

## Fire and Aviation Safety Team (FAST) Visit

**Fire:** East Fork Fire (Eastern Great Basin)

**Incident Commander:** Bill Van Bruggen, Type II

**Location:** Wasatch National Forest, Utah

**Date:** Tuesday, July 2, 2002

### Situation:

A Type 2 Incident Management Team was assigned. This 15,000 acres fire is burning in lodgepole pine and spruce 35 miles south of Evanston, WY. Favorable weather conditions contributed to minimal fire behavior. Crews were holding on the southwest flank and constructing handline on the west flank. Steep terrain and dry fuels are hampering containment efforts. Three hundred residences were threatened. Forty summer homes, a Boy Scout Camp and several campgrounds had been evacuated. Structure protection was in place.

**FAST Members:** Jim Shell, Cooperative Fire Specialist (Team Leader)  
Max Ewing, Safety and Health Officer (R4)  
Sherry Neal, Human Resources Specialist (R4)  
Dave Broadnax, Aviation Officer (R8)  
Glen Johnston, Helicopter Operations Specialist (R4)  
Dave Bergerud, Aircraft Maintenance Inspector (R9)

### Purpose:

Fire and Aviation Safety Teams (FAST) are activated during periods of high wildland fire activity or threat and are dispatched to provide assistance and conduct evaluations to promote safe operations. Team composition depends on the complexity of the incident(s).

### Introduction:

The FAST assembled in the Regional Office on Tuesday, July 2, 2002 at 07:00 a.m. and were briefed by Ken Strauss (Assistant Director, Fire and Aviation). Ken emphasized the importance of "Safety" during our visit with focus on assistance and adherence to policy. The team arrived on the incident at approximately 10:15 a.m. and was briefed by the Incident Command Team. The FAST visited the fireline and out briefed the Incident Commander (IC) on the team's observations. The FAST followed the format of the sample questions attached to this report in conducting the visit.

### Observations:

#### Management

*Fire.* Team reviewed the Incident Action Plan and Wildfire Situation Analysis (WFSA). Incident Commander expressed concern that if weather and fire behavior emulated what they had experienced on Monday, July 1, 2002 then he would advocate that a Type I Incident Command Team take over the incident. Latter in the day, a decision was made to transition to a Type I Team.

The IC had to manage the security to the fire by establishing roadblocks at 13-access points. The line officer and the IC make a good decision in that they physically and administratively close the entire incident area.

Overall the planning and actions on the incident appeared to be conducted in a professional manner with high consideration given to the safety of personnel.

*Aviation.* Aviation team members (Glen Johnston and Dave Bergerud) arrived at Evanston Airport at approximately 10:30 a.m. and inspected a S64 (Skycrane) and returned it to contract availability. They met with Bob Butler (Aviation Operation Branch Director) and discussed overall aviation operations.

Bob identified a problem with filling outstanding orders for aircraft and aviation personnel. Example: Type I & II Helibase Managers (HEBM I) had been on order for 3-days.

Evanston airport ramp was under a rental agreement for \$200 per day. Two Types I helicopters were working out of the airport. Each helibase had a helicopter manager who was Type II Helibase Manager qualified.

While at the airport a Cheyenne II fixed wing reported for assignment. Bob Butler checked pilot and aircraft approvals (cards) and discovered that the pilot was carded for point-to-point flight only. This presented a problem because the resource order was for airplane and pilot carded for fire recon and aerial mapping. The resource had to be sent home and another. A Safecom was filed to document the event and the regional Jim Morrison (Aviation Safety Manager) is tracking the Safecom.

Visited the East Fork helibase, 1-Type I & 2-Type III helicopters were working out of this helibase. Type II Helibase Manager was in place; deck operations area appeared orderly with adequate space for several more aircraft needed. The helibase is in relatively close proximity to the fire and may have to be moved in the event of a wind change from the east. Overall the helicopter operation on this fire was being run according to policy. Adequate aviation management personnel were in place.

The Type I Helibase Manager position will need to be filled with the arrival of more helicopters. The AOBD was performing very well in managing the overall aviation operation.

### Safety

During the fireline visit, there appeared to be a strong emphasis on safety. The IC noticed a contract crewmember not wearing his hardhat and took immediate action to correct the safety infraction. Discussions with the IC indicated no hesitation to pull firefighter off the line if safety standards could not be assured.

Work/rest standards were being managed in accordance with the Incident Action Plan Safety Analysis (215A), which the IC updated daily. The IC had made the decision to minimize the staffing for night operations due to crew rest and snag hazards. The IC addressed work/rest guidelines in the 215A. The IC admitted that during the initial period the 2 to 1 work/rest guidelines were a challenge to adhere to. Every attempt was made to bring work schedule in line by the second work period.

