

# ***CAL FIRE***



## **CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF FORESTRY AND FIRE PROTECTION NEVADA-YUBA-PLACER UNIT**

13760 Lincoln Way  
Auburn, CA 95603

## **INVESTIGATION REPORT**

<b>INCIDENT NUMBER:</b>	17-CA-NEU-026269
<b>CASE NUMBER:</b>	17-2320-122
<b>CASE NAME:</b>	CASCADE
<b>DATE:</b>	October 8, 2017
<b>INCIDENT TYPE:</b>	Wildland Fire
<b>INCIDENT INVESTIGATORS:</b>	Mike RUFENACHT, Battalion Chief – NEU Chris VAN COR, Division Chief –SAC Karen VILLALOBOS, Battalion Chief - SAC Jeremy MONROE, Deputy Chief– SAC

**1 - VIOLATION:**

- 1 **None Observed**
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**2 - SUMMARY:**

On the morning of October 8<sup>th</sup>, 2017, the National Weather Service issued a Red Flag Warning for parts of Northern California including areas covered by the CAL FIRE Nevada Yuba Placer Unit. The National Weather Service predicted North and East winds 15 to 35 miles per hour with gusts 40 to 55 miles per hour with low humidity's and dry fuels. At 11:02 PM hours on Sunday October 8<sup>th</sup>, 2017, the Grass Valley Emergency Command Center (GVECC) received a report of a vegetation fire on Cascade Lane near Neptune Road. The initial report on conditions was 10-15 acres with an extreme rate of spread. At the initial time of the fire, the closest remote automated weather station (the Bangor RAWS weather station), was receiving wind gusts to 29 miles per hour. The Cascade Fire burned 9989 acres of land, destroyed 264 residences and outbuildings, and caused four civilian fatalities. The La Porte Fire started on the same day and north of the Cascade Fire in Butte County. The La Porte Fire burned 6151 acres and eventually merged with the Cascade Fire. Together the two fires burned 16140 acres and were managed as the Wind Incident.

1   **3 – SUBJECTS:**

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3   S-1   Pacific Gas and Electric Corporation (PG&E)

4           77 Beale Street

5           San Francisco, CA 94105

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7           *PG&E is the owner of the electrical utilities and power distribution lines serving*

8           *the residence at 13916 Cascade Way, Brown's Valley, California 95918.*

1 **4 – VICTIMS, WITNESSES:**

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3 V-1 Jennifer JOHNSON

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SEX: [REDACTED] HAIR: [REDACTED] EYES: [REDACTED]

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HT: nkWT: [REDACTED] DOB: [REDACTED]

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CDL: [REDACTED]

9

Cell Phone: [REDACTED]

10

*Reported the Cascade Fire and her home was burned in the fire*

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12 V-2 Matthew JOHNSON

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SEX: [REDACTED] HAIR: [REDACTED] EYES: [REDACTED]

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HT: [REDACTED] WT: [REDACTED] DOB: [REDACTED]

17

RACE: [REDACTED]

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CDL: [REDACTED]

19

Cell Phone: [REDACTED]

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*Husband of Jennifer JOHNSON*

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1 V-3 Greg DANILYAN

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4 SEX: [REDACTED] HAIR: [REDACTED] EYES: [REDACTED]

5 HT: [REDACTED] WT: [REDACTED] DOB: [REDACTED]

6 RACE: [REDACTED]

7 CDL: [REDACTED]

8 Cell Phone: [REDACTED]

9 *Lives on Cascade Way and drove down Cascade Way before the fire had burned*  
10 *onto his property. DANILYAN's home and property also burned in the fire.*  
11

12 V-4 Janice RIDDLE

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15 SEX: [REDACTED] HAIR: [REDACTED] EYES: [REDACTED]

16 HT: [REDACTED] WT: [REDACTED] DOB: [REDACTED]

17 RACE: [REDACTED]

18 CDL: [REDACTED]

19 Home Phone: [REDACTED]

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1 V-5 Stanley Albert COOLIDGE

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4 SEX: [REDACTED] DOB: [REDACTED]

5 RACE: [REDACTED]

6 CDL: [REDACTED]

7 SSN: [REDACTED]

8 Stanley COOLIDGE and his fiancé Roseann HANNAH were reported missing  
9 and family members had last spoke with them via telephone as the fire was  
10 beginning to burn COOLIDGE's house. [REDACTED]

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14 V-6 Roseann Marie HANNAH

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17 SEX: [REDACTED] DOB: [REDACTED]

18 RACE: [REDACTED]

19 CDL: [REDACTED]

20 Stanley COOLIDGE and his fiancé Roseann HANNAH were reported missing  
21 and family members had last spoke with them via telephone as the fire was  
22 beginning to burn COOLIDGE's house. [REDACTED]

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1 V-6 David Patrick CULP

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SEX: [REDACTED]

DOB: [REDACTED]

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RACE: [REDACTED]

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CDL: [REDACTED]

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SSN: [REDACTED]

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13 V-7 Sandra Lou PICCIANO

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SEX: [REDACTED]

DOB: [REDACTED]

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RACE: [REDACTED]

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CDL: [REDACTED]

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*As documented in the Yuba County Coroner's Report (Attachment 14), a witness observed PICCIANO's vehicle crash in a field on the morning hours of the Cascade Fire on October 9, 2017. The witness was unable to get her out of the vehicle due to it being engulfed in flames.*

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**WITNESSES:**

W-1 Brent ROGERS

HFEO D2341- Heavy Fire Equipment Operator, CAL FIRE

NEU-13760 Lincoln Way

Auburn, CA 95603

Phone: (530) 889-0111

*HFEO ROGERS cut direct line on North edge of fire as it came off Cascade Way*

W-2 Mike RUFENACHT

Battalion Chief, CAL FIRE Nevada Yuba Placer Unit

13760 Lincoln Way,

Auburn, CA 95603

Cell Phone: [REDACTED]

Phone: (530) 889-0111

*Lead Investigator*

W-3 Chris VAN COR

Division Chief, CAL FIRE

PO Box 944246

Sacramento, CA 94244-2460

Cell Phone: [REDACTED]

Phone: 916) 653-5837

*Investigator*

1

2 W-4 Karen GOUGE

3 Battalion Chief, CAL FIRE

4 PO Box 944246

5 Sacramento, CA 94244-2460

6 Cell Phone: [REDACTED]

7 Phone: (916) 653-2195

8 *Investigator*

9

10 W-5 Jeremy MONROE

11 Assistant Chief, CAL FIRE

12 Sacramento, CA 94244-2460

13 Cell Phone: [REDACTED]

14 *Investigator*

15

16 W-6 Nathan BARCKLAY

17 Battalion Chief, CAL FIRE Amador El Dorado Unit

18 2840 Mt. Danaher Rd.

19 Camino, CA 95709

20 Cell Phone: [REDACTED]

21 Phone: (530) 647-5293

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1 O-1 Jim NOLT  
2 Electrical Mechanical and Corrosion Engineer, JH Nolt and Associates  
3 107 Blue Canyon Way  
4 Folsom, CA 95630-2003  
5 Office Phone: (916) 988-2256  
6 *Engineer used on the Cascade*  
7  
8 O-2 Ken ODOM  
9 AT&T  
10 PHONE (530)671-7202  
11 *AT&T crew member who helped cut and take AT&T lines (Evidence 5,6)*  
12  
13 O-3 Rick LOPEZ  
14 AT&T  
15 PHONE (530)680-3892  
16 *AT&T crew member who helped cut and take AT&T lines (Evidence 5,6)*  
17  
18 O-4 Frank STRICKFIELD  
19 PG&E  
20 PHONE (530)320-8298  
21 *PG&E crew member who helped cut and take the PG&E conductors*  
22 *(Evidence 7,8,9,)*  
23  
24 O-5 David PATTERSON Jr.  
25 PG&E  
26 PHONE (530)693-0448  
27 *PG&E crew member who helped cut and take the PG&E conductors*  
28 *(Evidence 7,8,9,)*

**5 – EVIDENCE:**

EVIDENCE 1- Weatherhead

EVIDENCE 2-Electrical main panel with meter

EVIDENCE 3-Electrical panel to 5<sup>th</sup> wheel trailer

EVIDENCE 4-Unknown glass or sap material found in origin area

EVIDENCE 5-Communication line from south utility pole to north utility pole

EVIDENCE 6-Communication line from north utility pole to drop pole near 5<sup>th</sup>  
wheel trailer

EVIDENCE 7-East leg conductor from south utility pole to north utility pole

EVIDENCE 8-West leg conductor from south utility pole to north utility pole

EVIDENCE 9-Drop line from north utility pole to drop pole at 5<sup>th</sup> wheel trailer

EVIDENCE 10-PG&amp;E Electronic Data

EVIDENCE 11-NOLT Engineers report and photos

**6 – PHYSICAL CONDITION OR CONDITIONS:**

Fuels in the Cascade Fire area were comprised of a combination of heavy understory of shrub and oak, heavy brush fields, and grass and oak woodland. Elevation ranges from 300 to 1500 feet, and topography varies from flat ground to slopes around 35%.

Date: Sunday, October 08, 2017

Time: 11:00 PM

Weather Station	READER RANCH	BANGOR
(SEE ATTACHMENT 18-Weather Data)		
Temperature:	61 degrees Fahrenheit	68 degrees Fahrenheit
Dew Point:	13 degrees Fahrenheit	15 degrees Fahrenheit
Relative Humidity:	15 percent	13 percent
Wind Speed:	10 miles per hour	6 miles per hour
Peak Wind Speed:	24 miles per hour	29 miles per hour
Peak Wind Direction:	67 degrees	75 degrees
Fuel Temperature:	59 degrees Fahrenheit	64 degrees Fahrenheit
Instrument Used:	RAWS Station 41809	RAWS Station 41201
GPS Coordinates:	39 18.13/121 07.02	39 23.51, /121 23.10
Elevation:	1968 feet above sea level	803 feet above sea level

On October 8, 2017 at 4:59 AM the National Weather Service Sacramento Weather Forecast Office issued a Red Flag Warning for October 8 through October 9<sup>th</sup>, 2017. The National Weather Service listed fire weather concerns of North to East wind 15 to 35 miles per hour (mph), gusts 40 to 55 mph, low humidity, and dry fuels (Attachment 18).

1    **7 – VEHICLE/EQUIPMENT:**

2    No vehicles or motorized equipment contributed to the start of the fire.

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1 **8 – PROPERTY:**

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3 The Cascade Fire consumed 9989 acres of land, destroyed 264 residences and

4 outbuildings, and caused four civilian fatalities. The origin area was located on Cascade

5 Way in Browns Valley California. Cascade Way is a rural dirt road with parcels ranging from

6 5-20 acres. The origin area is located at the address of 13916 Cascade Way, and the Yuba

7 County Assessor Parcel Number is 044-120-003-000. (See attachment 6-Yuba County

8 Property Information). The parcel is 20 acres in size with vegetation consisting of annual

9 grasses and oak woodlands. The parcel had a 1,024 square foot garage built in 1982 and

10 multiple travel trailer/fifth wheel/ RV's/ and cars on the property. Refer to the Cascade

11 Incident Damage Inspection Summary (Attachment 19) for the complete damage inspection

12 report.

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## 1 9 – NARRATIVE:

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3 At 11:02 PM on Sunday, October 8, 2017 the Grass Valley Emergency Command  
4 Center (GVECC) received a report of a vegetation fire on Cascade Lane near Neptune  
5 Road in the Browns Valley area of Yuba County. The initial report of the fire was from  
6 Jennifer JOHNSON from [REDACTED] (ATTACHMENT 1- JOHNSON 911 Call) J.  
7 JOHNSON told 911 dispatchers the power went out and she saw a fire outside on the  
8 property. She said the fire was in the grass and going directly towards her house. J.  
9 JOHNSON described the fire as the size of a house. The dispatcher asked if the  
10 powerlines were down and J. JOHNSON said she did not know, but it is really windy. The  
11 dispatcher asked if the fire was behind her house, J. JOHNSON said it is in the front and  
12 about 100 ft. from the house. When asked by the dispatcher if she knew how the fire  
13 started, J. JOHNSON said, I have no idea, and J. JOHNSON told the dispatcher she was  
14 driving towards Marysville Road to leave the area.

15 On October 9, 2017 at about 1:09 AM I (Battalion Chief M. RUFENACHT) was  
16 dispatched to the Cascade fire by the GVECC. I arrived at the Cascade fire about 2:03 AM  
17 and met with Fire Captain Specialist Karen Villalobos on Marysville Road near Collins Lake.  
18 We did not start looking for the origin due to the threat to public safety with the erratic fire  
19 conditions and strong winds. Instead, we drove down Loma Rica Road to assist with  
20 evacuations of citizens who were unable to get out of the fire area. On Loma Rica Road, I  
21 encountered the fire burning in a very erratic manner. The fire I encountered was the left  
22 (South)flank of the fire and the wind shifted directions multiple times creating visibility issues  
23 while driving down the road.

24 After assisting with evacuations, VILLALOBOS and I returned to Cascade Way to  
25 search for the area of origin. The winds and erratic fire behavior had subsided and  
26 VILLALOBOS and I searched for a cause along Cascade Way. Near 13852 Cascade way I  
27 found Dozer Transport 2341 (D2341) parked and fire hose on the ground where crews had  
28 attempted to start a hose lay off Cascade Way going to the east. I met CAL FIRE Heavy  
29 Fire Equipment Operator Brent ROGERS the operator on D2341 and asked him what he  
30 had done that morning. ROGERS said he arrived on Cascade way, unloaded his dozer and  
31 cut line from Cascade Way going west on the north end of the fire. ROGERS said he was  
32 on the fire edge as he cut the line. ROGERS said he also cut the line to the east off



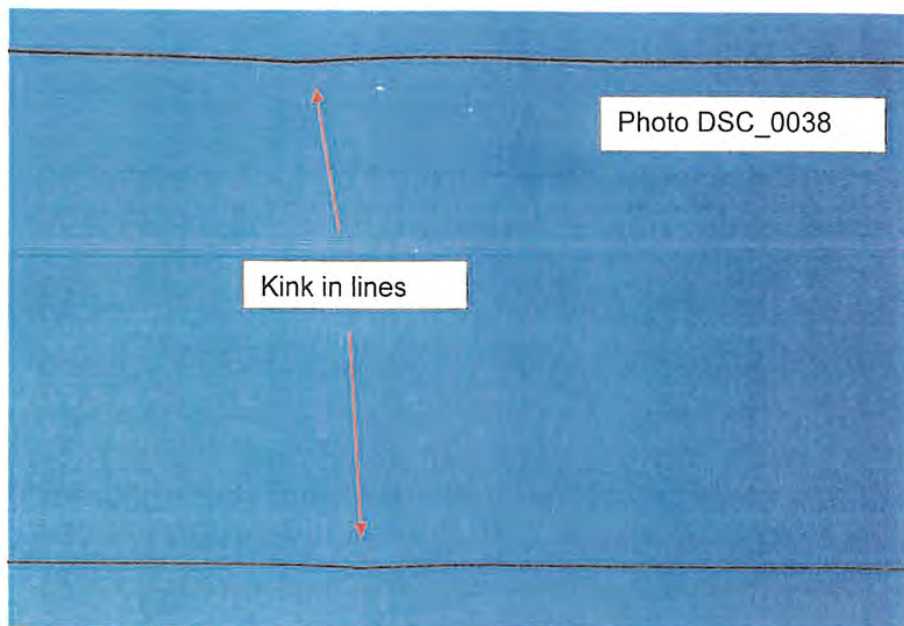
1 Cascade Way. After looking in the area along Cascade Way for about 30 minutes I decided  
2 to leave the Cascade fire because of the low light conditions, not finding any direct evidence  
3 along Cascade Way, and not knowing the size or damage of the McCourtney and Lobo  
4 fires. VILLALOBOS and I left at about 5:30 AM to try and secure any evidence which may  
5 be destroyed on the other fires. The wind along Cascade Way had subsided by 5:30 AM.

6 On October 9, 2017 at about 9:00 AM, VILLALOBOS received a voice message from  
7 Battalion Chief Landon HACK (B2313) regarding witness information from Matthew  
8 JOHNSON, the husband of Jennifer JOHNSON. At about 9:46 AM, VILLALOBOS  
9 interviewed M. JOHNSON via cell phone and agreed to meet him at his property later that  
10 morning. At about 11:30 AM VILLALOBOS met with M. JOHNSON at his property at [REDACTED]  
11 [REDACTED] (SEE ATTACHMENT 6) M. JOHNSON  
12 described what happened when the fire started as he had been told by his wife Jennifer  
13 JOHNSON. M. JOHNSON was not at the property when the fire occurred, but was at work  
14 as a Firefighter for the Yuba City Fire Department in Yuba City. M. JOHNSON said Jennifer  
15 JOHNSON was at home with their two kids. J. JOHNSON was watching TV when she  
16 heard a loud "POP" and the house lost power. J. JOHNSON looked outside toward the  
17 direction of the "shooting range" and saw a 20ft by 20ft or 30ft by 30ft fire burning. J.  
18 JOHNSON and the kids evacuated the house. After interviewing M. JOHNSON, he fed his  
19 livestock and left the property.

