



NATIONAL WILDFIRE COORDINATING GROUP

Memorandum No. 18-004

Date: 10 September 2018

TO: NWCG Executive Board Members
FROM: Garth Fisher, Chair, NWCG Executive Board

Handwritten signature of Garth Fisher

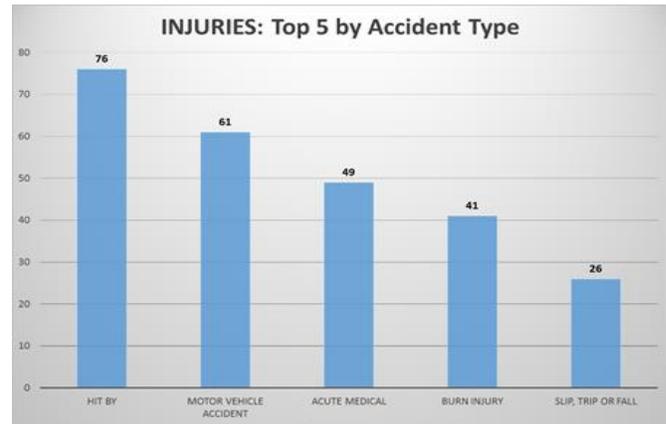
SUBJECT: 1. Recent USFS data analysis on firefighter injuries.
2. Recommendation to managers to emphasize hazard mitigations in identified areas.

The purpose of this memorandum is to communicate recent USFS findings on firefighter injuries and emphasize hazard mitigations associated with these findings. Please distribute this information through your agency channels.

The US Forest Service (USFS) Office of Human Performance & Innovation and Organizational Learning recently performed an internal study of USFS wildfire accident statistics over the ten-year period from 2007-2016. This study found that getting "Hit By" a rock, log, limb, or tree was the most frequent way USFS firefighters were injured. Further, getting "Hit By" a tree was the second most frequent way USFS firefighters were killed. While focused only on USFS firefighters, the study's findings may be extended to the entire wildland firefighting community.

A noteworthy parallel to this issue is insightfully presented in the Facilitated Learning Analysis (FLA) of the Incident 398 Hazard Tree Fatality. This FLA acknowledges that in some areas "Hit By" risks often cannot be completely mitigated. Working among hazard trees is one example of the inherent conflicts between suppression related activities and personnel safety.

In 1957 the mantra, Keep Alert, Look Up, Look Down, Look Around was born in the publication Safe Practices Under Blowup Conditions for the Fire Crew Boss. As true today as it was in 1957, firefighters face a formidable task: striving to accomplish their job while attempting to watch for every potential fall hazard. Look Up, Look Down, Look Around has obvious connections to "Hit By" accidents and remains a valid concept that encourages all firefighters to take an extra moment for decision space and awareness when in the hazardous wildland fire environment.



The high numbers of "Hit By" accidents has a strong message for Agency Administrators and Incident Commanders. If fire management strategies involve sending firefighters into steep, rocky terrain or snag-infested areas, carefully consider mitigations or other strategies which minimize exposure to "Hit By" hazards. Encouraging line personnel to Look Up, Look Down, Look Around and strategically choose work areas may lead to a reduction in these types of injuries.

For questions or concerns, please contact your agency representative on the NWCG Risk Management Committee (RMC) https://www.nwcg.gov/committees/risk-management-committee/roster

Distribution:
NWCG Committee Chairs
NWCG Staff

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