The FAST expressed the need to identify escape route routes and safety zones as the fire dense lodge pole stands. The IC assured the team that this need would be met.

### Suppression

Strategy seemed to be sound under the current fire conditions and appeared to be meeting the WFSAs objectives. The use of aerial resources and dozers appeared to be the best tactical choice due to limited available resources. Communications with all tactical personnel were being maintained. The IC recognized the potential need for additional repeater capability should the fire enter an area without adequate communications coverage and had placed a resource order for one.

### Administration

*Preorder.* The team expressed concern that Emergency Rental Agreements and a Service & Supply Plan were not in place to respond to the incident in a timely matter. This caused several shortfalls and delayed the team in getting operational.

Example: A refrigerated van was ordered but did not arrive at the incident for 3-days. This made it difficult to provide safe storage of perishables. Having ice delivered to the incident was abating the problem. There was one reported case of possible food poisoning.

*/s/Jim Shell*

Jim Shell, Team Leader

July 2, 2002

Date

## Sample Questions For Fire Site Visits

### Standards For Fire and Aviation Operations

#### Management Direction

- [ ] Who is the incident commander? If the fire is being managed under Unified Command, are all commanders present? Is the incident operating smoothly?
- [ ] What is the incident organization?
- [ ] What is the current situation? What has been damaged or is at risk?
- [ ] Have you received adequate direction for the management of the incident? Is a Wildland Fire Situation Analysis required/still valid?
- [ ] What are the incident management objectives? Constraints? Probability of success?
- [ ] Are the Incident Action Plan tactics realistic and achievable with current resources?
- [ ] Is a resource advisor needed?
- [ ] What are you estimated of suppression costs?
- [ ] What are the incident commander's concerns?
- [ ] What are the local social, economic, and political issues?
- [ ] Are there rehabilitation needs?
- [ ] What can I, as the agency administrator, do to help?

#### Safety

- [ ] What are your safety concerns?
- [ ] Are these concerns resolved? If not, what needs to be done?
- [ ] What is the general safety attitude and emphasis?
- [ ] Have you assessed the potential hazardous situations and determined if the fire can be fought safely?
- [ ] Have you applied the Fire Orders, Watchout Situations, and Lookout, Communication, Escape routes, Safety zones (LCES) process in selecting safe and effective strategies and tactics?
- [ ] Have you effectively briefed fire fighters of hazards, safety zones, escape routes, and current and expected weather and fire behavior?
- [ ] Is the safety officer position filled? If not, how is this function being addressed?
- [ ] Are you monitoring work schedules to ensure adequate rest? Are you meeting the standard work/rest guidelines?
- [ ] Have you provided for adequate rest, food, water, and health services for all personnel?
- [ ] Are all the fire personnel qualified for the positions they hold, and are they physically able to perform?
- [ ] Have you had any injuries or accidents?

## **Sample Questions For Fire Site Visits**

### **Standards For Fire and Aviation Operations**

#### **Fire Suppression Operations**

- [ ] What is the fire weather forecast (present and extended)?
- [ ] What is the fire behavior potential?
- [ ] Are fire personnel briefed on incident objectives, strategies, tactics, organization, communications, hazards, and safety principles?
- [ ] Are the strategy and tactics safe, effective, and consistent with management's objectives and accepted fire policies and procedures?
- [ ] Do you have effective communication on incident and with dispatch?
- [ ] Are you monitoring weather and fire behavior to make needed adjustments to strategy and tactics?
- [ ] Are you using tactical aircraft? Do you have an assigned air tactical group supervisor?
- [ ] Is aircraft use safe, effective and efficient?
- [ ] If the fire escapes initial attack, what will your role be in developing the Wildland Fire Situation Analysis?

#### **Administration**

- [ ] Do you have any administrative concerns?
- [ ] What arrangements have you made to complete time reports, accident forms, fire report, etc.?
- [ ] Did all orders and procurement go through dispatch?
- [ ] Do you have any outstanding obligations?
- [ ] Are all rental agreements and use records properly completed?
- [ ] How did the fire start? If human-caused, has an investigation been initiated to determine the cause and develop a trespass case?
- [ ] Do you know of any current or potential claims?

#### **Dispatch Office**

- [ ] Is the incident receiving fire weather and fire behavior information?
- [ ] Is the incident getting the resources ordered in a timely manner?
- [ ] Is dispatch adequately staffed?
- [ ] What are the local area and national Preparedness Levels? How do they affect this fire?
- [ ] Are the elements identified at the various Preparedness Levels being considered?
- [ ] What are the current local, area and national fire situations?
- [ ] What is the priority of existing fires and how are the priorities being determined?