20 At about 12:00 PM VILLALOBOS (See Attachment 6 VILLALOBOS Supplemental)  
21 started looking for a possible fire origin on the JOHNSON property by identifying any  
22 damaged powerlines and/or trees in the powerlines. VILLALOBOS did not find any trees  
23 into the powerlines running above a shared barbed wire fence between the JOHNSON  
24 property and the RIDDLE property. The RIDDLE property at [REDACTED] is located  
25 north of the JOHNSON property (See Attachment 4). VILLALOBOS observed fire damage  
26 on the main power drop and electrical box at the JOHNSON's home. VILLALOBOS then  
27 looked for a possible fire origin on the RIDDLE property locating two powerlines appearing  
28 to hang differently than the other powerlines. VILLALOBOS observed the wood cross arm  
29 at the top of the power pole hanging at an angle and a separate low hanging powerline  
30 coming off the power pole running across the driveway and through tree branches towards  
31 a travel trailer. At the travel trailer VILLALOBOS observed fire damage to the travel trailer  
32 and an electrical box attached to a power pole. VILLALOBOS secured the JOHNSON

1 property at [REDACTED] and the RIDDLE property at [REDACTED] by  
2 placing flagging across driveways. At the RIDDLE driveway VILLALOBOS observed a cut  
3 lock on the gate. Next VILLALOBOS walked along Cascade Way. VILLALOBOS did not  
4 find any damaged powerlines or trees into the powerlines.

5 I arrived back at the scene at about 5:00PM on October 9, 2017, and VILLALOBOS  
6 had been on Cascade way since about 12:00 PM. Assisted by VILLALOBOS, I started  
7 searching along Cascade Way for a fire cause and origin. Fire pattern indicators along  
8 Cascade Way identified the spread of the fire coming from the area of the RIDDLE or  
9 JOHNSON properties advancing east toward Cascade Way. Advancing indicators were  
10 also observed on the east side of Cascade Way moving east, from Cascade Way along the  
11 east side of the roadway. I checked the powerlines along east side of Cascade Way looking  
12 for any damage to the lines or equipment. I did not observe downed lines or any branches  
13 or vegetation in contact with powerlines along Cascade Way. VILLALOBOS showed me  
14 the powerlines on the RIDDLE property she observed earlier in the day. Using binoculars, I  
15 was able to see a mark on the east and west leg conductors. I was not able to identify what  
16 the mark was from the ground, but the marks looked in very close proximity to each other,  
17 and the conductors also appeared to have a kink in the line and line sag. I advised  
18 VILLALOBOS the lines were something we would need to rule out, and we continued  
19 looking at microscale and macroscale fire pattern indicators on the RIDDLE and JOHNSON  
20 Properties. At about 10:00 PM VILLALOBOS left the scene. I decided we would need to  
21 maintain scene security on a 24-hour basis until we were done with the origin and cause  
22 investigation. I remained at the scene overnight for scene security along Cascade Way at  
23 [REDACTED].



1  
2 On Tuesday October 10, 2017 at about 7:30 AM while at a coffee shop in Marysville,  
3 VILLALOBOS was contacted by Marty REEVES. REEVES said his grandfather (Dean  
4 RIDDLE) owned the RIDDLE property. REEVES told VILLALOBOS Dean RIDDLE passed  
5 away and the family had been cleaning up the property. REEVES said he visited the  
6 property two weeks ago, and no one lives on the property. REEVES said he was unaware  
7 of any problems with the powerlines. VILLALOBOS finished talking with REEVES and  
8 returned to the scene. At about 9:00 AM VILLALOBOS relieved me. At about 9:30 AM  
9 Chief Jeremy MONROE arrived at the scene. VILLALOBOS and MONROE continued  
10 looking for the origin area on the RIDDLE and JOHNSON Properties. Analyzing fire pattern  
11 indicators, VILLALOBOS and MONROE determined the general origin area (GOA) as the  
12 RIDDLE property near the powerlines and placed flagging to mark the fire pattern  
13 indicators.

14 On Tuesday October 10, 2017 at about 4:17 PM M. JOHNSON arrived at his  
15 property to feed his livestock and talked to VILLALOBOS. (See attachment 6-VILLALOBOS  
16 supplemental) M. JOHNSON told VILLALOBOS the RIDDLE gate was known to be locked  
17 shut. The shooting range was last used about two weeks ago. PG&E inspected the  
18 powerlines in the area about one or two weeks ago. The last time M. JOHNSON saw  
19 anyone on the RIDDLE property was about one month ago. During this time, M. Johnson

1 was told by the RIDDLE family that someone was stealing from the RIDDLE property. M.  
2 JOHNSON stated Janis RIDDLE was the grandmother and Robert REEVES was a family  
3 member.

4 At about 6:00PM MONROE left the scene. At about 6:30 PM Gold Country Security  
5 arrived for scene security and was given instructions to not allow anyone on the RIDDLE or  
6 JOHNSON properties. At about 8:00PM VILLALOBOS left the scene.

7 On Wednesday October 11, 2017 at about 6:30 AM VILLALOBOS arrived at the  
8 scene and relieved Gold Country Security. At about 9:15 AM BARCKLAY arrived at the  
9 scene to assist VILLALOBOS. At about 2:21 PM the CAL FIRE Survey Team  
10 (GAWRONSKI and DEGRAFF) arrived to look at the scene for the ability to map and  
11 document the scene with surveying equipment. The CAL FIRE Survey Team left at about  
12 3:00PM. At about 5:30 PM VILLALOBOS left the scene. At about 6:00PM Gold Country  
13 Security arrived for scene security and BARCKLAY left the scene.

14 On Thursday October 12, 2017 at about at about 6:30 AM VILLALOBOS arrived at  
15 the scene. Gold Country Security night shift left, and the day shift Gold Country Security  
16 arrived at about 7:00AM. At about 7:45 AM VILLALOBOS conducted a phone interview  
17 with J. JOHNSON to ask more questions. (See attachment 6-VILLALOBOS Supplemental)  
18 In summary, J. JOHNSON was up late watching TV while sitting on the couch. While  
19 watching TV, she heard what sounded like a tree branch hitting her house. Then the power  
20 went out and she saw a glow on the wall inside the house. She looked outside through the  
21 window blinds and saw a fire at the shooting range. The fire appeared to be burning in a line  
22 moving toward her house and was yellow/orange in color. After she saw the fire, J.  
23 JOHNSON got her two kids in the car and drove to the end of the driveway where she  
24 called 911 to report the fire. After reporting the fire, the JOHNSON family left the area.  
25 After evacuating her property, J. JOHNSON returned to her property with M. JOHNSON  
26 around 2:00 AM to check on the house. On the day of the fire, J. JOHNSON's daughter was  
27 outside walking her pig. Her son stayed inside the house because it was too windy to be  
28 outdoors. During the daytime, J. JOHNSON never noticed an interruption in power service.  
29 J. JOHNSON told VILLALOBOS, neither of her children had ever played with fire. She also  
30 told VILLALOBOS neither her or M. JOHNSON smoked, and she was unaware of anyone  
31 who wanted to hurt her or her family. J. JOHNSON told VILLALOBOS, from inside the  
32 living room of her home she could not see the workshop located on the RIDDLE property.

