

# Rapid Lesson Sharing

**Event Type:** Chainsaw Cut

**Date:** September 16, 2022

**Location:** Moose Fire  
Salmon-Challis National Forest  
Idaho

## Summary

On September 16 at 1015 on the Moose Fire, an Interagency Hotshot Crew (IHC) crewmember sustained a chainsaw cut to the left leg. While swamping for their sawyer, the chainsaw kicked back, striking and cutting into the swamper's chaps (see photo). The swamper sustained a four-inch laceration which took 10 staples to close. The firefighter was released later that evening to light duty.

## The Story

The crew was working on a rocky stretch of forest road to the south of the fire. The road was an indirect holding feature that consisted of a 100-foot swath of cleared timber off one side of the road. While accessible, the road was difficult to quickly traverse.

The experienced sawyer was swamping for a trainee, who was running the chainsaw. The swamper was pushing on a small tree that was being cut by the sawyer when the saw tip kickback occurred—striking and cutting the swamper's left leg.

At approximately 1017, a Division/Group Supervisor Trainee on the Moose Fire received a call on their tactical channel (TAC) from the IHC Crew Boss Trainee working on their Division. The Crew Boss Trainee notified the Division/Group Supervisor Trainee that he had a medical incident due to a chainsaw laceration on the leg of a crew member.

At 1019, the IHC Crew Boss Trainee assumed the role of Incident Commander (IC) for this Incident Within an Incident (IWI). He called into medical with an emerging medical incident along the Forest Service road. He requested that the ambulance assigned to Division T/W be moved north to the IWI location.

The DIVS and DIVS Trainee then headed toward this medical incident in their vehicle. They requested on TAC that the nearest Rapid Extraction Module Support (REMS) unit also head in that direction.

## REMS Takes Control of the Medical Incident Scene

The REMS arrived at 1023, took control of the scene, and delivered the Medical Incident Report on the Command channel. This initial report was a "RED: Chainsaw Injury" (PRIORITY 1 – Life or limb threatening injury or illness. Evacuation need is IMMEDIATE). At this same time, the IWI IC requested that the incoming ambulance divert and stage at the local spike camp.

At 1026, the IHC Crew EMT downgraded the "RED" to a "YELLOW" (PRIORITY 2 – Serious Injury or illness. Evacuation may be DELAYED if necessary) and determined that ground evacuation would be the best extraction



The chainsaw's saw tip kicked back, cutting into the swamper's chaps (see above), gashing a four-inch laceration into the swamper's left leg that required ten staples to close.

method. At 1032, the patient was stabilized and an IV was started. The patient was then packaged, loaded into the REMS UTV and transported to the spike camp for rendezvous with the ambulance.

### **Road Closed to Incident and Local Traffic**

Once the DIVS and DIVS Trainee arrived on scene they recognized the need to close the road to incident traffic—it was becoming very congested—and blocking the road. In fact, it was congested to the point that the DIVS and Trainee were unable to move any farther along the road. This medical incident was described by this incident’s responders as being like: “moths to a flame”.

At 1037, several Safety Officers began shutting down the road to this medical incident to local traffic. (It’s worth noting that the lower road was open to traffic supporting the local mining operations, forest access, and incident operations. Traffic had previously been an ongoing concern here. Numerous mitigation measures had been developed to reduce these impacts.)

At 1052, the REMS unit was able to rendezvous with the ambulance at the spike camp. The patient was then transferred to the ambulance and taken to the local hospital for treatment.

At 1545, the patient was released from the hospital. The injury was described as a four-inch chainsaw cut to the lower shin area which required 10 staples to close. The firefighter was released later that evening to light duty.

## **Lessons**

- ❖ Swampers should locate themselves on the far side of the tree, or farther away from the sawyer. This crew’s AAR on this incident will cover sawyer/swamper teams working in close proximity.
- ❖ A key success on this incident was the medical response. Due to the proximity of medical resources distributed throughout the fire area, the REMS team’s arrival time on scene took only four minutes.
- ❖ Challenges included road conditions and traffic. Mining and fire traffic were cleared in a timely manner by Safety Officers and the Division Supervisor, ensuring a safe roadway for the packaged patient in the UTV. Due to the poor condition of the road, this UTV was a critical piece of equipment.
- ❖ Medical response should be limited to assigned resources for the IWI. Some road congestion on the patient’s egress route was due to excess medical responders.

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