



Scenario: Disengagement Procedures

Scenarios are situations that can arise on a Wildland Fire or Aviation incident and are meant to add a realistic setting for the application of Today's Safety Discussion.

You have been attempting to build a line around a fire. You have been working for hours with little progress. You note that you are getting frequent spot fires as the result of spotting across the line you have constructed. You also note that individual trees are torching. You have been asked whether you should disengage.

What Are The Critical Issues?

Whenever the intensity of a fire exceeds the ability of the forces to control it, we are left with no alternative but to "disengage" and either wait for better circumstances or change tactics. Whatever happens, it is always safer and more advantageous from an operational perspective if you have a plan for the disengagement.

Critical Safety Measures

The following items are things to consider in your planning and discussion:

Preplan the disengagement.

Discuss establishing trigger points based on measurable factors such as:

- RH
- Winds
- Fire behavior
- Topographical boundaries
- Time/distance to safety zones
- Loss of suppression resources
- Other operational considerations (e.g., firefighter fatigue, loss of lookouts or communication)

When disengagement occurs, go through the Risk Management Process (see the Incident Response Pocket Guide).

- Situational Awareness
- Hazard Assessment
- Hazard Controls
- Decision Points
- Evaluate

When disengagement occurs, determine the disengagement type.

- Hold in place-order additional resources or wait for the fire to take its run.
- Change tactics-direct to indirect.
- Pull back-shorten the distance/time to the safety zone.
- Retreat-halt operations and move rapidly to the safety zone.

When disengagement occurs, define reengagement criteria.

- Winds die down
- Fire behavior decreases
- Additional resources arrive
- Fire reaches barriers or fuel breaks
- Tactics are agreed upon and relayed to forces.

Command/Leadership responsibilities resulting from changes in engagement plans include:

- Communicate the changes to your subordinates, as well as to adjacent forces and up the chain of command.
- Account for all your people.
- Make sure everyone follows the disengagement plan.
- Make sure an experienced person with a radio is the last person out during a retreat.
- Use the Risk Management Process (see the Incident Response Pocket Guide) to reassess the situation before reengaging the fire.

Reference: PowerPoint - [Entrapment Avoidance - "It's your call!"](#)

Have an idea for a safety discussion? Have feedback on this discussion? [Share it.](#)

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