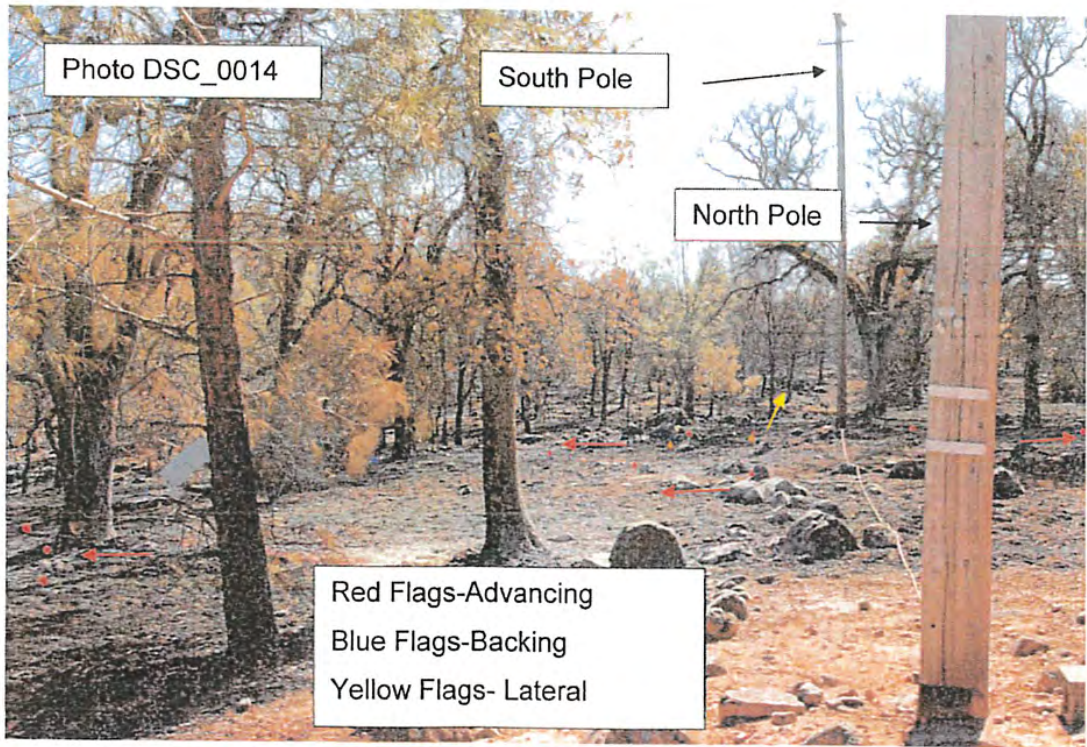
1 The last time J. JOHNSON saw anyone on the RIDDLE property was about a month ago,  
2 but she could not remember who it was. About two weeks prior to the fire starting, she saw  
3 PG&E driving the roads in the area.

4 On Thursday October 12, 2017, at about 1:30PM I flew over the scene and took  
5 photos. These photos are identified in the Aerial Photo Log. (Attachment 25-Aerial  
6 photos).

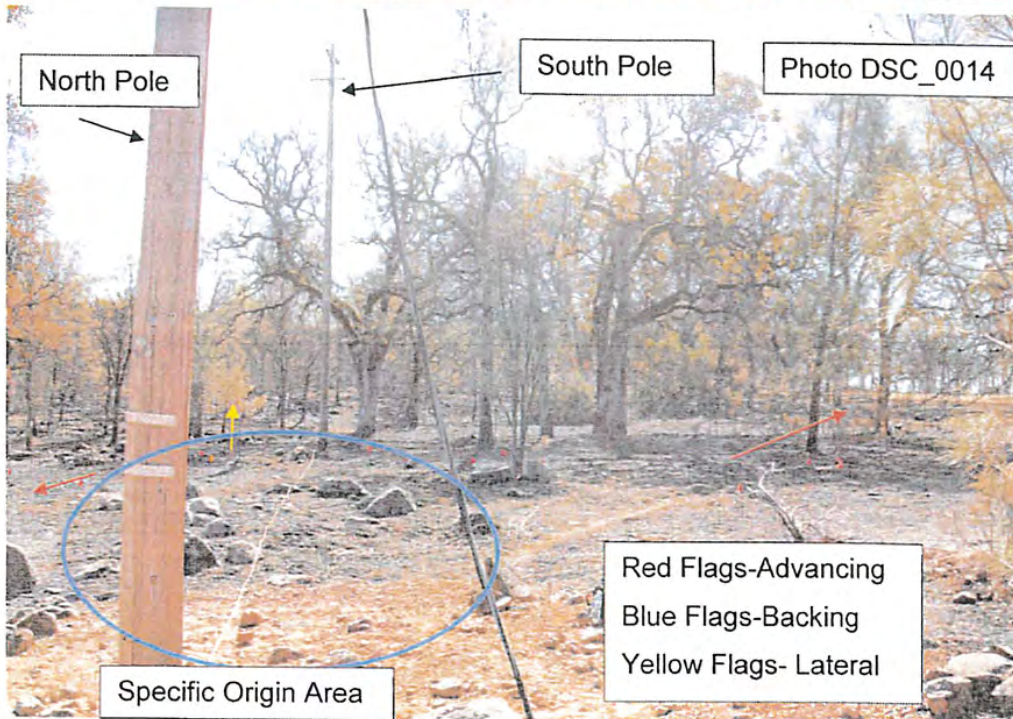
7 Gold Country Security completed a shift change at about 6:00 PM and maintained scene  
8 security.

9 On Friday October 13, 2017 at 10:15 AM I arrived with Jim NOLT (J H Nolt  
10 Associates Electrical, Mechanical, and Corrosions Engineers) and BARCKLAY at 13916  
11 Cascade Way. I continued adding fire pattern indicator flags, and verified the fire pattern  
12 indicator flags VILLALOBOS and MONROE had placed indicating the GOA. The fire  
13 pattern indicator flags underneath the north and south utility poles on the RIDDLE  
14 property showed advancing fire indicators going away from the area below the  
15 conductors in the dead and dry annual grasses. This area was identified as the Specific  
16 Origin Area (SOA).





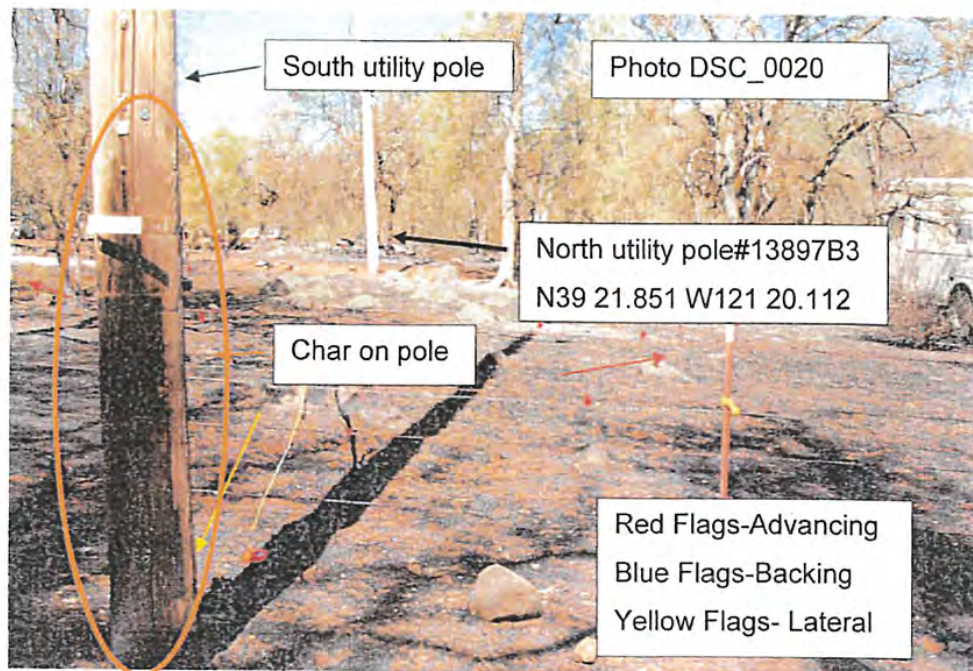
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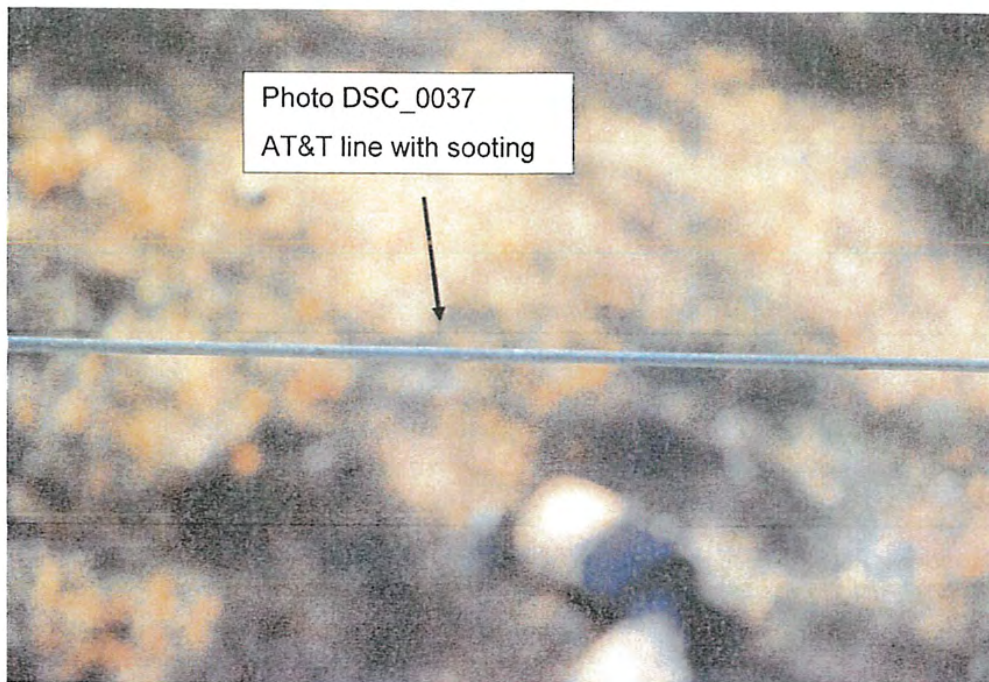
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1 NOLT took measurements of the two utility poles. At 11:25 AM B/C VAN COR  
2 arrived at the scene with a Cyrus Tree Service crew. The Cyrus crew was brought in for  
3 their bucket truck. NOLT went up in the bucket truck to get an elevated view of the  
4 utility equipment. After NOLT came down, I went up in the bucket to view the  
5 equipment and take pictures. We did not touch the conductors or equipment and only  
6 made a visual examination of the equipment for the investigation.

