

Fire and Aviation Safety Team (FAST) Visit

Fire: Rattle Fire (Eastern Great Basin)

Incident Commander: Pat Murphy, Type 2

Location: Moab District, BLM

Date: July 17-18, 2002

Situation:

Murphy's Great Basin Type II Incident Management Team was assigned to this incident. The incident had transitioned from a Type III to a Type II to a Type I and back to a Type II Incident Management Team during the life of the fire. The fire was burning in Douglas fir, pinyon pine, Juniper, Sagebrush and Gambel Oak on approximately 90,000 acres 30 miles North of Thompson Springs, Utah. The incident included lands administered by the State of Utah, Bureau of Land Management and private lands.

FAST Members: John Shive (BLM-USO) Team Leader
Jan Peterson (BLM-IDSO) Health and Safety
Greg Vergari (R4) Fire Operations
Jill McCurdy (R4) Aviation Safety
Rachel Carver (BLM-PRD) Incident Business Management

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). This FAST was activated by the Great Basin Coordinating Group (GBCG) on July 14, 2002. The team leader was given a delegation of authority signed by the Chairman of the GBCG at an entry briefing by Mike Dudley (R4 Director of Fire and Aviation) and Sheldon Wimmer (BLM Utah State Fire Management Officer) on July 15, 2002.

Introduction:

The FAST met with the Rattle Incident Commander, the Moab Field Office Manager and the Moab District FMO on the evening of July 17th. The FAST leader emphasized the importance of "Safety" during our visit with focus on assistance and adherence to policy and that the FAST was there to assist both the field office and the IMT in identifying and mitigating possible safety issues/concerns. The FAST attended the IMT preplanning and planning meeting for the following day shift on the 17th. The FAST visited the ICP on the 18th attended the day shift briefing and the Helibase briefing. An out briefing was held with Incident Commander Pat Murphy and Dave Engleman Moab FMO to discuss the team's observations

Observations:

Management

Murphy's Type II team was following standard ICS procedures and was fully staffed to manage the incident assigned. There was one spike camp established and the ICP had been established at the Moab Valley Inn in Moab with a base camp and Helibase established at the Canyonlands Airport. The IMT felt that they were receiving adequate direction and guidance from the Line Officer and staff. A BAER team was also in place and the IMT was working well with them to coordinated efforts. A WFSA was in place, was being signed off daily by the appropriate line officers and revised as necessary.

Aviation

On the evening of July 17, 2002 McCurdy met with Bob Butler, AOBD and discussed air operations on the Rattle Fire. He provided the FAST with the current and following days ICS 220 form. He gave an over view of the helicopter operations. Everything seemed to be in good order.

The IMT is in the process of preparing for a PSD burn operation in the next few days - conditions permitting. Vince Welbaum, qualified PSD operator is in charge of the PSD operation, if it does happen. A PSD Operator trainee (John Softich, SLD BLM) is assigned to the incident as well. A Type 3 helicopter from Salt Lake District BLM is on loan to the fire for 3 days (until Friday) to complete the burn. If the burn is not accomplished in that time frame the ship will return to Salt Lake and leave the fire in a position of not having a type 3 aircraft to accomplish the burn.

The FAST attended the Helibase morning briefing on July 18, 2002. The Type 1 Helibase Manager, Tim McCauley gave a very thorough briefing utilizing the Appendix F-Daily Helicopter Operations Briefing/Debriefing Checklist and the Incident Action Plan. A Helibase Operations trailer was in place and being properly utilized.

McCurdy and Shive looked into the required documentation for helibase operations. It appeared to be in place. The Helibase briefing board was complete to date. Load calculations were complete. There was a question on the load calculation for the S 58-T helicopter. McCurdy discussed the process with the pilot and obtained copies of the appropriate charts as well as the load calculation. McCurdy contacted Clair Mendenhall, R-4 Helicopter Inspector Pilot and faxed the HIGE, HOGE and completed load calculation form to him for verification. Mendenhall was able to verify that the correct charts were being utilized and the load calculation appeared to be correct. He requested that we inform the pilot of the 12,000' limitation, as it appeared that he was utilizing 12,500.

