



Great Basin Interagency Resource Representative Report Southwest Area Deployment June 2020



Introduction:

The Great Basin Coordination Center (GBCC), under direction of the Great Basin Coordinating Group (GBCG), activated Brad Washa and Gary Peck as Interagency Resource Representatives (IARR) to travel to the Southwest Area to provide a support network and interface with the nineteen crews (15 hand crews and 4 camp crews) on wildfire assignments in New Mexico and Arizona. An additional squad was in region and contacted the IARR's and tracked as well. In addition, the IARR's investigated how COVID-19 mitigations and protocols were being deployed by both resources and incident management teams.

Intent:

To summarize observations and feedback, the IARR's crafted this summary with an update on "real time" events and additional preparedness measures for all resources, Incident Management Teams, and fire management/agency administrators. Included with the summary are lessons observed and guidance for end users.

During their deployment, the IARR's visited the following fires and associate resources.

Incidents visited:

- Mangum Fire (SWT3)
- Bringham Fire (SWT4)
- Bush Fire (SWT5/SWT1)
- Bighorn (SWT2/NRT1)
- Skyline
- R3 Prepo (several locations)

Resources visited:

- Salt Lake County #1 2IA
- ENA#1 Camp Crew
- Caribou Camp Crew
- Vegas Valley 2IA
- Dromedary Peak 2IA
- Ruby Mountain 2IA
- Fishlake Regulars 2IA
- Sawtooth IHC
- Idaho City IHC
- Logan IHC
- Bonneville IHC
- Lone Peak IHC
- Twin Peaks 2IA
- Utah County
- SPA# 1 Camp Crew
- UWF Squad 81
- Central Utah Camp Crew
- Silver State IHC
- Weber Basin 2IA

Other management entities visited:

- Southwest Coordination Center
- 2 Buying Teams
- Santa Fe Zone Dispatch
- Tucson Dispatch (phone connection)
- SWT1, SWT2, SWT3, SWT4, SWT5, Albuquerque Zone T3 IMT

The following information is based on observations made by IARR's and valuable feedback from resources deployed on wildfire incidents in the Southwest Area during June 2020.

There are three areas of focus developed from the reviews to provide updated information for parties working in a COVID-19 wildland fire environment: Suppression Resources, Incident Management Teams, and Fire Management/ Agency Administrator Guidance.



Information for Resource Mobilization in the COVID-19 Environment (Groups or Single Resources)

Captured below are Great Basin crews (IHC, T2IA, and Camp Crews) and IARR observations while assigned in the Southwest Area during the June 2020 wildfire campaign. There are situational differences on all events they encountered, so balance the information and ensure to ask how processes are deployed while in transit and upon arriving to all incidents. Responding to wildfires in a COVID-19 environment is evolving and differs based upon state and location.

Observation References:

- Pre-mobilization
 - Complete the NMAC Interagency Checklist for Mobilization of Resources in a COVID-19 Environment.
 - Maintain self-screening practices using the COVID-19 Wildland Fire Medical and Public Health Advisory Team (MPHAT) COVID-19 Interim Screening Protocol.
 - Complete daily logs of contacts (unit log) to help with contact tracing efforts if needed
 - Carry adequate COVID-19 PPE and with ample reserves (masks, gloves, hand sanitizer, disinfectant sprays and/or wipes, paper towels).
 - Three masks recommended per person for a 14-day assignment.
 - Have working infrared thermometer for each crew and test before leaving unit.
 - Recommend resource(s) driving to incidents depart home unit fully self-sufficient with food and water for at least three to five operational periods.
 - Be aware of local, regional, and national pandemic situation.
- Travel
 - Know the COVID-19 restrictions and situation throughout your entire travel route and end destination(s). If possible, avoid traveling through hot spots or plan stops on the perimeters of those areas.
 - Wear masks in public and outside your “Family Unit/Module of One.”
 - Recognize varying public/responder compliance in all incident locations and lead by example and follow the CDC basics guidelines. (face coverings, wash hands, and social distance).
 - Minimize number of gas and other logistical stops with smallest numbers of personnel leaving vehicle(s).
 - Use rubber gloves at gas pumps and consider other innovative approaches such as using pumps in direct sunlight.
 - Ask about COVID-19 protocols in place before you chose a hotel and restaurants.
 - Call ahead to incident to engage their remote process before entering ICP or camps (See Box 8. Incident Base/Phone Number on Resource Order).
 - Self-assess during travel to convey any change in health status (incident and home unit).
- Incident and Staging
 - Efforts are being made to conduct many aspects of incident management business in a virtual environment but will vary from incident to incident.