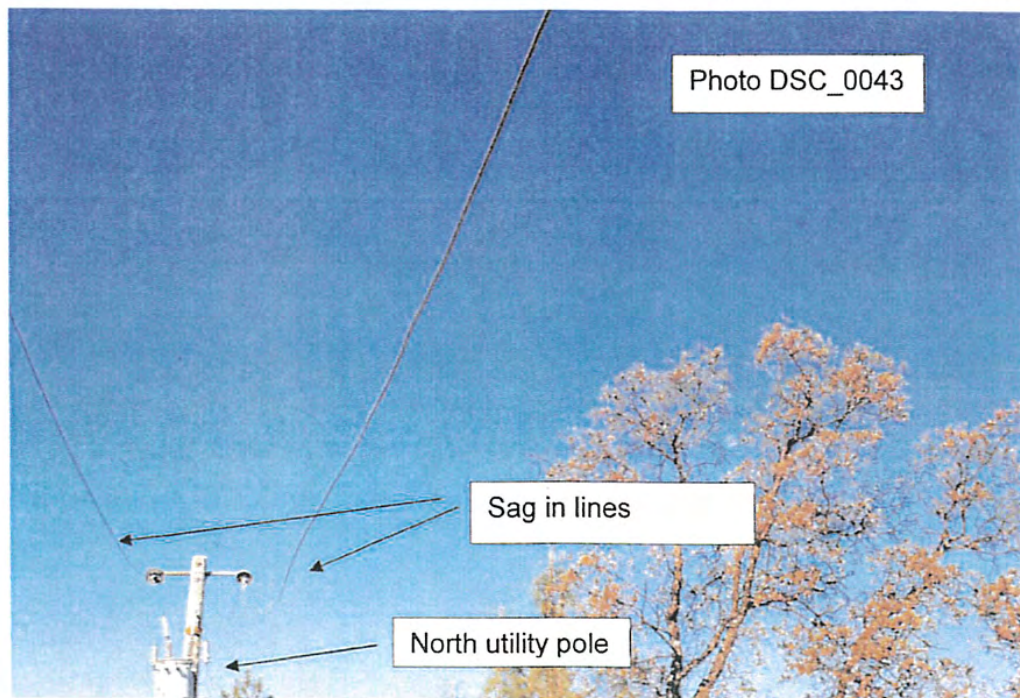


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8 Examining the lines from the bucket truck I observed the AT&T communication lines  
9 had sooting on them. I could not visually see any damage to the AT&T communication  
10 lines attached between the two poles.



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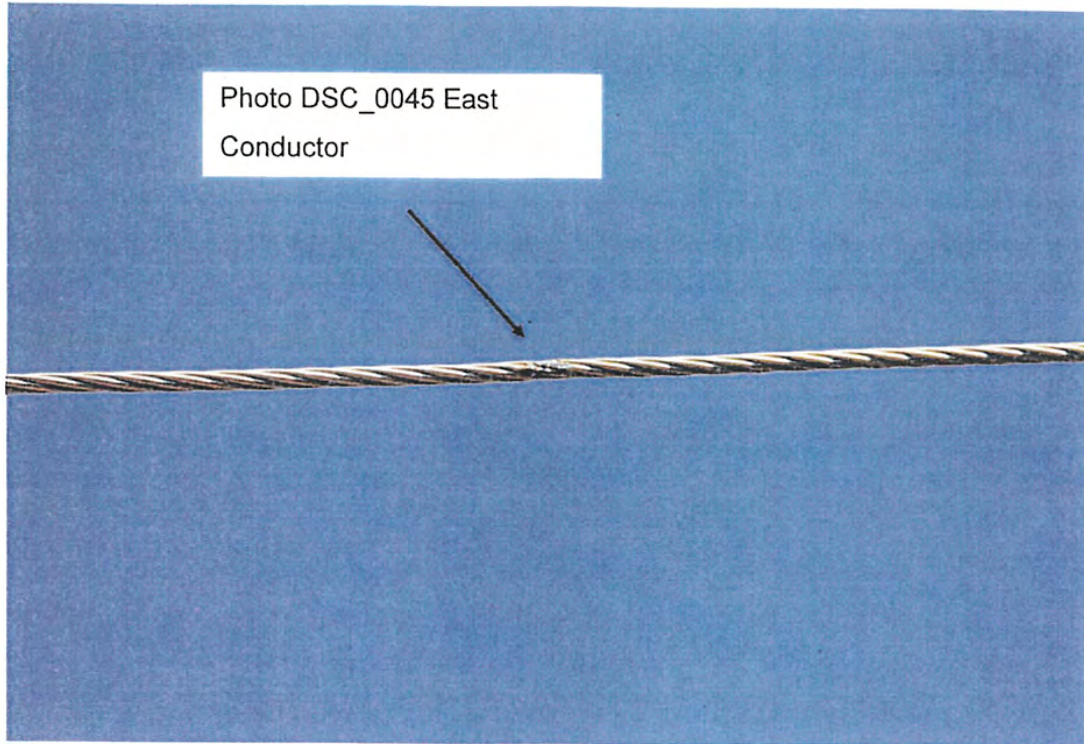
2 Examining the PG&amp;E conductors the from the bucket truck, I observed sag in the lines.



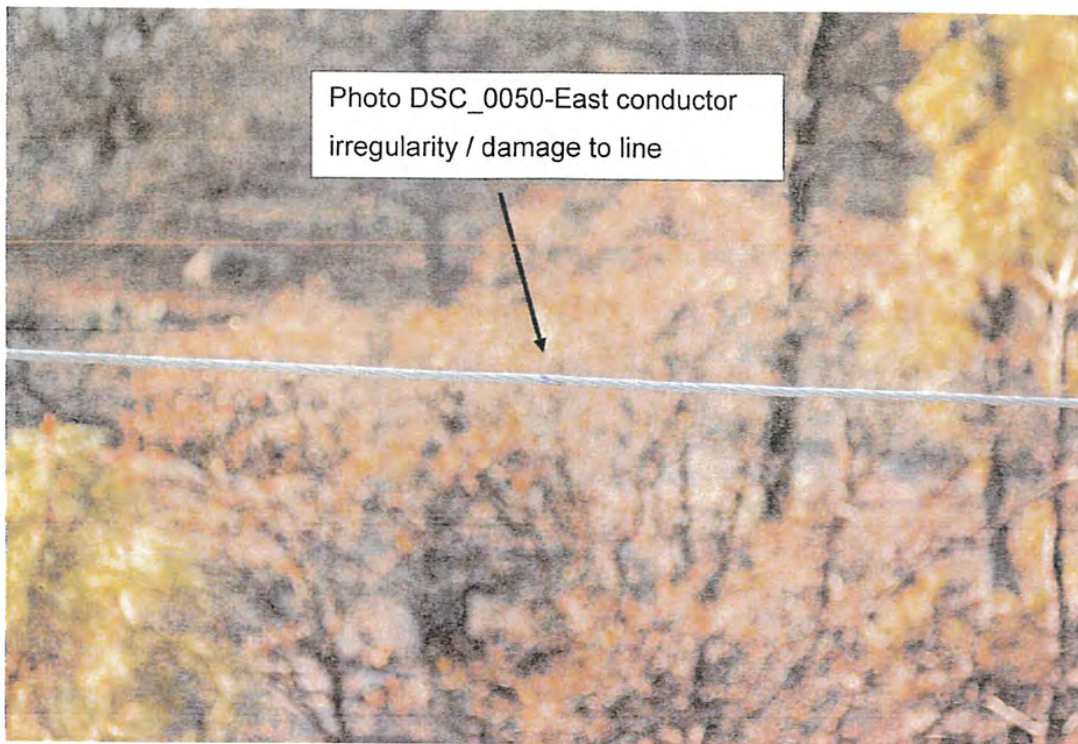
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- 1 From the bucket truck, I observed and photographed an irregularity on both the east  
2 and west conductors. The irregularities appeared to be damage to the lines. The  
3 damage appeared to be close to the same distance between the north and south utility  
4 poles. Jim NOLT completed an independent report of the electrical equipment at the  
5 scene (Attachment -7).



