# Southern Area Type 2 Incident Management Team

**PRESS RELEASE: FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**Hazard Trees – Our Greatest Danger**

**Great Dismal Swamp (June 19, 2008) --** Crews battling the South One fire have another worry on their hands. The fire minimally grew the last couple of days, and smoke is still in the air, but trees now pose the greatest danger. The latest is a tree falling in the woods.

In the western part of the U.S. a hazard tree (commonly referred to as a "snag" in the firefighting community) comes crashing down, after a wildland fire, making loud cracking and other noises to alert crews on the ground that they need to take action. At this fire the only sound some trees make is when they impact the terrain.

To make matters worse, on the South One Fire, from 25 to 60 percent of the trees are falling! Depending on how deep the fire has burned through the organic layer, the root system of trees is weakened by the fire. Each day the fire burns deeper and exposes more root mass. Firefighters are exposed to greater risk of snags falling with each passing day. The crews are now getting a hands-on education in firefighting in a swamp.

Special safety measures are now being used during night operations. Crews are now not being allowed to enter the swamp while safety officials evaluate concerns over the latest problem. Incident Commander Tony Wilder said "that firefighter safety is our number one concern. We want all of our teammates to return safely to their home."

At the Great Dismal Swamp, 70 percent of all trees falling are gums and maples, plus other hardwoods. Also impacted are pine and Atlantic White Cedars that are coming down as well. Normally some trees and branches come down under windy conditions, but here gentle breezes are bringing down trees with little or no warning. In addition, trees near roads seek light, and the leaning of the tree towards the light causes them to topple.

Adding to the problem for the men and women helping to battle this blaze are the types of mechanical equipment moving around supporting the ground forces. The large engines

and technical equipment supporting ground forces move around and cause vibrations in the ground, also adding to the falling tree problem.

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