

SUMMARY

Mid-level Manager's Survey:

Assessing Contributions to Firefighter Entrapments

This report describes an effort to discover some of the issues affecting the performance of firefighter supervisors in mid-level management positions (Division Supervisors, Branch Directors.) After reviewing reports from a number of entrapment and near-miss incidents (including a specific entrapment in 2002), we developed some hypotheses about the challenges faced by mid-level wildland fire managers, and the reasons for those challenges. Out of that review, we developed some hypotheses about the challenges faced by mid-level wildland fire managers, and the reasons for those challenges. During the summer of 2003, Lessons Learned Information Collection Teams interviewed 11 of these managers while they were on fire assignments in an attempt to test our hypotheses.

Findings:

The process -- creating hypotheses, generating "talking points" questions to test the hypotheses, and then conducting fire camp interviews about the talking points -- was an efficient method for generating useful conclusions.

Some of the talking points questions needed to be improved to do a better job of testing the hypotheses. More interviews should be conducted only after improving the questions.

Even with the small sample size (11), some concepts came across strongly enough to warrant suggested changes:

- 1) Provide suppression resources with training in fire weather prediction, to offset the burden on the DIVS.
- 2) Rather than providing raw data from which to predict fire behavior or weather, recast the information in ways that are more readily usable to resources in their current condition, e.g., a "fire fighter action" report instead of a weather report.
- 3) Offer DIVS training concerning:
 - Personnel supervision
 - Integration of Type I crews into division management
 - Management of critical situations
 - Methods for assessing resource capabilities
- 4) Implement systematic performance appraisals for DIVS

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