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2 NOLT and I examined the well house to the RIDDLE property. Fire pattern indicators  
3 showed the fire moving toward the well house from the area of the north and south  
4 utility poles on the RIDDLE property. NOLT examined the well house electrical to rule  
5 the well house out as the cause of the fire (See Attachment 7 – NOLT Report). The well  
6 house was locked, and we cut the lock to gain access to the small metal enclosure.  
7 The inside of the well house was not consumed by fire (See photo DSC\_0060).

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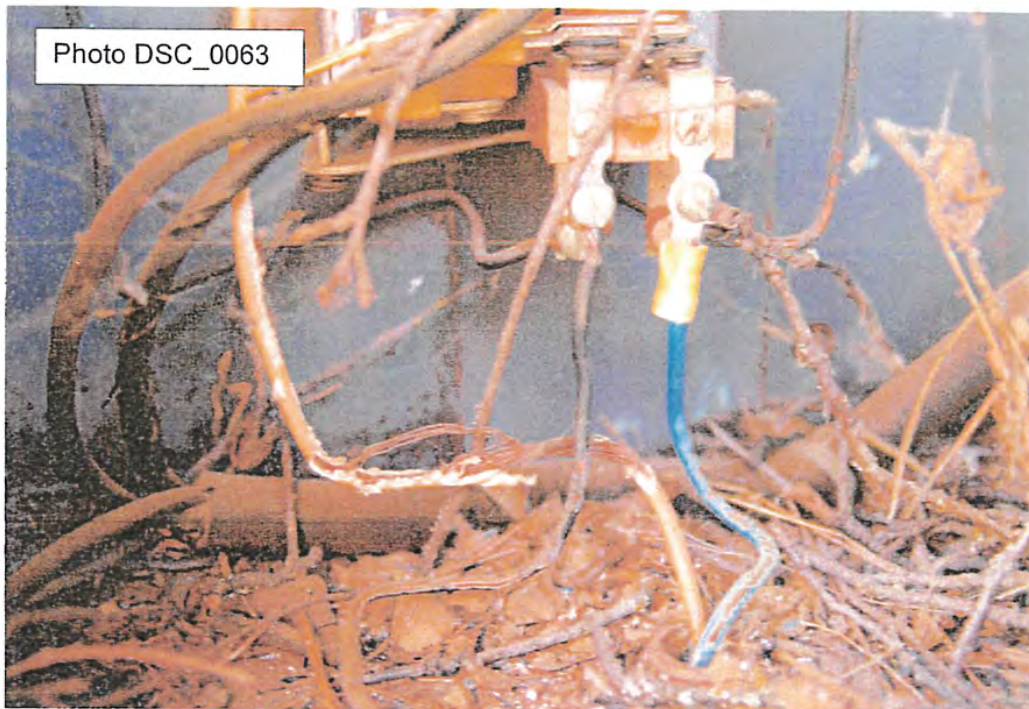
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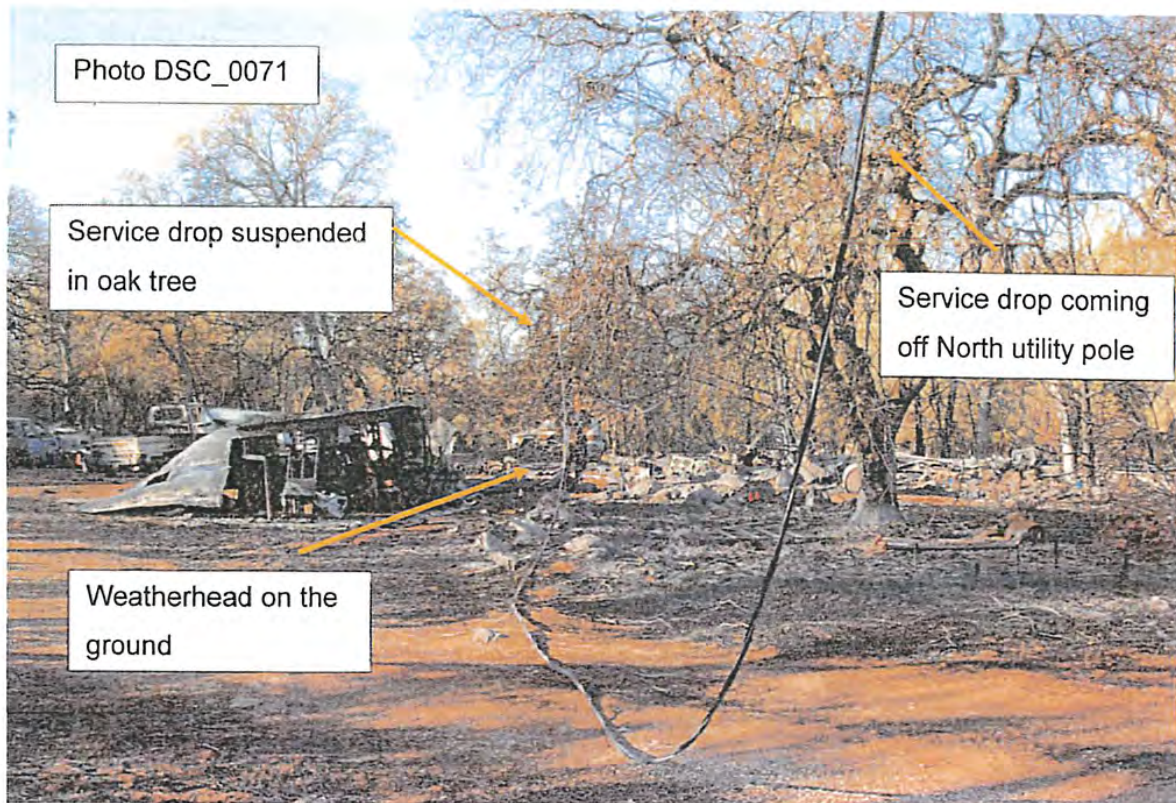


- 1  
2 The electrical panel inside of the well house appeared to be weathered and damaged  
3 by rodents (see photo DSC\_0063).  
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2 NOLT examined the electrical (See NOLT report attachment 7) and the well shed was  
3 closed and sealed with plastic ties at the lock hasp.  
4 NOLT and I checked the drop line coming off the north utility pole going to the  
5 weatherhead near the 5<sup>th</sup> wheel trailer. The service drop came off the pole and was  
6 lying on the ground (See photo DSC\_0071). From the ground, the service drop went up  
7 off the ground held by an oak tree and was found near the weatherhead by the 5<sup>th</sup>  
8 wheel trailer.

