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State Forester



# COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA

## Department of Forestry

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### MEMORANDUM

**DATE:** March 29, 2024  
**TO:** Whom it may concern  
**FROM:**  
**CC:**  
**SUBJECT:** Near Miss, Luray Complex

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On Friday, March 22nd, 2024, VDOF field staff from the \_\_\_\_\_ Region responded to a large brushfire in Luray, Virginia. This hand crew was tasked with establishing a handline from the edge of the field located off Route 340 just North of the 340 Landfill (38.62770, -78.59355) up Browns Creek following the fire edge and tying into the USFS Browns Hollow Trail that continues up the Southeast side of the mountain of New Market gap on Route 211.

Two trucks transporting DOF firefighters were staged in the green field. Hand tools scratched containment lines around both trucks, and work commenced up the creek. Before leaving the trucks in the field, the fire's edge was not in sight, and the firefighters were not concerned with the trucks being threatened during their shift. At the end of the shift, the firefighters returned to the trucks to see that the green field was on fire and burning around the trucks. Containment lines established before work began had held and saved the trucks from being consumed. Firefighters used the remaining water on one of the trucks to spray their way out of the field to route 340 and return to the Cooters ICP.

No property was damaged, and critical thinking before the commencement of work saved two large pieces of VDOF equipment.

Upon returning to the incident command post, the near miss was reported to Division Supervise \_\_\_\_\_

Initials

Enclosure

document1; file designation

Near Miss Narrative

Squad Boss

Crew:

3/22/2024:

We received our orders for the day: install handline on south side of fire from the east to the west. That would meet an existing foot/hiking trail along the south side of Browns Run (Browns Run Trail) and we were to improve the trail into a fireline in case the fire was to jump Browns Run stream.

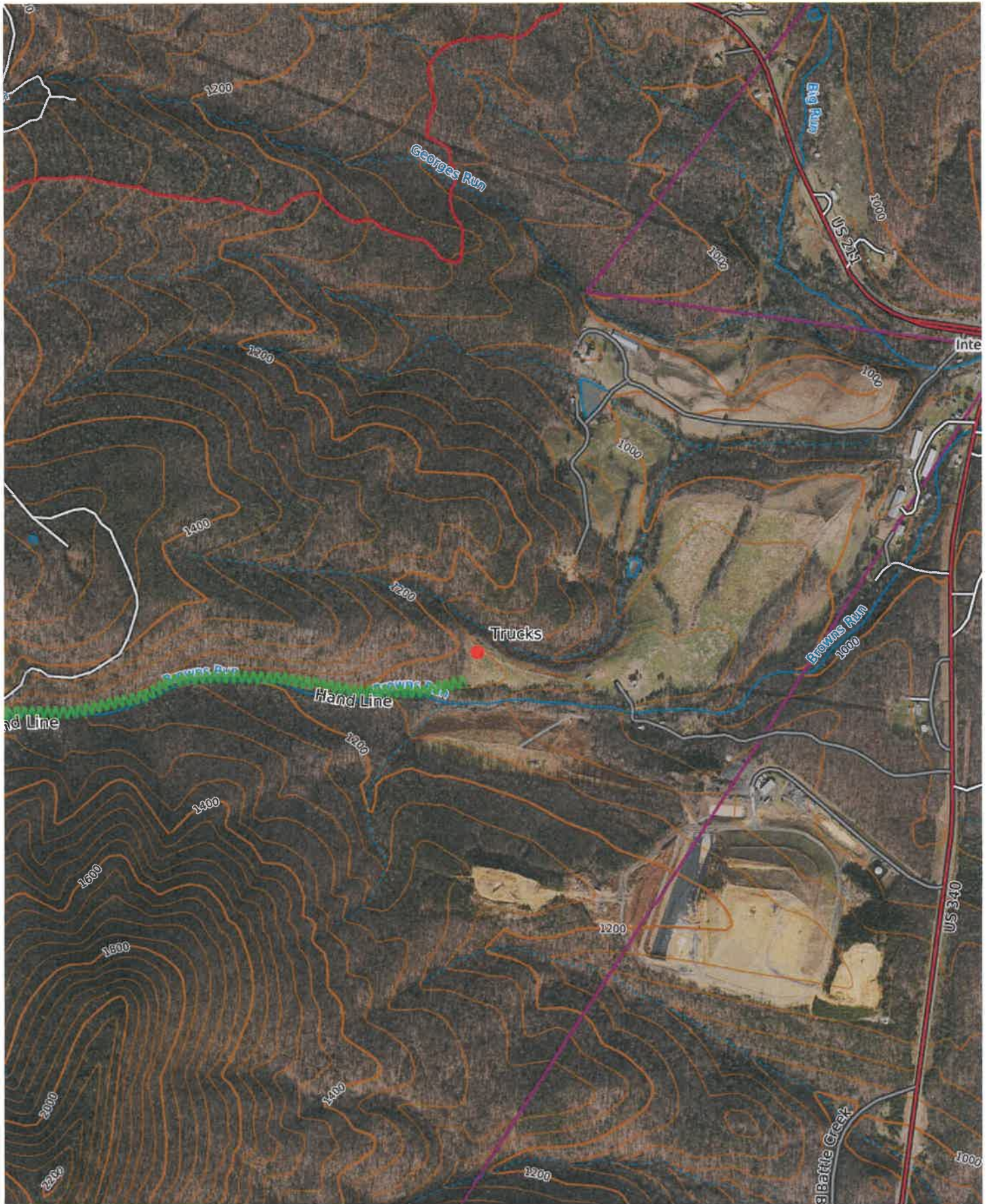
We arrived at our starting point, a green pasture north of the Battle Creek Landfill, and parked our two DOF trucks in the safest possible place (northwest corner of the field under a large tree with green grass about 3" tall) immediately blew the dead leaves that were under and around our trucks with a leaf blower. As we were getting our gear ready for the day, we noticed that the fire was active to the north of our trucks in another creek bottom that could possibly come up the slope to our trucks by the end of the day (no fireline was between us). We discussed this as a crew and decided to install a small handline around the trucks down to bare soil.

During the day we completed about 2.7 miles of hand and blower fireline (we were tired). At the end of the day a Forest Service UTV got us out to Sonny's Place via a trail they had been monitoring that day. Our Division Sup. picked us up and took us to IC where got another DOF employee to drive us back to the trucks.

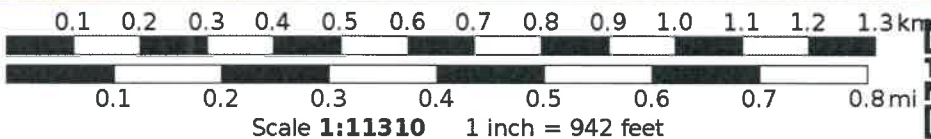
Upon arrival the fire was active in the field moving from the south to the north (burning spotty in widely spaced broomstraw with flame lengths of 8-10 feet). The three of us got our packs and led through the least intense part of the fire on the north side of the field. We had to cross the flame front and then were in the black.

At first sight the two trucks appeared undamaged and our handlines had held. However, as we got closer noticed that the fire had crossed the handline in front of his truck underneath the engine. He made a quick inspection under his truck and did not notice any damage. Both trucks started and we made a plan that I would lead out of the field with to operate the water hose when we had to cross the fire again to get out. knocked down the flames with approximately 15 gallons of water and then the tank was empty. We drove through the coolest part of the fire front that had made. It appears that no damage was done to either vehicle but they will be inspected further.





Mercator Projection  
WGS84  
UTM Zone 17S  





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