



Ventura County Professional Firefighters

Press Release

VCPFA Members Released From Burn Center

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Two of the three firefighters injured in the Jesusita fire on May 6th have been released from the Grossman Burn Center.

Captain Brian Bulger, a 30-year veteran was released on Friday afternoon after being treated for smoke inhalation that occurred while he was participating in the rescue of two other trapped firefighters.

Captain Ron Topolinski, a 28-year veteran was released on Saturday afternoon following a Friday surgery for second degree burns to his hands, forearms and face. Both members are recovering at home.

Firefighter Robert Lopez remains in the burn unit with second and third degree burns to his shoulders, back, face, and ears as well as lacerations to his face caused when a sliding glass door imploded during the fire.

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The three injured members were part of a Ventura County Fire Department strike team assigned to structure protection in the Spyglass Ridge road area above Santa Barbara. Captain Topolinski and Firefighter Lopez of Engine Company 54 were protecting a house in steep terrain with limited access and poor water supplies.

Fire conditions outside the house deteriorated rapidly, and with water running low they decided to retreat inside the house and don air masks for protection. With fire completely surrounding the structure the windows and glass doors soon failed, lacerating Firefighter Lopez and drawing fire into the house from multiple directions. The two firefighters were forced to abandon the structure and expose themselves to fire while making a run to their fire engine a distance away.

A short time later the strike team leader and his assistant arrived after driving through near zero-visibility conditions. Captain Bulger, the assistant strike team leader, exited the SUV command vehicle to assist Firefighter Lopez and Captain Topolinski, and in doing so suffered smoke inhalation. All three were then driven by the strike team leader to a neighboring house where emergency treatment was begun by a Firefighter/Paramedic as the fire continued to burn around them. The injured firefighters were later transported to the hospital after the fire died down enough to safely bring in an ambulance.

The injured firefighters and the VCPFA want to thank the Grossman burn center doctors and staff for their excellent care, the many fire agencies and locals, and members of the public for their many well wishes and support.