- ICP and dispatch center access maybe limited or restricted. Call ahead to get SOP before you roll in.
- Be prepared for digital check-in, screening questionnaires, and/or temperature checks at ICP or other staging areas.
- Be patient, things take longer in the COVID-19 arena at all levels.
- IMT's may have different protocols in place, stay flexible and ask questions.
- Have Adobe Pro installed if possible to interface PDF products, along with apps for Zoom and MS Teams for virtual web based briefings and meetings.
- Radio and virtual web-based briefings and meetings are more common and being used.
- If capturing photos of CTR's or shift tickets, set image to actual size for readability.
- Be aware digital processes are in place, but hand submission may still be viable with precautions in place.
- Continue to practice daily self-screenings, know the IMT COVID-19 (24 hour) protocol for symptomatic individuals while assigned.
- Be prepared for face coverings and limit numbers at group operational briefings.
- Understand reverse isolation practices (you protect others by wearing a mask and they protect you by wearing a mask) and wear face covering in settings outside of the "Family Unit/Module of One" environment (public, briefings, meetings, when you enter a another groups module).
- Some IMT positions may be working virtually and off-site. Interface may be through phone or video interface which can pose challenges. Ensure you have access to Zoom and MS Teams and ask IMT's to reveal those positions not onsite.
- Visit the Medical Unit (or other entity in place) and ensure you are fully versed on the process of incident notification for symptomatic individual.
 - Most teams have a COVID-19 Coordinator (MEDL or other specialist) looking at strategic level planning and response.
- Demobilization and Return Travel
 - Some incidents are offering virtual demobilization where resources are not required to have face-to-face contact with the Demobilization Unit Leader, the Finance Section and other units. Work with Finance and Plans to reduce face to face interactions and speed up departures.
 - Same considerations for Travel.

Other Observations and Challenges: Recommendations

- Communication is more difficult due to mask wearing as you cannot see facial expressions. People need to over communicate and actively listen.
- Some services are virtual and the impersonal connection is challenging and may cause frustration(s).
- Acceptance of change and "new normal" procedures for personnel safety can be an additional burden to the tight knit fire community.
- Fear of the unknown and new perception up or down the chain of command regarding COVID-19 can lead to friction.
- Crews are expected to be self-sufficient for a minimum of three operational periods (five operational periods is ideal) and are having difficulties staying supplied. If you are assigned to initial or extended attack fires, work with the Logistics Section closely to prevent falling behind with resupplying while on assignment.

- Digital processes for supply acquisition can be challenging if no confirmation of receipt or update on processing is provided, work with Logistics to get those updates timely. If unsupported timely, crews have resorted to sending runners to camp to resupply but need to consider tradeoffs of additional exposure.
- As you move away from ICP to the fireline, use of COVID-19 PPE seem to be less, although greater opportunities for social distancing exist.
- Spiking out is being heavily utilized and encouraged versus setting up camp at ICP.
 - This is not in a typical organized spike camp, but in locations the crew finds or an area where facilities might identify.
 - Crews should be ready to spike and overusing motels can increase exposure to COVID-19 from the public.
- Flexible meal options have been considered for ensuring resources are fed.
 - The standard option for single serving food containers is not always available and transportation issues can impact being fed.
 - In almost all cases, while food was once hot, food can be cold, once it arrives.
 - Containment devices may be compromised from the moisture contained within food.
 - Some crews have been provided approval to go on per diem and utilize local restaurants and grocery stores. Such needs to be coordinated with your supervisor and the Food Unit Leader.
 - Boost supplies of MRE's to supplement your reserves if challenges arise.
- Concerns expressed, but not found, for COVID-19 overpowering managing the wildfire and removing focus on normal firefighter safety.



Information for Incident Management Teams Operating in the COVID-19 Environment

Captured below are Great Basin crews (IHC, T2IA, and Camp Crews) and IARR observations while assigned in the Southwest Area during the June 2020 wildfire campaign. There are situational differences encountered while assigned or observing all Incident Management Team organizational types (Type III, Type II, and Type I). IMT's balanced the Best Management Practices (BMP) defined in Wildland Fire Response Plans (WFRP) and made "real time" adjustments as challenges were encountered. Lessons learned are being crafted to be shared and all GB IMT staff are encouraged to reach out to their counterparts from the Southwest and Northern Rockies who were mobilized during these events.

