



File Code: 5100/6710

Date: September 29, 2003

Route To:

Subject: Safety Review, Rough Draw Fire

To: Regional Foresters, Station Directors, Area Director, IITF Director, Job Corps, and
WO Staff

You may be aware of an informal electronic message recently distributed that raised concerns about the qualifications of a type II Maryland fire crew and about the actions of the incident management team (IMT) they were serving under on the Rough Draw Fire. I am concerned about the effect of allegations made and want to set the record straight.

A thorough review was conducted to address the concerns raised in the informal message. It revealed that the crew acted in a completely appropriate manner for the situation that confronted them. LCES (Lookouts, Communications, Escape Routes, and Safety Zones) principals were successfully implemented and the crew's withdrawal to their safety zone was executed in exemplary fashion. The review failed to find any shortcomings in the qualifications or capability of the crew. In fact, the Division Supervisor stated in the crew performance rating, "I have worked with Type II crews everywhere; I would take the Maryland crew anywhere and anytime."

Likewise, concerns raised about the actions of the IMT were inaccurate and unfounded. The review established that the team provided strong leadership from the initial assignment of the crew through their after-action review conducted the day following the incident. All actions taken were fully open, appropriate, and thoroughly documented.

In summary the review team found that none of the five concerns raised in the routed message had merit, that those involved performed in an exemplary manner and "further follow-up was not necessary." (See enclosed review team report. Also the Maryland investigation report can be found on the website www.dnr.state.md.us/forests/report.pdf).

In this case employees reported what they considered important safety issues in a manner they thought best. It is unfortunate that second-hand or third-hand information was then distributed before all parties involved could be interviewed, the records reviewed and the facts accurately determined. This highlights the need for care and professionalism in handling safety concerns expressed by our employees.

I want to encourage our employees to always report their safety concerns. When possible we hope this can be done through established channels. Within the fire community, safety concerns are most efficiently expressed through the SAFENET process where they are written and submitted to appropriate levels to assure the issue can be dealt with at the lowest level or elevated as necessary.



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It pleases me that through the timely investigation by the team and the follow-up review, we found there were no safety shortfalls. I commend the Maryland crew and the Incident Management Team for their appropriate and professional actions.

I ask that you share this letter and review report with your line officers and fire management staff and encourage wide distribution throughout the fire community. We must do whatever we can to correct the misinformation and dispel rumors surrounding the performance of the Maryland crew and the Incident Management Team. This must be done while still confirming our collective support for individual responsibility to address safety issues.

/s/ Joel D. Holtrop
JOEL D. HOLTROP
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Enclosure

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