

TWO MORE CHAINS

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Understanding the Value of Storytelling

By Kelly Woods, Director
Wildland Fire Lessons Learned Center

From my first moments working in wildland fire, I understood that we are a storytelling culture. I attended Guard School the same week I “celebrated” my 18th birthday. The only cadre members I remember from that week were members of the Zigzag Hotshots. They told stories that captivated my young impressionable mind. Through their words and story sharing, I began to understand how my choices and the choices of those leading me could directly affect the safety of everyone involved. I was drawn into the adventure of the job as they relayed details of what I might expect as I began life as a wildland firefighter. I was learning from their experience.

When someone shares their story, we cannot help but become active participants in the events. Listening, judging, and processing each detail to determine if we would have read the context clues in the same way, ultimately arriving at the same actions. Or would we have done something different? Either way, through this process we develop our own experience.

At its core, storytelling is the basis for learning and healing.

Through storytelling we build slides from which we can draw if ever we find ourselves in a similar situation. In essence, a well told story can elicit a reaction so strong that learning can happen. With no story, there is no dialogue. With no dialogue, internal or external, there is no learning.

Beyond learning, storytelling helps develop a sense of community through building comradery and establishment of culture. How often have you found yourself reliving shifts of the past with friends by telling tales of hard but fun times, unbelievable accomplishments achieved together, or by recounting the worst of the miserable times with affection knowing you persevered together?

Stories establish norms, create perceived heroes and villains, celebrate good times, and help process difficult times. At its core, storytelling is the basis for learning and healing.

In this issue of *Two More Chains*, we focus on entrapment stories told through decades of incident reports and reviews. We will also hear from someone who was on Storm King Mountain near Glenwood Springs, Colorado on July 6, 1994 and what it means to him to tell his story.

Decades after I heard those initial fire stories, I find myself understanding the value of storytelling on a whole new level. Consider the words on the following pages in this *Two More Chains* as you ponder the role of storytelling in our culture and your own development.

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Stories:

Why We Need Them and Why They are Never Over

Making Sense of What Happened, What We Are Doing, and Who We Are

By Erik Apland, Field Operations Specialist (Acting)
Wildland Fire Lessons Learned Center

Mark Twain supposedly said: *"History doesn't repeat itself, but it often rhymes."* Whether he said this or not, it nevertheless seems absolutely true.

I've been working on a special assignment that entails reading, indexing, and making notes on the reports of entrapments in the Wildland Fire Lessons Learned Center's (LLC) Incident Review Database (IRDB). In reading these, you run into so many things: surprises, heartbreaking stories, thoughtful analysis, callousness. The first reaction I have when I read about fire entrapments that seem eerily similar is: *"Oh, this is just like..."*

But, of course, it isn't just like it.

Different people made different choices for different reasons in different places at different times. My mind wants to put these things together. The similarities are, superficially, very strong: [Inaja \(1956\)](#) and [Cedar \(2003\)](#) in the same river canyon less than two miles apart; [Tuolumne \(2004\)](#), [Ponderosa \(2001\)](#) and [Mt. Murphy \(1982\)](#) involving nearly the same sequence of events, all in the Sierra Nevada foothills, with different outcomes.

"This is just like that," "This is why they did that," are just stories we tell ourselves. In the past 15 years we have become better at acknowledging that. No longer are events written as if by a narrator objectively observing the action from above—a viewpoint you could call "God's Eye View."

The 'God's Eye View' Mindset

Two reports from this previous "God's Eye View" mindset struck me. The first was the [Lake Mountain Fire](#) on Idaho's Salmon-Challis National Forest in 1985. The first of two large-scale entrapments during the 1985 Idaho fire season, Lake Mountain involved the deployment of 85 fire shelters (with no fatalities or serious injuries). In the report, intense focus is placed on the belief that a fire shelter deployment is incontrovertible evidence of avoidable mistakes. The report goes on to admonish firefighters only to use shelters when absolutely necessary, even though the report itself admitted the deployments under investigation were necessary.

PODCAST

To learn more from Erik Apland and his exploration of entrapment stories found in the LLC's Incident Review Database, check out our latest Wildfire Lessons Podcast:

<https://wildfirelessons.podbean.com/e/reading-reflecting-and-changing-behavior/>

"A DEPLOYED FIRE SHELTER--IS THE END RESULT OF AN EARLIER MISTAKE!"

(a statement by an unknown Great American philosopher)

Different Culture – The above admonition was the only text on the second page of the 1985 "[Report on the Fire Shelter Deployment on the Lake Mountain Fire](#)".

The second striking report from this era was the Coffee Pot Fire in New Mexico in June 1994. Members of a hotshot crew were overtaken by fire on a trail down a steep slope. They used fire shelters for protection. Only weeks before the earth-shattering South Canyon Fire, the investigators wrote: *"All five individuals involved in the shelter deployment said they felt uncomfortable as they went down the switchbacks, but they went anyway. All firefighters, especially 'Hot Shots' have a 'Can-Do' attitude. This is both positive and necessary but cannot be allowed to compromise personal safety."* Written by an investigation team only three weeks before South Canyon, these words are eerie beyond belief. They could be lifted directly from the subsequent [South Canyon Investigation](#).



