

DOCKET

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Record of Conversation
Geoff Lesh, P.E.
Siting, Transmission and Environmental Protection Division
California Energy Commission

June 14, 2011

On June 14, 2011, I called and spoke with Section Lead Barthel of the Camp Pendleton Air Crash Fire Team 760-725-4707, to get an understanding of the chronology of the events that led to the eventual extinguishment of the transformer fire at the Palomar Power Station (01-AFC-24C) that occurred on Dec 22, 2010. The following is a summary of that conversation.

Mr. Barthel was a member of the team that responded with the Camp Pendleton Crash Team Foam Truck.

Team recd request for foam truck at 1530 hrs on Dec 22, 2010
Team arrived to Palomar Power Station (PPS) at 1705 hrs
First foam attack on fire: 2010 hrs

Upon arrival:

- Team viewed fire situation on video monitor in the control room, and was briefed by on-site fire team and management personnel.
- Team verified that Lock-Out/Tag-Out was in place and completed so that power was off in area of fire.
- Teams met and decided upon an attack plan and set up attack-team command responsibilities.
- First attack made at 2010 hrs.
- After about 15 minutes of foam application, the attack was called off because the foam was not holding. There was too much heat coming off causing the foam to break up and allow reigniting of the fire.
- The team and truck remained on site throughout the night. The fire reduced itself somewhat by morning.
- Next day, after briefing and planning meetings, another attempt was made after the fire had reduced in size.
- Fire was attacked with foam a second time at 1400 hrs on Dec 23, 2010.
- The attack method was the same as previous day, but this time it worked at knocking down the fire.
- Fire was fully knocked down at 1420 hrs.

As to why the foam application didn't work first time, but then worked next day? Mr. Barthel thought that it worked the second time, because fire had burned down over the previous approximately 25 hours so that there was less heat being evolved.

Discussion of possible Suggestions:

- Having foam on site may not help. (It's mostly (97%) water, and so it may increase volatility of the burning oil when there is a lot of heat)
- Any notable problems encountered: none
- Notable or unnecessary delays encountered: none
- More practice training for such fires? No. Fire departments already make an initial plan during annual walkthroughs and inspections.
- There was initial concern about the berm height around the transformer being sufficient for both leaking oil and fire water, as it had been raining before and at the time that the fire started, but berm height never became a problem.