Helitack crew and contractors appeared to be doing well as far as the work/rest guidelines.

Ground Safety

Fatigue Management - Crews interviewed stated they were well within the work/rest guidelines. They were following their 14 days assignment requirements and the Team was managing the Work/Rest situation. Comments from the Team indicate that Team Members were putting in more hours than they were reporting. They cannot accomplish their duties within the work/rest guidelines. The IC is voicing frustration and concern over this problem. This is a common occurrence and nothing specific to this Team.

IMT staffing related to safety impacts - The Team has a dedicated SOF2. They have filled 4 SOF2's for on line operations. Interviews with Crews and Tractor operators indicated that SOF's were being very active and covering all phases of Safety. The IAP addresses Safety adequately.

Change of Command - Did not witness Change of Command from Vail's Type I to Murphy's Type II. This incident did not provide a good opportunity to witness this aspect of management.

Contract/Cooperator Safety Issues - Interviewed one Type 2 Crew from Idaho Corrections. Crew was well briefed, had a current IRPG. This was the only contract/cooperator unit interviewed.

Recognition of Fire Danger and Great Basin severity - Team did a very good job assessing complexity of this complex incident. Team was considering a very large complex burn out. The IC listened to the plan assessed the pro's and con's, considered the objectives and decided to postpone the operation for 7/18 due to a few elements not being fully staffed out. This FAST was pleased with the decision and thoughtfulness of this IC and Team

Thirty Mile Compliance - On arrival, Ground Fire Safety gave the SOF a copy of the 30 Mile Incident Checklist and asked that they use it. This will ensure the Team records actions taken to address work/rest.

Adherence to work/rest guidelines, as reflected in Crew Time Reports, is detailed in the work/rest compliance section of this report. Crews, Modules and Overhead that were interviewed by Ground Fire Safety indicated guidelines were being enforced by the Team and adhered to by these units.

Pocket Cards were handed out to incoming resources. The Agency is in compliance with this Action Item.

Most crews, modules and overhead carry incident Response Pocket Guides and they say they use it. The Team has yet to see it physically taken out and used. The lack of availability of the IRPG is hampering this effort.

Work/Rest Compliance

Work/rest standards are being managed according to current policy and guidance. One work shift that exceeded 16 hours was due to travel layovers on employees return to home unit. Documentation was on file to support the excessive hours. Extended shift work is being mitigated by 2-3 hour breaks during mid-day. This is not in conformance with the work/rest guidelines. The FAST discussed this with the Incident Commander to ensure that this is corrected and that strict compliance with the standards are followed. Random spot check of hours worked by all resources assigned to the incident reflected that the IMT is paying close attention to work/rest compliance and is doing an excellent job.

Occupational Health and Safety

Safety was emphasized during the briefings, camp activities and fire operations. The road between the ICP and main spike camp was hazardous and had numerous blind spots. To mitigate traffic accidents markers were placed approximately every half mile, and at each marker vehicles would announce over a dedicated radio frequency the vehicle direction and location. This was an excellent accident prevention strategy.

The ICP medical unit reported to the safety officer and the IMT felt that this promoted better access/communication between medical, safety and the command staff. Accidents and injuries were low and the treatments were primarily maintenance/prevention. Occupational health was promoted and supported.

The ICP layout adhered to OSHA slips, trips, falls and emergency egress regulations. Appropriate flagging/alert signs were posted for any hazards and speed limits were posted. The ICP observed OSHA's Good Housekeeping guidelines and personal hygiene stations were available for personnel.

The spike camp was given a sample Camp Safety Plan, which included safety guidelines for the spike camp during thunder and lightening activity. The camp had flagging and signs to alert personnel of possible slips, trips, and falls as mandated by OSHA. The supply area was organized and clean meeting OSHA Good Housekeeping regulations.

The spike camp medical unit was organized and clean. The medical staff reported low injuries and accidents with most treatments being primarily preventative.

Overall the Rattle Fire had an excellent Occupational Health and Safety Program.

Suppression

Strategy seemed to be sound under the current fire conditions and appeared to be meeting the WFSAs objectives.

/s/ John C. Shive

John C. Shive, Team Leader

July 16, 2002

Date