Rapid Lesson Sharing

Event Type: IA Structure Protection/Evacuation

Date: Aug. 16, 2016

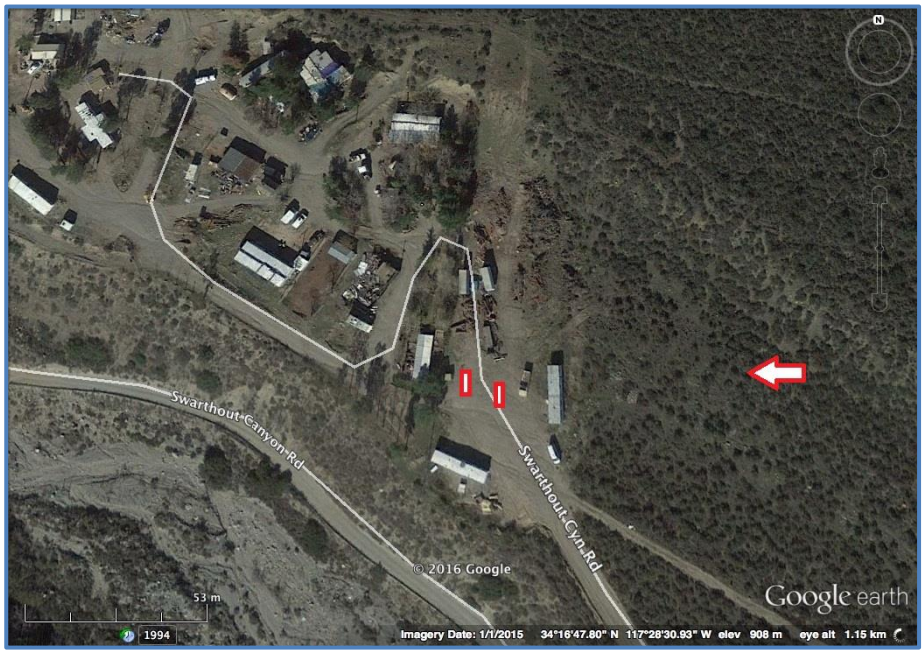
Location: Southern California

NARRATIVE

The Blue Cut Fire started at approximately 1040 hours on August 16, 2016 along Cajon Boulevard near the Interstate 15 Freeway.

Initial attack fire suppression resources were actively engaged in perimeter control fire suppression activities in an attempt to hold the fire to the area of origin.

As the fire behavior increased, spot fires ignited across Cajon Boulevard and progressed toward structures to the north in the Swarthout Canyon area. The County Fire resources disengaged from their original assignment and redeployed into Swarthout Canyon to begin immediate evacuations of the affected area in front of the now rapidly growing wildfire.



The two rectangles indicate the location of the two engines when the fire spread—shown by arrow—overran them.

During this attempt to locate remaining residents and inform them to evacuate to a safer location, two County Fire Type 3 Engines were overrun by the fast-moving fire at a residence—where two civilians had remained on the property. Firefighters had asked the residents to leave multiple times but they refused.

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Next, the fire crews noticed that their escape route was cut off by fire. The fire crew personnel told the residents to take shelter in their residence. The two Engine Companies both sheltered in place—with several minutes of heavy smoke, heat, and firebrands to contend with—until the fire front passed.

Once the fire front moved through, firefighters found that multiple vehicles and structures had caught fire, including the structure in which the residents had taken shelter.

Two firefighters were transported to a local hospital with minor injuries. Both were released hours later and returned to fight the fire. The fire equipment received minor cosmetic damage.

Neither of the two residents were injured.

LESSONS

- ✓ Maintain situation awareness and establish management action points based on current and anticipated fire behavior.
- ✓ If property owners are not willing to evacuate, inform them of the hazards at risk and be prepared to disengage and continue to a safer location.
- ✓ Identify escape routes, safety zones, and safe refuge areas and make them known.

The rapidly growing Blue Cut Fire on Aug. 16 during initial attack, when two Engine Companies who were evacuating residents from threatened homes were overrun by the fire. Photo courtesy InciWeb.

One of the two engines involved in the WUI burn over incident. Both engines received minor cosmetic damage.

This RLS was submitted by:

Training Officer

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