

TABLE OF CONTENTS

REVIEW TEAM PROCESS	PAGE 3
SEQUENCE OF EVENTS	PAGE 6
OVERVIEW OF SPYGLASS RIDGE	PAGE 12
MAP OF SPYGLASS RIDGE	PAGE 21
OVERVIEW OF MISSION ROAD	PAGE 24
MAP OF MISSION ROAD	PAGE 31
OVERVIEW OF HOLLY ROAD	PAGE 34
MAP OF HOLLY ROAD	PAGE 41
OVERVIEW OF TUNNEL ROAD	PAGE 45
MAP OF TUNNEL ROAD	PAGE 52
OVERVIEW OF PALOMINO ROAD	PAGE 55
MAP OF PALOMINO ROAD	PAGE 60
INCIDENT PROGRESSION MAP	PAGE 66
S-215 FIRE OPERATIONS	PAGE 67
PPE REPORT	PAGE 69
WOLFPACK WEBGEAR REPORT	PAGE 80
TRAINING REVIEW REPORT	PAGE 87
SAFETY REVIEW REPORT	PAGE 93
FIRE BEHAVIOR ANALYSIS	PAGE 95
FINAL SUMMARY	PAGE 98

REVIEW TEAM PROCESS

The review process of this incident comprised of an evaluation of the accident sites along with an analysis of the damage to the personal protection equipment (PPE), mobile equipment, fire conditions, fuel, and topography that existed at the time of the accidents. Statements were taken from those involved to help construct a timeline and present a clear picture of the chain of events leading up to and through the conclusion of the incident. An examination of the PPE and discussion with the manufacturers were required to determine the extreme conditions that existed at the time of the incident.

The Serious Accident Review Team (SART) was activated the evening of May 6, 2009, with reporting instructions for the following morning at the Jesusita Base Camp in Santa Barbara. The team formed and received a briefing from the IC. The team members were Dale Hutchinson, Team Leader, MMU; Kevin Gaines, Lead Investigator, RRU; Matthew Conoscente Investigator RRU; Chris Palmer Investigator RRU; Larry Harris Investigator TUU; Pat Sparks Investigator SLU; Paul Alvarez Investigator MMU; Mark Derosier Investigator BDU; Jane Schmitz Investigator SLU; Greg Grizzell Investigator Southern Region Riverside; Kurt Winchester BDF USFS Agency Representative; Marty Hamel, Safety Program representative ANF USFS; Robert Bell Training Program Specialist ONC USFS; Darren Hensley, Mobile Equipment Technical Specialist, Southern Region Riverside; Misty Marschall, Documentation Unit Leader, SLU Unit; Bill Weiser, Cost Unit Leader RRU; Jeff Isaacs, CDF Firefighters Representative, SCU Unit; Mike Ramirez Tech Spec. SAC; Jeff Shelton Fire Behavior Analyst ORC; Steve Kennedy GIS Specialist VNC; Dave Chovanec, and Jon Bergh were assigned to the team as the Ventura County Fire Dept. Liaison.

The SART met and discussed the course of the investigation and established guidelines and a time table for the first part of the accident review. A visit to the accident sites was conducted by investigators and Technical Specialist. Pictures of the scene and the PPE were taken by Investigators for the report. A copy of the dispatch log was provided and the recording of the radio traffic was also provided.

The lead investigator instructed the other investigators to interview all personnel that responded to or was at scene of the accident. Those interviews were scheduled and performed by the investigators assigned to the specific accident site. CDF Firefighters provided representation for the SART and Union representation was provided by the specific agency.

The Training program representative examined the training records of the personnel involved. It was determined that everyone met or exceeded minimum qualifications required for the positions held.

The Safety program representative examined and cataloged all of the PPE in use by those involved in the Spyglass incident. PPE Technical specialist from Missoula Montana and Southern Operations Riverside responded to analyze the PPE and fire shelters. Their report details as to the amount of heat that the PPE was subjected to and to possibly determine the temperature when the firefighters were burned. The President for Wolfpack was also contacted and analyzed the Wolfpack web gear and provided a detailed report.

The Mobile Equipment technical specialist examined the maintenance records of all equipment involved. It was determined that one of the Santa Paula Engines did not have the required ember screen.