Observation References:

- Pre-mobilization
 - Team members adhere to NMAC Interagency Checklist for Mobilization of Resources.
 - Maintain self-screening practices using the COVID-19 Wildland Fire Medical and Public Health Advisory Team (MPHAT) COVID-19 Interim Screening Protocol (COVID-19 MPHAT guidance).
 - Complete daily logs of contacts to help with back tracing efforts (if needed).
 - Individual(s) take adequate PPE with reserves and do not count on re-supply immediately.
 - Recommend resource(s) driving to incidents depart home unit fully self-sufficient with food and water for at least three to five operational periods.
 - Be aware of local, regional, and national pandemic situation.
- Travel
 - Know the COVID-19 restrictions and situation throughout your entire travel route and end destination(s). If possible, avoid traveling through hot spots or plan stops on the perimeters of those areas.
 - Recognize varying public/responder compliance in locations and lead by example.
 - Wear masks at all times in public and outside your "Family Unit/Module of One."
 - Minimize number of fuel/logistical stops and avoid areas known as high risk.
 - Use gloves at gas pumps and consider other innovative approaches such as using pumps in direct sunlight.
 - Ask hotels and restaurants about COVID-19 protocols in place before you chose one.
 - In travel status, report situations that may impact your health to IMT MEDL.
 - Travel as a unit and over communicate with staff if traveling long distances.
- Incident
 - Ensure DOA and Leader's Intent give clear IMT direction with regard to operational latitude and COVID-19 exposure mitigation and containment.
 - IMT's must embrace and lead by example in regard to COVID-19 mitigation.
 - Team posture needs to set the stage as a core value and stress individual accountability.

- IC's should convey leader's intent early in the incident at briefings and meetings to properly set the stage.
 - IMT's must convey the reverse isolation process of COVID-19 mitigation. The mask protects the other person and theirs protects you. Even if you are in a Family Unit/Module of One environment, if someone enters your area with a mask on, don yours.
 - Deploy the IMT's response plan to align with host agency, local health department, CDC, NMAC, FMB, NWCG, Regional WFRP best practices, and IMT lessons learned.
 - Teams should limit face to face contact when possible.
- Plans
 - Establish a virtual check-in process with links to resource orders and in special instruction (Box 8 and 12) put a contact phone and email.
 - In addition, add screening questions to gauge if a resource is symptomatic. Forward that information to MEDL and craft a plan to prevent resource from reaching the incident if a "yes" answer is revealed.
 - Note: not all resources will navigate the virtual path. Have an onsite back-up plan with a check-in board (unstaffed), and an inside ICP/camp protected station.
 - Virtual use of IMET, SITL, GISS, and other specialists is working well.
 - GISS working remotely may gather geospatial data and start on maps when IMT is mobilized and have incident maps ready when team members arrive at incident.
 - e-Suite Enterprise is operational and virtual staffing configurations are successful.
 - Administer temperature checks by medical staff at check-in or random sites.
 - Connect the submission of manifests and other documents to finance via MS Teams.
 - Build a PACE model for meeting and briefing coordination. Assign a "meeting or production manager" if possible to coordinate all events, platforms, and proper invitations. Include QR links for resources that may tune in and know your audience. IMT's in the Southwest were using a combination of face to face, video feed, and radio briefings bundled in one. Ensure you have an audio line with your fire teams' account.
 - Keep briefing size smaller and more concise. Adjust presentation order to deliver leaders intent (IC) and COVID-19 Coordinator (MEDL or OSC) specifics after PSC introduction.
 - Some IMT positions may be working virtually and off-site. Interface may be through phone or video interface which can pose challenges. Explain to resources which positions are virtual positions and ensure the interface is adequate for resource needs.
 - With virtual participants such as an IMET, they can appear on a video feed with audio easily. However, connect them via phone placed by the microphone to be radio cast to the field and heard at the face to face locations. Have Communications Technician capture radio element next to speakers and ensure presenters "break" for radio feed interface.
 - Require masks at briefings and any location you are outside your "Family Unit/Module of One" arena where social spacing cannot be maintained. IMT's must take the lead. As presenters wear a mask until you get to the microphone then take it off. Stand-up microphone work best and Operations can grab the mic and move them or use lapel mics and laser pointers.

