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at 19:41:42

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Incident Name: Showers Type 2

Assignment Dates: 8/20/02- 8/25/02

Unit or Jurisdiction: Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit- USFS Region 5

Geographic Area: Lake Tahoe

Phone: 530-582-7850

Most Notable Success: This fire was in the Tahoe watershed. We were under scrutiny from multiple environmental concerns and the USFS Management Unit. We requested and assigned resource advisors from the Unit to each Division as soon as we took over the fire. They were part of every suppression action and ultimately rehabilitation of the work. The result was minimal impact to the Lake and a happy Management Unit. This included cataloging all snags and trees dropped by diameter, species, and direction of fall.

Most Difficult Challenges: Fire was caused by a fatal plane crash in a remote area. The Units LE assigned a person to work with the SO and NTSB personnel for scene investigation, body and plane removal, and family follow up as the Team Liaison. We arranged for the family to walk over one hour to the site for personal reasons. We assigned a competent Situation Unit Leader to walk in first and sanitize the site. This proved invaluable in that he found items that would have been disturbing to the family and cleansed the site before their arrival.

Secondly, crew time reporting was an issue. IA Type I crews were over 24 at 0600 the next morning. The Team took the fire at noon but developed an IAP for the 0600 briefing. The crews did not get off the line until noonish. One crew had 39 hours on duty time including driving to the fire and assignment. The crew supv. felt telling his divisions of this was all he had to do. I informed him as a sup he is responsible to make the final decision to pull his personnel off the line and telling his division is a cop out.

My take on this is personnel on the line are not willing to tell when they are timed out and need to get off the line. I ask them this: if you see an unsafe assignment do you feel comfortable refusing it? They all answer yes. I then ask them why they will work 39 hours on hot line? Is that not unsafe. I get blank stares and then they will say, "If I left the fire will get away". We need to get the "intent" of the work rest down to the worker bees and get it through their heads this is a safety issue just like a bad assignment. It is not getting there yet. I believe our fire fighters do not see fatigue as a safety issue in the same sense as extreme fire behavior for example

Recommended Changes: Need to do some things on work rest:

1. Quantify what is rest. A pilot must have 10 hours uninterrupted rest away from distractions. Right now if a crew is off the line they are not getting paid. What has happened is the criteria set forth for pay is also considered rest. In other words if the crew is in the chow line, showering or repairing tools it is considered rest because it is not recorded on the CTR. In reality they are getting maybe 4-5 hours of rest per 24 hour period and 3 hours of non line time but still up and at em. I am sorry but rest in the world of recuperation has to be consecutive and complete, like sleeping.
2. I have heard many discussions about consecutive hours. In some cases, the time off shown on the CTR for meals is added into the total for rest in a 24 hour period. True rest has to be uninterrupted. Although well meaning, nobody is getting a true 2-1 rest at all.
3. Overhead personnel in base have a different criteria for rest than line people. There needs to be a different criteria for base personnel verses line personnel and personnel who drive vehicles.
4. Has anyone determined if the 2-1 federal policy links with Department of Motor Vehicle requirements in California for example? One of the most serious effects of fatigue is on drivers.

Unresolved Issues: We still have a need for a link between resource ordering, allocation, and the ability to staff an incident with the work rest cycle, and other cultural issues as follows:

1. IA Incident Commanders need to project and order adequate resources at least 12 hours before the next operational period. If not, there will not be resources to relieve the IA staff and they will have exceeded the 24 hour policy.
2. Dispatch centers need to stop being flabbergasted when IA folks order large contingents of equipment early on in the incident for the next operational period. After they pull their chins up, they need to place the orders promptly so the problem listed above is alleviated. I think our dispatch centers have evolved from a support organization to policy makers and that is wrong.
3. The federal caterer system is fine, but the criteria of 600 meals is cumbersome. The result on Type II fires is a team unable to feed 500 fire fighters effectively for 48 hours while waiting for a federal caterer. There needs to be options available locally that can support a fire of this size until a federal caterer can make it or or is needed. I would suggest 900 meals per day as a trigger requiring a caterer. 300 personnel at a meal is nothing with just the support staff alone. There seems to be acceptance on federal fires that feeding personnel bag lunches and rations for two complete days is okay. It is not okay purely on a nutritional platform and of equal importance is the understanding that the administration thinks enough of the ground pounders to take care of basic creature comforts and just might result in higher productivity and fire fighters willing to do a job.

4. There still is the overriding issue of hoarding resources. For whatever reason coordination centers, great basins, north zone, south zone and all can withhold resources purely because the fire is not in their area of responsibility. This is done under the guise of providing initial attack or whatever, but the Storm King problem of air tankers within view but unavailable is alive and well.

5. Need to recognize that the red card system is being adhered to fairly well on large fires with a check in process, team assigned etc. We are still allowing personnel unprepared to manage initial attack fires well beyond their scope. Certified Chief officers, which is not a red card qualification must be responding to and handling fires that escape the initial attack resources. The scope of responsibility for a red-carded division sup is significantly less than that of an initial attack IC, yet these people are placed in this position frequently. The federal agencies are the only fire service providers I know of who do not require Chief officers at extended attack incidents and allow seasonal engine Captains to do the job. Significant safety issue and results in numerous large fires that don't need to happen.

Submit: Submit Data

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