

BULLETIN

NO.: 21-025
DATE: February 11, 2021
TO: All Personnel
FROM: Steven Lozano, Deputy Fire Chief, Employee Services
SUBJECT: Incident Review – Groveland Incident

Please find attached the Informational Summary Report (Incident Review) for Groveland Incident.

- **Reference:**
 - SDFD Operations Manual, Injury and Illness Prevention Program, Safety Communications SI10 Sec04
- Structure fire on January 26th, 2021 with wires down (video included)

Reviewed by the OHSC's investigation sub-committee; lead investigators:
Captain Chad Allison, Battalion Chief Chris Babler, Battalion Chief David Picone

Any questions should be directed through the chain of command.

Please contact the Health and Safety Office at SDFDHealth&Safety@sandiego.gov with comments or areas of improvement. For all other questions contact HSO/Battalion Chief David Picone at 619.533.4466 or dpicone@sandiego.gov

Wellness Resources link: [“Promoting Safe and Healthy Lives”](#) or call 833-SDFD-HSO
password - support



Informational Summary Report

Incident Review

San Diego Fire-Rescue Department

“Groveland” Incident

Tuesday, January 26, 2021

SUMMARY

At 12:25:02 San Diego Engine 12 (SND E12), San Diego Truck 12 (SND T12) and San Diego Battalion 6 (SND B6) arrived to find a single story, single family dwelling that had flashed over seconds before arrival. Firefighters were in the process of setting up for a coordinated attack on the fire when an overhead wire attached to the home suddenly dropped from the intense superheated smoke nearly striking a Firefighter (FF) from SND E12. The live wire came to rest on a chain link fence arcing several times and energizing the metal fencing on the Alpha side of the structure. Firefighters immediately identified the hazard, relayed clear communication to Groveland Incident Command (IC) and the hazard area was identified using banner tape. A Firefighter was assigned to the hazard to create a physical barrier preventing entry into the step/touch electrical potential zone.

CONDITIONS

Weather:

- Temperature: 71° Fahrenheit
- Relative Humidity: 31
- Winds: SW 7 mph
- Visibility: Clear 10 miles
- Fuel Type: Type 5 Construction
- Road Conditions: Dry/residential
- Topography: Flat
- Fire Behavior: Rapid growth
- Structural Features:
 - 1960s single family three-bedroom home
 - Exterior 5 ft “No Trespassing” sign was located outside with a metal construction fence surrounding the property.

SEQUENCE OF EVENTS

12:25:02 SND E12 arrived at scene and reported that they had a one-story house with smoke and fire coming from the front of the structure, they were attacking the fire and assuming Groveland IC.

This was a vacant home with chain-link fence surrounding the property and had powerlines running from the pole to the residence overhead. After SND E12 had spotted in front of the house, SND E12 FF noted impingement and arcing on the powerline and informed their Captain. The Captain had the Engineer pull the engine forward, out of the fall path of the impinged line. This repositioning also served to move them closer to the hydrant found across the intersection at San Jacinto.

(12:27) SND B6 assumed command and reassigned SND E12 Captain to Fire Attack (FA).

(12:28) SND T12 arrived at scene and spotted approximately three car lengths behind SND E12, safely away from the overhead wires on the ALPHA side. The IC gave SND T12 the assignment to perform Ventilation and Utilities.

As is evidenced in cell phone video captured by a neighbor, (link below) the following occurred simultaneously:

- The overhead wires were subject to extreme heat from a flashover just prior to units arriving. The heat burned the utility service line that ran to the ALPHA/BRAVO corner of the 1 story roof.
- SND E12 FF (recognizing the need for bolt cutters to gain entry to the residence) initially turned to retrieve them off the Engine, then made the decision to retrieve them from SND T12. The decision helped him narrowly escape an arcing electrical down line falling due to fire conditions. Arcing several times, it came to rest on the metal fence, a parked car and spanned the street between SND E12 and SND T12 potentially charging the chain-link fence.

Several individuals verbally communicate the down line, including the SND T12 Engineer (ENG) FF and civilians. The IC immediately broadcast the hazard on command and tac, conducted a Personal Accountability Report (PAR) and advised each incoming unit as they arrived at scene. The IC also alerted firefighters on scene by utilizing the siren on their apparatus.

The Engineers banner taped the hazard, including the energized fence. SDG&E electrical crews had a delay in response due to several other down lines in the city resulting from a recent high wind event. The IC requested their incident be made priority.

SND E26 Captain and the RIC team create a physical barrier from anyone attempting to enter the step potential zones. National City (NAT) B57 arrived shortly after to assume safety until SDGE could safely mitigate the electrical hazard.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS AND CHALLENGES

- Immediate recognition by first-in crew of the hazard
- Excellent communication before and after the power line fell by crews on scene
- Proper placement of apparatus concerning electrical hazard
- Use of banner tape and personnel to restrict access into step and touch potential zones
- Because of needing access to the structure, crews could not conduct complete exclusion of personnel the entire length of the chain-link fence
- Delay of SDG&E

INJURIES/DAMAGES

- No injuries reported

AREAS FOR REVIEW

- Consideration from the IC to use the new “Emergency Radio Tones” policy guideline per bulletin 20-143 beep tones automated by Dispatch
 - *Life Hazard events may precipitate the activation of three short beeps followed by an announcement of the hazard. For example, “Metro with an emergency announcement. There is major flooding and live wires down in the area of Broadway and Harbor Drive.” This may be initiated by the incident commander, ECDC battalion chief, or fire dispatch supervisor.*
- Hazard identification:
 - Utilize three levels of banner tape to prevent personnel from entering hazard area
 - Assign a unit or individual with the sole task of preventing people from entering the hazard area
 - Make every attempt to banner tape area off without using the fence to tie off banner tape because of touch potential on fence
- Remember to identify the pole number or adjacent pole numbers
- Treat any down line as live until verified by SDG&E
- Treat the ENTIRE metal fence as energized
- Notify SDPD via Dispatch and/or in person to notify their personnel on scene
- Broadcast via PA on apparatus to alert civilians and members of the Media

Reviewed by the Occupation Health and Safety Committee’s investigation sub-committee.

Lead investigators:

Captain Chad Allison

Battalion Chief Chris Babler

Battalion Chief David Picone

PHOTOS / VIDEO

[SDFD - Groveland Incident - Wires Down](#)



A Board of Review has not approved this Summary Report. It is intended as a safety and training tool, an aid to preventing future occurrences, and to inform interested parties. Because it is published on a short time frame, the information contained herein is subject to revision as further investigation is conducted and additional information is developed