



United States Department of the Interior  
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT  
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In Reply Refer to:  
9210 (CON03)

Memorandum

To: Colorado State Director

From: *Acting* Wayne Werkmeister  
Field Manager

Subject: 24-Hour Preliminary Report

**THE FOLLOWING INFORMATION IS PRELIMINARY AND SUBJECT TO CHANGE**

**Location: Dry Creek Fire, near De Beque, CO**

**Date of Occurrence: June 9, 2015**

**Time of Occurrence: Approximately 1730 Hrs MDT**

**Activity: Wildland Fire Suppression**

**Number of Injuries: 0**

**Number of Fatalities: 0**

**Property Damage (such as vessels, equipment, and structures): Partial damage to a chainsaw**

**Narrative:**

On the afternoon of June 9, 2015 a fire crew member from the Upper Colorado River Fire Management Unit (UCR) experienced a safety issue with a MS 460 Stihl chainsaw while responding to the Dry Creek Fire near De Beque, CO. The fire was a single tree juniper with no containment issues.

After hiking approximately 30 minutes into the fire, the sawyer attempted to start the chainsaw. The saw sputtered a few times but did not stay running. The sawyer turned the saw tank upright to check the fuel level in the saw. The sawyer estimates he was approximately 11 feet down-slope from the fire's smoldering edge. When the sawyer opened the saw cap, an immediate burst

of fuel sprayed out of the tank under pressure. The sawyer was able to deflect some of the spray with his gloved hand; however a significant amount of fuel spray soaked his saw chaps and the waistline area of his Nomex. The sawyer immediately tossed the chainsaw forward and away from his body and stepped back.

The tossed chainsaw began leaking fuel onto the ground. Moments later the vaporized fuel mist from the chainsaw, which had been carried by the up-slope breeze to the fire's smoldering edge (approximately 9 feet away), ignited. As a result the chainsaw caught fire. Firefighters quickly extinguished the flames. The chainsaw experience damage to the fuel tank, handle, and trigger. The fuel cap was later found; it was partially melted.

The chainsaw in this incident was a Stihl MS460 which had been placed in service and used extensively in August of 2014 for two weeks on a saw project. The saw had the newer style toolless fuel and oil caps. The gasoline used in the chainsaw mix did contain some ethanol. The chainsaw had been readied for the season in April prior to a prescribed fire assignment. The chainsaw had not been started earlier in the day and was "cold" when this incident occurred. Ambient air temperatures were estimated to be 80-85 degrees Fahrenheit.

After consulting the BLM-CO Fire and Aviation Staff and BLM State Safety Officer, this incident is being deemed a "Near-miss" as defined by the Interagency Standards for Fire and Fire Aviation Operations (the Red Book) Chapter 18-7. A Lessons Learned Review Team from outside the UCR will be assembled to further investigate this incident and will produce Lessons Learned Review (LLR).

In addition to this 24-Hour Preliminary Report, a Safe-net is being prepared and will be submitted.

/s/ Wayne Werkmeister, Acting Field Manager

cc:

Northwest Colorado District Manager

BLM Colorado Safety Manager

BLM Colorado State Fire Management Officer