire BLM, Prineville District OR	Firefighting Using indirect line to burn out and hold fire, fire behavior increased	Federal/BLM and two private landowners	Entrapment Escapes routes compromised and burned out from safety zone	12	0		No injuries and no property damage

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8/19	Silver Fire Plumas NF Quincy, CA	Firefighting Constructing hand line on initial attack	Federal/FS	Hazard tree Bucket drop knocked snag down & a piece of it broke firefighter wrist	1			Broken wrist
8/20	Hoyt Fire BLM, Carson City District Fallon, NV	Firefighting Providing air support on a initial attack fire	Contractor	Aviation SEAT crashed while dropping retardant on a fire	1		1	
8/21	Silver Fire Plumas NF Meadow Valley, CA	Other – sleeping Firefighter was ran over by grey water truck in fire camp	Federal/FS	Firefighter was sleeping in camp when truck drove over her	1			Treated, transported to medical center in critical but stable condition
8/22	Highway 99 Los Molinos, CA	Driving Crew was returning to home unit	Federal/FS	Rollover Crew carrier was struck by semi-truck side mirror and rolled	8			8 FFs transported to hospital, 7 treated & released, 1 FF had significant injuries
8/29	Pacheco Fire CAL FIRE Santa Cara County CA	Firefighting Fire made run at engine, 2 firefighters deployed engine's curtain, moderate damage reported	State/CAL FIRE	Burnover of engine, 2 firefighters deployed engine's rear compartment fire curtain	6			No injuries
8/29	Station Fire Angeles NF CA	Firefighting Patrolling	Federal/FS	Entrapment	1	1		No injuries, FF inside vehicle, minor damage to vehicle
8/30	Station Fire LA County, Camp 16 CA	Driving While escaping camp burnover, firefighters' vehicle left roadway and rolled	County/LA County	Rollover Vehicle left roadway, rolled down mountain side resulting in fatalities	2		2	

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10/05	Sheep Fire San Bernardino NF CA	Driving Engine was returning to ICP after assignment	State/CAL FIRE	Vehicle Accident Private vehicle pulled into engine's path, it lost traction striking bridge	4			2 FFs received minor injuries, transported to local hospitals, treated and released
10/22	Bald Mountain Helibase Stanislaus NF CA	Prescribed Fire	Federal/FS	Medical Firefighter received burns to leg	1			1 st , 2 nd & 3 rd degree burns to leg
10/29	Howser Pile Burn Kings Mountain NMP Kings Mountain, SC	Prescribed Fire Using drip torch to ignite bone piles	Federal/NPS	Medical FF was emptying drip torch when fire flashed back on him	1			FF received 2 nd degree burns to right hand and face, transferred to GA burn center
11/7	Lynn Hollow Great Smoky Mountains NP TN	Hazard Fuels Reduction (felling snags)	Contractor	Hazard tree Sawyer was struck by falling limb	1			Sawyer was transported to hospital with non-life threatening injuries
11/16	Uinta-Wasatch Cache NF WY	Hazardous Fuels Reduction	Federal/FS	Vehicle Accident Roll-over	2			1 minor injury
11/29	Dark Ridge Cumberland Gap NHP KY	Hazard Fuels Reduction (felling snags)	Federal/NPS	Hazard tree Firefighter was assisting with felling when tree broke free and pinned him to ground	1			FF was transported to trauma center
12/4	Highway 89 North of CAL FIRE Pondosa Station CA	Hazard Fuels Reduction	State/Crew member	Hazard tree Firefighter struck by tree felled by other firefighter	1			FF received concussion, broken leg (knee) and broken finger
TOTAL					92	4	15	

For calendar year 2009, there were fifteen (15) fatalities.

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Entrapment/Burnover –

Medical Emergencies – 5: Four of which were confirmed as heart attacks and one unknown cause of death.

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The NWCG Safety & Health Working Team would like to request any Investigation Reports from agencies that experienced the above or other fatalities, entrapments, and major accidents in 2009 or previous years. Safety Gram reporting criteria can be found at http://www.nwcg.gov/teams/shwt/safetygram_criteria.pdf

Please mail reports to the following address or email them to: stan_palmer@nifc.blm.gov.

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