The Documentation Unit Leader was to collect copies of all documents and photographs regarding the accident review. Each accident site has its own documentation box and labeled on the SART Investigative File Inventory (IFI).

On May 18, 2009 the team having completed the initial review of the sites, interviews, photos, and the equipment involved were released through ROSS and returned to their home units. The team reformed on June 29-July 2, 2009 in Santa Barbara to start the completion of this document.

Jesusita Fire Command Structure

On Tuesday, May 5, 2009, at 1:45 PM, a wildland fire was reported burning in the foothills north of the City of Santa Barbara along the “Jesusita” hiking trail within the Los Padres National Forest DPA (not on the Forest)– Santa Barbara Ranger District. Los Padres National Forest (LPF), Santa Barbara County Fire Department (SBC), and Santa Barbara City Fire Department (STB) initiated a coordinated wildland fire dispatch of fire suppression resources to the incident.

The first arriving SBC Division Chief reported a fire burning in heavy brush along the Jesusita Trail, approximately 1 mile above the Lauro Canyon reservoir, within the Direct Protection Area of the LPF. Access into the fire area was limited by the mid slope location of the fire. By 2:30 PM, Unified Command was established with the three agencies. Potential existed for the fire to move into State Responsibility Area (SRA), as well as the urban interface area, and a Type 1 Incident Command Team was selected to manage this incident due to the anticipated complexities of incident management. A CAL FIRE Incident Command Team (ICT) was ordered based on the predicted weather and potential for fire spread down slope off of the Forest, into SRA, and urbanized areas of Santa Barbara.

On Wednesday, May 6, 2009, an extended attack command structure (Type 3 Incident Command Organization per Interagency Standards for Fire and Aviation Standards – “Red Book”) conducted the operational briefing. This briefing covered incident objectives, weather, division assignments, communication plan, and a safety message. Weather predictions were discussed during the morning briefing for the potential of down slope “Sundowner” winds for the late afternoon and evening hours. The incident was planned to transition to CAL FIRE ICT-4 at 6:00 PM.

The IAP communications plan for May 6, 2009 assigned the Structure branch on one tactical frequency. This consisted of the Mission Structure group with 4 type 1 Strike teams, the Tunnel Structure group with 4 type 1 strike teams and the San Roque Structure group with 3 type 1 strike teams assigned. Additional Type 1 strike teams were assigned from staging and off duty (resting) to this same tactical frequency which resulted in an over tasking of one frequency.

Sequence of Events

On Tuesday, May 5, 2009, at 1:45 PM, a wildland fire was reported burning in the foothills north of the City of Santa Barbara along the “Jesusita” hiking trail within the Los Padres National Forest DPA (not on the forest)– Santa Barbara Ranger District. Los Padres National Forest (LPF), Santa Barbara County Fire Department (SBC), and Santa Barbara City Fire Department (STB) initiated a coordinated wildland fire dispatch of fire suppression resources to the incident.

The first arriving SBC Division Chief reported a fire burning in heavy brush along the Jesusita Trail, approximately 1 mile above the Lauro Canyon reservoir, within the Direct Protection Area of the LPF. Access into the fire area was limited by the mid slope location of the fire. By 2:30 PM, Unified Command was established with the three agencies. Potential existed for the fire to move into State Responsibility Area (SRA), as well as the urban interface area, and a Type 1 Incident Command Team was selected to manage this incident due to the anticipated complexities of incident management. A CAL FIRE Incident Command Team (ICT) was ordered based on the predicted weather and potential for fire spread down slope off of the Forest, into SRA, and urbanized areas of Santa Barbara.

On Wednesday, May 6, 2009, an extended attack command structure (Type 3 Incident Command Organization per Interagency Standards for Fire and Aviation Standards – “Red Book”) conducted the operational briefing. This briefing covered incident objectives, weather, division assignments, communication plan, and a safety message. Weather predictions were discussed during the morning briefing for the potential of down slope “Sundowner” winds for the late afternoon and evening hours. The incident was planned to transition to CAL FIRE ICT-4 at 6:00 PM.

