

Fire and Aviation Safety Team (FAST) Visit

Fire: Mustang Fire (Eastern Great Basin)

Incident Commander: Mike Melton, Type I

Location: Ashley National Forest, Utah

Date: Friday, July 4, 2002

Situation:

A Type I Incident Management Team was assigned. This 20,000 acres fire is burning in douglas fir, pinyon pine, juniper and sagebrush near Dutch John, UT. Torching and running were observed during the previous burning period. Crews made good progress building fireline on the west, northwest and southeast perimeters. Highway 191 had been reopened and evacuees were returning to Dutch John.

FAST Members: Jim Shell, Cooperative Fire Specialist (Team Leader)
Dave Provencio, Fire Operations Specialist (R4)
Sherry Neal, Human Resources Specialist (R4)
Dave Broadnax, Aviation Officer (R8)
Jill McCurdy, Assistant 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:

Team leader emphasized the importance of “Safety” during our visit with focus on assistance and adherence to policy. The team arrived on the incident at approximately 10:30 a.m. and was briefed by the Incident Command Team. The FAST visited the Incident Camp, Helibase, attended the night operations briefing and public meeting, 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. The IC team demonstrated a good understanding of the expectations under the 2 to 1 work/rest guidelines. Shift lengths were being managed by planning for 12-hours and leaving room at the end of the shift for unexpected fire activity or delays in transportation.

A contract handcrew was interviewed by the FAST. The crewboss expressed concern that during their shift they had difficulty communicating with the Division Supervisor due to excessive air-to-ground radio transmission on the tactical channel. This was discussed with the IC team during the out-briefing and the FAST was assured that the situation would be corrected.

Aviation. Resources appeared to be professionally managed with emphases on safety and adherence to crew rest guidelines. The IC was using the right choice of aircraft to meet the needs of the incident. A Single Engine Air Tanker (SEAT) had arrived on the incident to provide retardant drops when necessary. The large airtanker was released from the incident.

Safety

There appeared to be a strong emphasis on safety. Work/rest standards were being managed in accordance with the Incident Action Plan Safety Analysis (215A), which the IC updated for each shift.

The injury record was good. There had been only one loss-time injury (knee) during the IC team's tenure.

A handcrew was interviewed and they expressed concern about establishing lookouts at the beginning of their shift. The division supervisor immediately resolved their concern.

The handcrew was utilizing the Incident Pocket Response Guide (IPRG) and the Fire Danger Rating Pocket Card, however not all of the crews had copies. Due to a shortage of IPRGs the IC team included Risk Management Process and guidelines for How to Properly Refuse Risk in the Incident Action Plan (IAP). The IC team expressed concern that IPRGs were not available and asked that the FAST follow-up on the issue. The FAST reported the issue to the Multi-Agency Coordination (MAC) Group and was informed that IPRGs would be at the Great Basin Fire Cache July 22, 2002 for distribution.

Suppression

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

Administration

Wildfire Situation Analysis and Delegation of Authority documentation were consistent with the IAP.

The FAST attended a Public Information meeting and attendees were informed of the reopening of Highway 191 and evacuees of Dutch John could return home. The meeting was well received by the public.

/s/Jim Shell
Jim Shell, Team Leader

July 4, 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?