

The Learning Curve

TEN LESSONS LEARNED and BEST PRACTICES

AFTER INCIDENT REPORTS FIRST EDITION - 2002

INCIDENT COMMUNICATIONS:

Staging Incident Management Teams (IMT)

When an IMT is staged before an assignment, the team can use this time to both brief and update on new policies and guidelines as well as train within their sections. This can be a good opportunity to familiarize new team members with the ISUITE computer program. This program is used to check in and track resources on an incident. Each IMT Section determines how they will use the ISUITE program and how it can be interfaced with other Sections.

Use of IMT websites

IMT websites are becoming critical as a fast and effective means for disseminating information beyond the incident. One New Mexico IMT web site was identified as being frequently checked by homeowners in Michigan inquiring about the status of their summer homes located near the fire.

Providing Closure after a Serious Incident

Holding a memorial service at the base camp for all incident personnel helped to provide a degree of closure after the recent C130 airtanker crash in California. Incident personnel were also given the opportunity to donate to a memorial fund.

Filling the Liaison Officer Position

A local Office of Emergency Management (OEM) coordinator can make an excellent liaison officer for an IMT. On one recent incident this coordinator, who knew all the local players, focused on improving relationships with local government that were strained at the time. The human relations skills of the OEM coordinator and his local knowledge was critical to the successful completion of the assignment.

SAFETY:

Leadership by Example

By walking the fire line and talking with crews, the IC, Operations Section Chief and the Safety Officer demonstrate their support for the firefighters and their well being. The overhead can also take this opportunity to review the importance of using personal protective equipment to crew safety, thereby improving compliance.

OPERATIONS:

Using Local Expertise

Local resources can have excellent knowledge of the local fire behavior, including unique wind patterns and local fuel conditions. Incorporating their knowledge of these factors into the strategy can have a significant impact on containing the fire. It is important to identify who these local resources are as soon as possible and use their expertise during all phases of the incident.

Fire Behavior in Drought Stricken Forests

Fire behavior analysts have observed some very unusual fire behavior this season. In Southwestern Utah, a fire recently burned through aspen stands between 6,500-10,900 feet at extreme rates of spread. Warning: Aspen stands **MUST NOT** be used as safety zones due to these severe drought conditions. Do not be deceived because the forest looks green.

PLANNING:

Setting Priorities for Staffing Divisions

When limited resources are encountered, either due to wildland fires early in the season or during Preparedness Level 4/5, the weather predictions for wind can help in prioritizing which divisions to staff and allocation of resources among the divisions.

Key Role of Incident Meteorologist

The incident meteorologist can be invaluable in the planning process especially when an area is experiencing severe drought conditions. Their predictions will aid in selecting the appropriate strategy and tactics to employ. Meteorological conditions on an incident can be influenced by local topography, substantially increasing spread rates during these drought conditions.

Incident Qualifications of State and Municipal Agencies

Standardized procedures are needed regarding how state and municipal resources will be used on incidents. These sources of personnel do not always carry proof of their ICS qualifications. A way of addressing this in California is for every resource to carry a "Fire Qualification Letter" signed by their Fire Chief that attests to their red card qualifications.

***Remember – A lesson learned is a lesson disseminated.
Please pass this on to others.***