The fire was estimated at 400 acres, and later reduced in size to 200 acres after more accurate mapping. Fire spread was topography and fuel driven, and the predicted winds had not yet surfaced. The incident strategy for perimeter control included direct attack using Fire Crews, Type 3 engines, and aircraft. The fire was divided into two branches; Branch I (East portion), and Branch II (West portion). Branch I control operations were direct attack starting in the Spyglass area in Mission Canyon working to the West. Branch II control operations were direct attack from the origin along the Jesusita trail working to the East. Both Branches had significant challenges with limited access to the fire line and the mid slope location of the fire.

The Structure Protection Branch coordinated fire suppression resources among the residential areas. Three Structure Groups were developed: Tunnel Structure Group for the Tunnel Road area; San Roque Structure Group for the San Roque Canyon area; Mission Structure Group for the Mission Canyon Road

area. Control operations for all structure groups within the Structure Branch were to prepare and triage structures which could be threatened by an advancing fire.

Access challenges existed for all Structure Groups due to the narrow roads, ornamental and native vegetation, and the arrangement of the homes among the canyons and ridges. Additionally, the main access route for all structure groups was the same for Branch I. An evacuation order was in place for the northern portions of Mission and San Roque Canyons.

A Staging Area was set up at the Incident Base at Earl Warren Show Grounds. There was a considerable amount of fire suppression resources staged due to the possibility of fire progression down slope due to the forecasted “Sundowner” winds. Resources continued to arrive at staging throughout the day.

At approximately 2:20 PM, the fire was slightly over 200 acres, and the windy conditions at the higher elevations grounded the fixed wing aircraft. The fire continued to become more active as Northwest “Sundowner” winds began to surface, and a high intensity backing fire started to push down slope toward structures in the Mission Canyon Area. Branch I disengaged perimeter control resources and removed them from the upper sections of Mission Canyon due to this increase in winds and fire behavior. Branch II also disengaged the perimeter control resources and moved them back to a safe location. Both Branches were now experiencing stronger winds and increased activity.

Structure Branch recognized the increased fire activity, and was coordinating resource movements within the Tunnel Group and Mission Group for structure protection. At 3:39 PM, Branch I reported significant fire activity and that the fire had moved down slope and was in the vicinity of the water tank at the end of Tunnel Road. Winds were reported to be between 20 and 30 miles per hour from the Northwest. At 3:46 PM, the Operations Section Chief reported substantial fire activity in the upper Spyglass Ridge Road and Mission Canyon area. In addition, the winds had increased to velocities that grounded rotary wing aircraft. At 3:50 PM hours Branch I reported the fire was burning above and below homes and resources in Mission Canyon and advised Structure Branch to pull the resources out of Mission Canyon.

At 3:52 PM, Tunnel Structure Group requested additional strike teams of engines for structure protection as the fire was spotting ¼ mile in front of the main fire front which was headed down slope. At approximately 4:00 PM, the fire front moved into the residential areas of upper Mission Canyon. Spot fires ahead of the fire front became established in the drainages above Lauro Reservoir, and caused multiple uphill fire runs from all directions into the residential areas of Mission Canyon. Engine companies assigned to Mission and Tunnel Structure Groups became engaged in structure protection operations.

Radio reports of firefighters trapped in structures, taking refuge in structures, or taking refuge in their engine were being reported. At 4:08 PM, the first report of injured firefighters was received. The Operations Section Chief and Structure Branch Director directed resources into the Mission Canyon area to assist with structure protection. Narrow roads, extreme fire behavior, downed powerlines, and heavy smoke conditions precluded fire suppression resources from exiting the area, as well as hampering resources from entering into the area to assist. Residents who remained in their homes within the evacuation area sought refuge with various engine companies in various locations. Multiple homes were burning adding to the heavy smoke and extreme temperatures. Some water systems within the residential area lost volume and pressure.

Strike Team Leaders and Engine Companies were bringing injured personnel to Santa Barbara County Fire Station 15 (located at Mission Canyon Road and Foothill Road) for initial treatment, or were taking them directly to the hospital outside of the knowledge of the incident. Residents that sought refuge with engine companies were escorted out of the area.

At 4:52 PM, the Operations Section Chief gathered intelligence on the burnover and firefighter injuries to brief the Incident Commander. The Agency Administrators were advised of the burnover and firefighter injuries, and a CAL FIRE Serious Accident Review Team (SART) was requested at 6:00 PM.