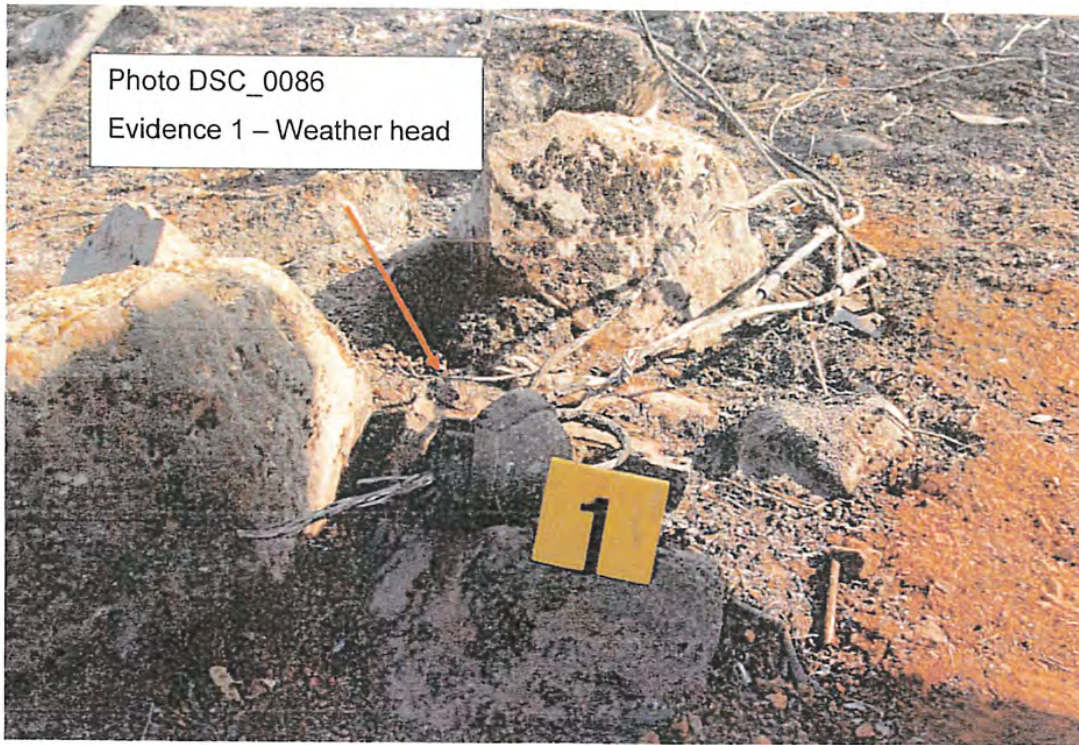




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I was unable to locate any tree branches on the drop line which would suggest the tree caused the drop line to contact the ground. I was unable to locate any limb damage, charring, pitting, or staining on the tree which would have been indicative of a live conductor making contact with the tree. The weatherhead, electrical meter, and electrical panel to the 5<sup>th</sup> wheel trailer were collected as evidence and sent to Anamet Inc. for further laboratory testing due to the extent of fire damage to the equipment. NOLT also looked at this equipment for analysis (See NOLT report - Attachment 7).





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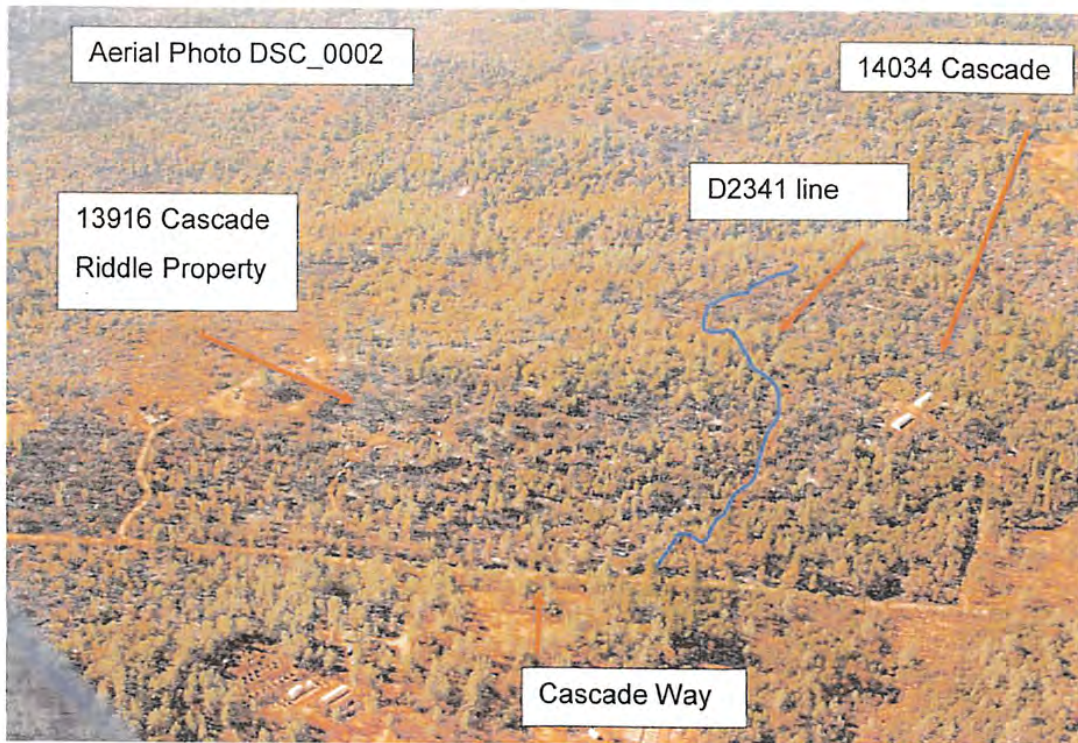
1  
2 Following the wiring from the service drop to the electrical meter, I found wiring going to  
3 the 5<sup>th</sup> wheel and well house on the RIDDLE property. I was unable to locate any wiring  
4 going to the travel trailer or shop on the RIDDLE property.

5 On Friday October 13, 2017 at about 7:30 PM, I met with Janice RIDDLE at  
6 Neptune Rd. and Willow Glenn Rd. I asked RIDDLE when the last time she knew of  
7 anyone being on the property at [REDACTED] RIDDLE said the last time was  
8 Saturday October 7, 2017. RIDDLE said her Dad died and the family has been trying to  
9 get the property cleaned up and the old cars removed. I asked her if anyone smoked  
10 on the property and she said no. I asked her if there was any burning or mowing which  
11 had occurred recently. RIDDLE said no and said they didn't do any of that due to the  
12 dry conditions making it too dangerous this time of year. I asked RIDDLE which  
13 buildings had power running to them. RIDDLE said power only went to the 5th wheel  
14 trailer and well, nothing else had power. RIDDLE said her PG&E bill for the property  
15 was about \$4.00 a month. I asked her if they had any livestock on the property, and  
16 RIDDLE said there was no livestock on the property (See Attachment 8).

1           On Saturday October 14, 2017, at about 8:50 AM I checked the property at  
2   14034 Cascade Way to check the area around the marijuana cultivation building and  
3   power pole on the property. I first observed the two grow sheds flying over the area on  
4   October 12<sup>th</sup>. This property is down slope and north of the RIDDLE property. The  
5   property had burned and dozer line construction was between 14034 Cascade Way and  
6   the RIDDLE property at [REDACTED]. I had contacted Dozer 2341 (Operator  
7   Brent ROGERS) on the early morning of October 9, 2017 and asked ROGERS where  
8   the fire line was at when he arrived on Cascade Way. ROGERS said the fire was on  
9   the north side of the RIDDLES property at [REDACTED]. ROGERS said he cut  
10   line on the north of the RIDDLES property as the fire was backing down the hill.  
11   ROGERS said later that morning a crew came in and put fire on the ground north of his  
12   dozer line near 14034 Cascade. ROGERS said he was cutting direct line. the  
13   Marijuana cultivation buildings and power pole at 14034 Cascade Way were not  
14   involved in fire until suppression crews arrived and used fire to improve the line (See  
15   Aerial Photo DSC\_0002).

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3 At about 9:20 AM on Saturday October 14, 2017, I interviewed Greg DANILYAN  
4 at his residence at [REDACTED] (See Attachment 9) . DANILYAN said the fire  
5 was on the north side of the JOHNSON driveway, and had not crossed to the south side  
6 of the driveway. DANILYAN said the fire was about 100-200 feet from Cascade Way.  
7 DANILYAN did not give a size of the fire, and I asked him if it was windy and his  
8 response was "insanely windy". DANILYAN had to leave but met me again at the  
9 property at about 2:00PM. I gave DANILYAN my camera and asked DANILYAN to take  
10 a picture of where he saw the fire the night of October 8, 2017 when he was driving out.  
11 DANILYAN took a picture of the driveway to Matt and Jennifer JOHNSON's house. I  
12 asked DANILYAN if he drove through smoke on his way out on October 8, 2017 and  
13 DANILYAN said "no". The photo DANILYAN took is DSC\_0085, taken from Cascade  
14 Way looking west.



