

The usual morning disorientation lasted seconds. I had to get the dozers I had onboard to the fire line. The road was going to be ugly enough in the daylight. Even as badly as they were needed, taking them in the dark would have been far too risky.

They put pickups in front of and behind me. The windy gravel road through the scrub was closed until I got off of it. With a little luck it wouldn't be long. The spotters seemed to know what they were doing.

We pulled into the staging area in just over ninety minutes. Every one of them had been tense – the road was as windy and steep as any I'd seen. Workers attacked the trailer as soon as I set my parking brakes. Ordinarily, I would have done the work myself, but every second counted today.

Watching the dozers pull off the trailer and head straight up the hill behind us struck me as incredibly sad. The fire crews were fighting as hard they could and they were still losing. All I could do was stand and watch – I'd only be in the way if I tried to help.

I had to wait to leave until I had clearance to fill the road again. It was a long day, but watch I did for as long as I could before it was finally time to sleep again.