



## Lessons on COVID-19 Era Large Fire Briefings by the Southwest Area Type 1 IMT

*“Duty to provide a work place safe of known hazards and wearing a mask is a simple measure to respect and protect each other. We need the integrity to be diligent even when people are not looking. We need a healthy workforce for the long season ahead of us.”*

Incident Commander  
Southwest Area Type 1 Incident Management Team

When the Southwest Area Type 1 Incident Management Team gave their first briefing on the Sawtooth Fire, they changed the location from inside a building to an open courtyard outside. The IC started by laying out their intent regarding COVID-19 prevention at morning briefing. They explained that the change of location was to provide better ventilation and space to social distance from each other (great than six feet).



Morning briefing became a visual representation of differing beliefs, risk tolerance, and prevention actions. It was apparent that old habits would be a barrier to successful implementation (see photo above).

For the next briefing, overhead asked that resources limit the number of people they brought to briefing to maintain recommended social distancing. While the ability to keep six feet of space between attendees became easier during the main briefing, individuals closed that distance during division breakouts.

### **After a COVID-19 Confirmed Contact – IC Requires Face Masks at Briefings**

After notification of an individual that had contact with a confirmed COVID-19 case and considering the varied adherence to recommendations, the IMT asked for all of those attending briefings to wear a cloth face cover. That briefing began with the IC sharing their reasoning and decision behind changing his Leader’s Intent. Everyone in the briefing area that morning wore a face cover and worked on maintaining social distancing (see photo on next page).

By the IMT’s fourth shift the fire activity had decreased dramatically. Only mid-level leaders like Division Supervisors and Task Force Leaders were asked to attend briefing that morning to further reduce the number of individuals gathered in one area. The IC provided the expectation that they would brief their resources in the field, observing

the guidance that cloth face masks would be worn in groups over ten if social distancing measures were not observed. Messaging in the IAP was also adjusted to reflect the intent provided in briefing.



## Takeaways

- Provide clear Leaders Intent regarding expected COVID-19 prevention measures. Need to remain flexible and course correct when new information is presented; leader's intent can be adjusted. Main function is to give info and ensure safety.
- Tying COVID-19 messages back to doctrine and core values (Duty, Integrity, Respect) helps provide clear expectations. The Incident Commander informed: *"Duty to provide a work place safe of known hazards and wearing a mask is a simple measure to respect and protect each other. We need the integrity to be diligent even when people are not looking. We need a healthy workforce for the long season ahead of us."*
- The footprint of ICP and other incident management facilities/grounds will need to be larger to accommodate prevention measures such as social distancing or less individuals being permitted to use the space at one time.
- Modifying the messaging for Incident Requirements in the IAP to align with the changing intent provided at briefing helped the IMT communicate incident expectations for coronavirus prevention measures. The inclusion of COVID-19 as a hazard on the Risk Assessment Worksheet in the IAP communicates to all personnel on the fire that it presents a risk to incident objectives (see below).

INCIDENT OBJECTIVES ICS-202	INCIDENT NAME SAWTOOTH FIRE	DATE PREPARED 6/03/2020	TIME PREPARED 2030
OPERATIONAL PERIOD (DATE/TIME) <b>THURSDAY June 4, 2020</b> Day Operational Period: 0600-2000			
<b>VALUES AT RISK:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Incident Responders and the Public (#1 Priority)</li> <li>Communities of Concern (Apache Junction, Gold Canyon, Superior, Top of the World, Queen Valley, Miami/Claypool, Mesa and the Phoenix "East Valley" Metro Area, Elephant Butte, Quarter Circle U Ranch, and JF Ranch Headquarter)</li> <li>Superstition Wilderness</li> <li>Sonoran Desert Habitat</li> <li>Williams Gateway (Mesa) and Phoenix Sky Harbor Airports – impacts from smoke and TFR</li> <li>High Voltage Power Lines</li> <li>Archaeological and Cultural Resources</li> <li>Waterways and Riparian Areas</li> <li>Wildlife Resources</li> </ul>			
<b>INCIDENT OBJECTIVES:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ensure all actions reflect a commitment to firefighter and p operations that are commensurate with values at risk, prot and type of firefighting resources necessary to successful</li> <li>Be creative, decisive and exercise good judgement in dec</li> <li>Make reasonable and prudent decisions to accomplish the jurisdictional agencies mission while minimizing risks and limiting exposure to firefighting personnel.</li> <li>Minimize fire impacts to private property and public infrastructure in and around above described "Communities of Concern."</li> </ul>		<b>OPERATIONAL SHIFT: JUNE 4,</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>organizations.</li> <li>Resources will maintain module of one separation. Masks are encouraged but not required, unless indoors where physical distancing cannot be maintained.</li> <li>Ensure timely and accurate information is communicated to cooperators and partners to increase safety</li> </ul>	
<b>INCIDENT REQUIREMENTS:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Manage timely, safe, and efficient initial attack within the designated area, coordinating with affected organizations.</li> <li>Resources will maintain module of one separation. Masks where physical distancing cannot be maintained.</li> <li>Ensure timely and accurate information is communicated relationships and capitalize on resources, capacity, and ex</li> <li>Public information is distributed to all interested parties including stakeholders, local and state government officials, and the public utilizing the most effective and broad-reaching information platforms.</li> <li>Create and maintain a work environment in which people are treated with respect and dignity.</li> <li>Keep cost commensurate with values at risk.</li> </ul>		<b>OPERATIONAL SHIFT: JUNE 5-7,</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>manage timely, safe and efficient initial attack within designated area, coordinating with affected organizations.</li> <li>Resources will maintain "module of one" separation. Masks will be required when meeting in groups of 10 or more outside your "module of one."</li> <li>Ensure timely and accurate information is communicated to cooperators and partners to increase safety</li> </ul>	
<b>WEATHER FORECAST FOR OPERATIONAL PERIOD</b> Hot to very hot temperatures are expected today, with warm over 10% in the afternoon, recovering to the 25-35% range overnight low at 5%. Winds will be southwest at 5 to 10 mph. See the attac		<b>OPERATIONAL SHIFT: JUNE 8,</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>manage timely, safe and efficient initial attack within designated area, coordinating with affected organizations.</li> <li>Resources will maintain "module of one" separation. Masks will be required in meetings and briefings, and when interacting in close proximity (less than 6 feet) with individuals outside your "module of one."</li> <li>Ensure timely and accurate information is communicated to cooperators and partners to increase safety</li> </ul>	
<b>GENERAL MESSAGE</b> ALL Incident personnel have five common communication responsibilities: 1) know what you need to do; 2) communicate your actions; 3) communicate hazards to others; 4) acknowledge messages; and 5) ask if you don't know. See the 2018 IAPG (purple cover), page x, for more information.			
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORGANIZATION LIST (ICS 203)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> MEDICAL PLAN (ICS 209MF)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SPOT WEATHER FORECAST	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ASSIGNMENT LIST (ICS 204)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> AIR OPS SUMMARY (ICS 206)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> FIRE BEHAVIOR FORECAST	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATION PLAN (ICS 205)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SAFETY MESSAGE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SHORT HAUL OPERATIONS GUIDANCE	
PREPARED BY (PLANNING SECTION CHIEF) Bob Love <i>R. Love</i>		APPROVED BY (INCIDENT COMMANDER) Alan Sinclair <i>A. Sinclair</i>	
ICS 202			

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