- If in person meeting needs to occur, conduct them in outdoor locations or large indoor meeting spaces should be secured. Again, masks should be utilized during meetings out of an abundance of caution.
 - Communication is more difficult due to mask wearing as you cannot see facial expressions. People need to over communicate and actively listen.
 - Use all methods for product delivery, QR codes to FTP, Wi-Fi exchange and paper.
 - Develop an electronic training and documentation protocol.
 - Deploy a virtual process to minimize contact at demob.
 - Transitions: be extra cautious during the overlap period. Craft a plan that limits exposure as the two IMT's interface. Facilities may need cleaning if they are going to be co-used quickly and transitions need to be modified to reduce risk.
 - Closeouts will be impacted, large AAR's, and also team gatherings modified.
- Finance
 - elsuite Enterprise is working to support remote/virtual staffing configurations.
 - Develop a virtual document submission plan (see Bush and Bighorn Fire IAP's for example on the FTP site).
 - Communicate options for digital submissions of FTR and Equipment Time Reports with QR codes on IAPs and posted in camp(s). Keep hand submission options available with precautions in place.
 - Field advice, if submitting photos of CTR's or shift tickets, set image to actual size for readability.
 - Limit exposure with facility controls use plexi-glass barriers and reversed monitors for draft reviews. ICP and camp staff works together through MS Teams to process finals and limit interactions with resources.
 - Work with Plans to coordinate minimum exposure virtual demobilization process.
 - Work with buying teams/incident business advisors to clarify resource requests for extra supplies due to COVID-19 and also various logistical new norms.
- Logistics
 - All fires seemed to struggle within the Logistics Section resulting in part from working in the COVID-19 environment.
 - Boost staff to cover logistical challenges due to COVID-19 mitigations in ICP, camps, spikes, with food/water delivery, increased need for sanitation and disinfection, complex supply acquisition and distribution processes.
 - Separate ICP from camp(s) and limit traffic.
 - Order additional camp crews, add additional restrooms, hand sanitization stations, and develop barrier delineation to help with area control.
 - Post increased signage for process explanation and PPE requirements.
 - Design a controlled food service area. To avoid longer wait times, an option was separates line for single serving and multiple serving requests.
 - Keep ahead of re-supply requests and close ordering loops with resources.
 - Confirm supply orders submitted electronically and advise resources of their status. If not informed, resource will travel to camps to re-supply and increase risk of exposure.
 - Spiking out is being heavily used and encouraged versus setting up camp at ICP.

- Account for crews spiking outside of spikes “scatter spikes “. It becomes challenging when delivering support items. Enforce PPE best practices in spikes.
- This is not in a typical organized spike camp, but in locations the crew finds or an area where facilities might identify.
- Crews should be ready to spike and overusing motels can increase exposure to COVID-19 from the public.
- Flexible meal options have been considered for ensuring resources are fed.
 - The standard option for single serving food containers is not always available and transportation issues can impact being fed.
 - In almost all cases, while food was once hot, food will be cold, once it arrives.
 - Containment devices may be compromised from the moisture contained within food.
 - Some crews have been provided approval to go on per diem and utilize local restaurants and grocery stores. Such needs to be coordinated with your supervisor and the Food Unit Leader.
 - Issue: delay of food delivery, container compromise, cold food, and disbursement time can impact resource 2:1 work:rest ratio.
- Stay 96 hours ahead with re-supply of ice, water, and MRE’s as the cache system will be strained.
- Crews will exhaust 72 hour kits if support lags and they then run out or be forced to boost supplies early in the event that has been drawing question by IMT’s.
- Limit exposure: fuel tender drivers pump fuel and no interaction needed.
- Radio kit request have increased due to COVID-19.
- When quality of food experienced was low, and resources chose to self-supplement with fresh fruits and vegetables. Ask the operators how can we support you better?
- Medical/Safety
 - Implement a comprehensive COVID-19 response plan. Align with the DOA, Leader’s Intent and other response agency guidance. Be ready for a COVID-19 “positive case”.
 - Assign a “COVID-19 MEDL” and boost staffing to cover COVID-19 operations in both medical and safety. Establish a working relationship with Health Department, local hospitals, and the Department of Emergency Management.
 - Have 24 hours coverage available if symptoms present during off hours.
 - Additional Medical Unit staffing maybe required to handle additional workload imposed by COVID-19.
 - COVID-19 protocol signage needs to be posted (everywhere).
 - Develop trigger points if exposure(s) arise and impacts to operation escalate.
 - Convey CDC guidelines and team expectation for COVID-19 mitigations at briefings and meetings. Follow the basics!
 - Ensure PPE compliance reaches the field and is followed in break-outs and spikes.
 - Ensure all resources and support personnel practice daily self-screenings (MPHAT).
 - Align with Plans to monitor symptomatic individuals while en-route.
 - Common areas that the team will occupy should be disinfected by commercial cleaning organization prior to transfer of command.
 - Increased use of hotel lodging has been working well for resources in the Southwest.

