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FROM : National Wildfire Coordinating Group

REPLY TO : NWCG@nifc.gov

DATE : 04/17/2006

SUBJECT : SAFETY BULLETIN : New Holland Incident 72 Hour Report



72-hour_Briefing.doc

THE FOLLOWING INFORMATION IS PRELIMINARY AND SUBJECT TO CHANGE

Injured employees: firefighters (2)

Preliminary factual findings: The injured individual was participating as an Engine Boss on an escaped prescribed fire which had been converted to a wildfire. The engine was engaged in direct attack of the southern flank in tall grass. The fire overran the engine with the Engine Boss and another firefighter in the cab. Both firefighters were able to move from the engine to a safety zone after the passage of the initial flaming front. The Engine Boss received minor burns on his legs and arms, the second fire fighter received slight burns to his face, while moving from the engine.

Narrative: The Engine Boss and firefighter were assigned to a Type 6 engine engaged in the initial attack of the southern flank of the fire which was actively burning in tall grass. They were utilizing a rolling attack with the firefighter driving the engine and the Engine Boss working the hardline. The Engine Boss determined that it was time to disengage, stopped the engine to throw the line on, and then moved to engine cab and directed the firefighter to move through the green to a safety zone. The engine would not start, and the flaming front overran the engine almost immediately. The Engine Boss waited for the flaming front to pass, and then led the firefighter through the black to a safety zone. The firefighters encountered significant residual heat while moving from the engine to the safety zone, and received minor burns. Both firefighters were wearing full PPE.

The interagency investigation team reviewed the fire scene and interviewed employees assigned to the prescribed fire and wildfire. The team has determined that this situation met the definition of entrapment.

Lessons Learned: Based upon the preliminary findings by the investigation team, the following Lessons Learned should be transmitted to all wildland firefighters for the remainder of the 2006 Fire Season:

1. Engine crews must identify and maintain adequate safety zones and escape routes in the event that an engine breaks down.
2. Engine cabs may be a safer option than shelter deployment in fast moving fires in tall grass.
3. Driving over areas with significant residual heat can result in vehicle malfunctions.
4. Wildfire qualifications and experience levels must be considered when making holding and contingency assignments for employees assigned to prescribed fires.
5. Prescribed fire contingency plans must realistically address options for worst case scenarios.

The report of the investigation team will be issued within 30 days.

DAN MORFORD

Team Leader