Photo DSC\_0085-Taken by DANILYAN

Driveway at [REDACTED] (JOHNSON property)



1  
2 On Saturday October 14, 2017 at about 10:00 AM I checked the electrical  
3 fencing on the JOHNSON property at [REDACTED] I first observed the  
4 electrical fencing on the night of October 9<sup>th</sup>, while providing scene security for the  
5 RIDDLE and JOHNSON properties. The electrical fencing was in need of repair as it  
6 had breaks in the fencing and was not intact like a functioning fence would be. West of  
7 the house I found the controller to the electric fence. The controller was unplugged and  
8 I was unable to locate an extension cord near the controller.

9 On Sunday October 15, 2017 at 9:00 AM the CAL FIRE Survey team arrived to  
10 document the scene using LIDAR and the Total Station measuring equipment.  
11 Once the CAL FIRE Survey Team had completed measuring the scene, I collected the  
12 following: (Evidence 1) electrical weatherhead near the 5<sup>th</sup> wheel trailer; (Evidence 2)  
13 the electrical main panel and meter near the 5<sup>th</sup> wheel; (Evidence 3) electrical panel to  
14 the 5<sup>th</sup> wheel; (Evidence 4) an unknown glass or sap material found in the SOA. (See  
15 Evidence Log for all evidence). I used a metal detector to look for any metal fragments

1 related to the cause of the fire in the SOA. I was unable to find any metal fragments or  
2 materials associated with electrical arcing below the conductors.

3 On Monday October 16, 2017 at about 9:55 AM VAN COR met with Jennifer  
4 JOHNSON and Matt JOHNSON at their residence at [REDACTED]. VAN COR  
5 had Jennifer JOHNSON photograph were she first saw the fire on Sunday October 8,  
6 2017 (See Attachment 10).

7 On Tuesday October 17, 2017 at about 9:45 AM myself, B/C VAN COR, and  
8 CAL FIRE Attorney Dave WISEMAN using an AT&T crew (K. ODOM and R. LOPEZ)  
9 started collecting the communication lines between the north and south utility poles on  
10 the RIDDLE property at [REDACTED]. White tape was placed on the  
11 communication lines and a black mark using a Sharpie pen was used to mark the top of  
12 the line as it was hanging on the poles. Using the AT&T crew and bucket truck, the  
13 communication line was cut and taken as evidence. (Evidence 5) The communication  
14 line from the south utility pole to North utility pole was collected without the line touching  
15 the ground. (Evidence 6) The AT&T line from the north utility pole to the drop pole near  
16 the 5<sup>th</sup> wheel trailer, was collected and this line was partially on the ground.

17 On Tuesday October 17, 2017, at about 12:00PM a PG&E bucket truck and crew  
18 of two entered the fire scene. PG&E Frank STRICKFIELD and David PATTERSON JR.  
19 assisted us with removing the two PG&E conductors from between the north and south  
20 utility poles on the RIDDLE property at [REDACTED]. White tape was placed on  
21 the conductors and a black mark using a Sharpie pen was used to mark the top of the  
22 conductor as it was hanging on the poles. The conductors were cut by PG&E and we  
23 rolled the conductors as they were lowered down. Areas looking like there was damage  
24 to the conductor were wrapped with plastic bubble wrap to protect the area. The  
25 conductors did not touch the ground when they were lowered. (Evidence 7) is the east  
26 leg conductor from the south utility pole to the north utility pole. (Evidence 8) is the west  
27 leg conductor from the south utility pole to the north utility pole. Once the conductors  
28 were taken down and packaged, the service drop from the north utility pole going to the  
29 pole at the 5<sup>th</sup> wheel trailer was taken down and packaged as (Evidence 9). Part of the  
30 service drop was lying on the ground when it was taken down and packaged. At about

1 1:35 PM I placed a phone call to the RIDDLE's and JOHNSON's and advised them we  
2 were releasing the scene. At about 1:51 PM, I notified the GVECC the scene security  
3 was released and we left.

4 On March 30, 2018, at about 12:00PM I received PG&E data reports. These  
5 reports showed the PG&E electric maintenance/inspection daily log for the area near  
6 the GOA (See Attachment 16). The inspection dates on the daily log was dated 9/22/17.  
7 The records also contain a Cascade Incident Description and Factual Summary Report  
8 by PG&E. The Pole Detail Reports on Cascade Way list the last visit date, under  
9 inspection history as 10/22/2007. The PG&E data reports will have to be verified by  
10 the CPUC.

11 In April 2018, I received the CAL FIRE Survey Team overall site map  
12 (Attachment 13) for the Cascade Fire Origin. The overall site map documents the  
13 location of the indicator flags in the specific origin area (SOA).

14 On Wednesday May 23, 2018, I received copies of the PG&E Energy Statement  
15 from the Riddle Property at [REDACTED] (See Attachment 15). The July,  
16 August, and September statements showed 0.000000 kWh in total usage for all three

17 months. The charges were: July -\$10.51  
18 August -\$9.86  
19 September -\$9.53

20 On May 24, 2018, I received the Conductor Swing Diagram (See Attachment 13)  
21 prepared by CAL FIRE Survey Team Member David KAROLY. The conductor swing  
22 diagram shows the contact point for the conductors in the GOA.

23 On Monday July 30, 2018, I met Jim NOLT and CAL FIRE Battalion Chief Lance  
24 BERRY at Anamet Inc in Hayward California. NOLT examined evidence items:

25 Item 2- Electrical main panel with meter.

26 Item 3- Electrical panel to 5<sup>th</sup> wheel trailer.

27 NOLT examined these two items and on August 8, 2018, I received the report  
28 (Attachment 17). NOLT found no evidence of electrical failure or arcing from within or  
29 on the evidence that was examined.

1           On Wednesday August 29, 2018, I received an email from Anamet Inc. regarding  
2 the material characterization analysis for evidence item 4 (Sap like material found in the  
3 SOA). Anamet's results confirmed the material was indicative of rosin acids or pine  
4 resin. (Attachment 20).

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**OPINIONS & CONCLUSIONS**

Based on my knowledge, training, and experience, 911 audio, witness statements, and evidence from the Cascade Fire, I believe the cause of the Cascade Fire was due to line sag during the October 8, 2017 wind event. The wind in conjunction with the line sag on the two-conductors located on the property at 13916 Cascade Way made contact creating an electrical arc. The electrical arc deposited hot burning or molten material on the ground in a receptive fuel bed causing the fire. I reserve the right to re-examine this report if additional information is discovered or provided to me that could amend or reinforce my opinions or conclusions.

 9/24/2018

M. Rufenacht #2456

Date

Battalion Chief, CAL FIRE

Nevada Yuba Placer Unit

**10 – ATTACHMENTS:**

- 1 Attachment 1 – Jennifer JOHNSON 911 Call
- 2 Attachment 2 – Wind 911 Audio Tapes
- 3 Attachment 3 – Wind Radio Traffic
- 4 Attachment 4 - Cascade Road APN/Address Map/ Yuba Co. Property Information
- 5 Attachment 5 – Google Earth view of Fire scene
- 6 Attachment 6 – F/C Villalobos Supplemental
- 7 Attachment 7 – NOLT Report
- 8 Attachment 8 –Rufenacht / RIDDLE Interview
- 9 Attachment 9 – Rufenacht / DANILYAN Interview
- 10 Attachment 10 –Van Cor / Jennifer JOHNSON Interview
- 11 Attachment 11 –Scene ICS 214's
- 12 Attachment 12 – Evidence log and documentation
- 13 Attachment 13 – CAL FIRE Survey Team Report
- 14 Attachment 14 – Yuba Co Coroner's Report
- 15 Attachment 15 – PG&E Energy Statement's for 13916 Cascade Way
- 16 -Attachment 16 – PG&E equipment documentation
- 17 -Attachment 17 – NOLT Report on Evidence Items 2,3
- 18 Attachment 18 -Weather Data
- 19 Attachment 19 -Damage Inspection Report /Post Incident Action Summary
- 20 Attachment 20 – Anamet Lab report of Evidence 4 (Pine resin)
- 21 Attachment 21 – LEFT BLANK
- 22 Attachment 22 – Wind Complex PIO Final Update
- 23 Attachment 23 – Cascade Crystal Report
- 24 Attachment 24 - Photos
- 25 Attachment 25 – Aerial Photos