- Operations
 - Operations will still brief incoming resources, set-up map and hold briefings, outside if possible, plus brief in the field (PPE worn).
 - Do not let COVID-19 takeover operations.
 - Concerns expressed, but not found, for COVID-19 overpowering managing the wildfire and removing focus on normal firefighter safety.
 - Ask how the resources are holding up with COVID-19 mitigations and fire intertwined.
 - Connect with the field more if radio brief is the only option.
 - Watch for disconnects from virtual platforms, confirm clear intent with operators.
 - Quickly adjust processes that do not work and ensure its well-known adjustment.
 - Help with Logistics with support and supply needs.
 - Recognize the desire to stay remote to lower risk vs resources going into camps or ICP.
- Demobilization & Return Travel
 - Offer a virtual demobilization pathway where resources are not required to have face-to-face contact. IMT needs to develop the loop closure process between all unit visits to ensure assets are returned and documentation is completed.
 - Same considerations as listed for travel.
- Other Observations and Challenges:
 - Resources are seeing gaps of compliance and this reality can lead to credibility issues. Also, there may be reluctance to enter camp areas with non-compliance if the risk is higher.
 - Intent messaging from IMT's may be challenged by delivery through virtual environments. Ensure loop closures to field operators occur.
 - Resources will balance exposure/risk in larger camp environments and make their best decision on how to support themselves. They prefer remote and don't assume you have to see them to support them. Communicate with them and avoid forced option paths.
 - If food and/or re-supply are not adequate, deviations will occur. Ask "how are the support efforts being received", are you getting the nutritional elements needed and are camps or spikes safe for access?



Information for Fire Management/Agency Administrators to Consider for Operating in the COVID-19 Environment

Captured below are Great Basin crews (IHC, T2IA, and Camp Crews) and IARR observations while assigned in the Southwest Area during the June 2020 wildfire campaign. Several areas of focus were revealed while engaging fire leadership and Agency Administrators (AA).

- AA's must ensure clear intent is given and translates to deliberate IMT compliance of COVID-19 protocol.
- AA's must lead by example and give strong intent messages when interacting with the resources.
- A leader's intent optional document should be included as part of the Delegation of Authority (DOA) to cover COVID-19 mitigations and response planning.
- Ensure IMT's are accountable to present and deploy required COVID-19 mitigation tactics.
- Solicit feedback from resources to know "how they are doing" and if systems are not working. Ensure IMT's make swift adjustments and broadly communicate them.
- Ensure that IMT's have a COVID-19 Coordinator (MEDL or other specialist) that is focused on response planning for COVID-19 in the incident environment at a strategic level (all facets).
- AA's must be prepared to deliver a virtual in-briefing and closeouts.
 - AA's need to coordinate with IMTs to accommodate resources attending virtually through Zoom or MS Teams.
- Operational briefings and planning meetings may be held in a virtual environment. AA's can participate remotely versus have to attend all in person (travel and message connection tradeoffs).
- With some resources working virtually, there might be earlier demands on local unit such as geospatial data if GISS are working remotely as they may start on maps when IMT is mobilized.
- AA's need to provide IMT's resource connections to local Health Departments and showcase differences in protocols to COVID-19 response during in-briefings.
- Larger areas may be required for ICP footprint to allow for social distancing, while also allowing for pre-identified areas for informal spike camps near the fire and providing social distancing.
- Address concerns for working around COVID-19 overpowering managing the wildfire and removing focus on normal firefighter safety.