

After Action Review (AAR) Tips



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Tips for Conducting AAR's

Schedule shortly after the activity was completed.

Remember the 25, 25, 50 suggested time allotment.

Focus on WHAT not WHO.

Establish clear ground rules: encourage candor and openness, this is dialog – not lecture or debate, focus on items that can be fixed, keep all discussions confidential.

Skilled facilitation is recommended (an individual with less at stake like a staff member outside of the chain of command. Also see AAR Facilitation Techniques)

What did we set out to do? (Spend about 25% of total time on this question and the next)

Establish the facts.

Purpose of the mission and definition of success

- Key tasks involved
- Conditions under which each task may need to be performed
- Acceptable standards for success

What actually happened?

Continue to establish the facts

If available, it is best to pool information from three diverse/objective sources:

- Observer-controller
- Instrumentation (voice records from dispatch, RAWs data, etc)
- Video taping

Participants must come to agreement on what actually happened.

Pool multiple perspectives in a process that resembles “majority rules”.

Why did it happen? (Spend about 25% of total time on this question)

Analysis of cause and effect

Focus on WHAT not WHO.

Provide progressive refinement for teasing out explanations of what occurred. This will lead into developing possible solutions.

What are we going to do next time? (Spend about 50% of total time on this question)

Solutions will arise naturally once problems are identified and understood

Focus on items you can fix, rather than external forces outside of your control

Identify areas where groups are performing well and should sustain. This will help repeat success and create a balanced approach to the AAR.

Sustain/Maintain:

Improve:

Did lessons learned, trends, concerns, processes or ideas come up that you want to share immediately with other units horizontally & vertically? Highlight them on the ICS 214 Unit Log. Submit them to the national, interagency LLC as a Spark that others can learn from.

There are several formats that you might use. Two possibilities are suggested below:

- Issue, Discussion, Recommendation
- Concept of the operation, Results, Trends, Recommendation

Is an After Action Review Rollup Recommended at this point or end of the project?

Follow these four questions:

- What was the most notable success at the incident that others may learn from? Please explain.
- What were some of the most difficult challenges face and how were they overcome? Please explain.
- What changes, additions or deletions are recommended to wildfire training curriculums?
- What issues were not resolved to your satisfaction and need further review?

Notes: