

SAFETY / HAZARD ALERT

Forestry Operations

Firefighters Out of Position During Planned Ignition



Location: Mount Docking Fire near Invermere, BC

Date: August 16, 2022

Details of Close Call / Serious Incident: A type 3 firefighting crew was working on the Mount Docking fire team in mid August. There were planned ignitions for the afternoon of the 16th, using ignition from both ground and aerial resources.

At the morning Incident Action Plan meeting, the type 3 firefighting crew was given a task which involved working along the guard. The ignition plan was not discussed at the Incident Action Plan meeting. It was discussed briefly at a crew leader meeting and then in detail at a separate ignitions meeting.

The type 3 crew carried out their task, which required them to work a fair distance up along the mechanical guard. Ground and air ignition commenced, and the fire began burning hot.

The type 3 crew was supposed to exit down the guard and meet on the road, but they didn't know the plan. The aerial ignitions crew (who were communicating on a separate channel from the type 3 crews) noticed the type 3 firefighting crew, and began to radio others to tell the type 3 crew to get off the guard and down to safety on the road.

The guard was compromised in spots, so the crew hiked down through the green.

Everyone made it out of the fire unharmed, however two of the fire crew's backpacks, which were left on the fire line above the machine guard, were consumed in the fire.

Learnings & Suggestions:

- Fire crew leaders and their team should make sure they know the days events and important particulars when working on a fire, as well as all multi-employer workplaces. This may mean asking questions up the chain of command if that information isn't presented to you, or you don't understand it.
- Fire crew leaders should work in close proximity to their trainees to ensure they can be monitored, especially if work conditions become dangerous. Although it can be intimidating to speak over the radio when working on a fire, asking questions, or clarifying your position for safety purposes is an easy way to gain information quickly. In situations that don't feel right, radio communication should be used immediately and without hesitation.