Deep in the [1956 Inaja Fire report](#) is a revealing insight into human factors and decision-making—40 years before South Canyon’s aftermath initiated a transition to the culture we recognize today.

Unexplored in the [Coffee Pot report](#) (as well as the original South Canyon report) is whether it truly is just a “Can-Do” attitude that fueled the fateful decision to go down the line, or if there were other social, political, and psychological factors at play. Take, for instance, this quotation from a firefighter who survived an entrapment in Southern California: “*Danny Street...remarked to me as we looked down into the canyon, ‘Kenny, I don’t like the idea of going down there.’ I told him, ‘I don’t either, Danny.’ Thinking to myself that Jack Kern of the Los Padres [National Forest], who really knows his fire, had been there all day must have thought it OK...I said something to that effect to Danny.*” This statement was recorded by the team investigating the [1956 Inaja Fire](#). Danny and Kenny made it out of the canyon, but eleven others did not.

This deference to respected colleagues, and our (mistaken?) perception of someone else’s comfort level with an assignment is surely important in our risk management calculations, then and now. The Inaja Fire was one of a string of fatality fires that prompted a task force by the U.S. Forest Service that developed, among other things, the 10 Fire Orders and 13 Watchout Situations (increased to 18 in 1987). But deep in the Inaja report was this

insight into human factors, 40 years before South Canyon’s aftermath initiated a transition to the culture we recognize today.

Reading Their Stories with a Seriousness that Empathy Demands

The uncertainty of our contemporary reports acknowledges the uncertainty of reality, unlike many past documents that narrate, pass judgement, and point over and over again back to the rules: *Here’s where they broke the rules, you’ll be fine if you follow the rules.* In 1987, at the height of a five-year period of mass shelter deployments, one investigation team even recommended adding a label to the fire shelter: “*CAUTION: Violation of Any 10 Firefighting Orders May Require Use.*”

With both of these fires, I feel responsible to take what I heard and what I think it meant and continue to chew on it. To try to figure out what to make of it, and to come back again and again as my perspective changes with the years.

On the [Bell Valley Fire](#) (1973) and the [Coal Canyon Fire](#) (2011), a firefighter lay down prone in the middle of a road rather than retreating a few feet to safety. In 1973 the reason is left indeterminate, inexplicable. In 2011 the human factors are explored in depth. History doesn’t repeat itself, but it often rhymes. Those rhymes we only find by looking back on the work done by generations before us, by reading through their stories with the seriousness that empathy demands.

Another Entrapment Story Not in the IRDB

We tell stories for a lot of reasons. A lot of the stories have the premise: “*This is how dumb I am,*” or “*I was so f***ing scared.*” We tell these stories because they are stuck in our heads. These stories say something about who we are as people and what we value. But they are also a challenge to us. Stories ask us: *What do you make of this?*

There’s a story a friend told me about a firing operation in northern Washington that went totally sideways (actually it went down, then came back up). This is an entrapment story. The smoke column they made collapsed; the fire ran downhill. I laughed, gasped, expressed relief at a happy ending.

Since then, I have thought about what that story meant. This was a story about a plan that had to work. It was a story about a “No-Alternate” plan that didn’t work. It was a story about why that ended up being OK, even when it didn’t work. This entrapment, like innumerable others, is not in the IRDB.

The Story is Never Over

Several years after I had last worked in northern Washington’s Methow Valley, I returned before the fire season started to visit old friends. We went to an old haunt and told new stories. It was early 2016.

In years gone by, we had spent countless hours under this roof talking and listening and laughing. Returning to sit and listen to an old friend was like coming home. I listened to a story about [a fire up Twisp River Road](#) that didn’t have a happy ending like my

friend's entrapment story. As the crow flies, these two fires are only a few miles apart, separated by 12 years and the greatest barrier human beings can imagine.

With both of these fires, I feel responsible to take what I heard and what I think it meant and continue to chew on it. To try to figure out what to make of it, and to come back again and again as my perspective changes with the years.

We are all accountable to our brothers and sisters. When they tell us about the time they were in a bad spot, we owe it to them and to ourselves to figure out what the hell to make of that. That's true of these entrapment reports, too. Not just the big fires we train on and think we know the best (*but do we?*), but also the small ones that we may have never heard of before: [Bell Valley](#), [Mack #2](#), [Coffee Pot](#), [Fish Lake](#).

Even when the report authors wrote as if they had concluded the story, it is never over. Hopefully, you can find the firefighters in these reports, in these stories, and try to listen to them.

***Hopefully, you can find the firefighters in these reports,
in these stories, and try to listen to them.***

All of Us Getting Together

When I think about all the stories housed here in the LLC's IRDB, and all the stories I have heard and remembered—or heard and forgot—I think about all of us getting together around a big campfire, or maybe on a big project fire.

We sit at those long folding tables under the canvas tent roof and drink one more cup of coffee before heading to demob. Everybody is there: the crews fresh off the lines from Idaho in 1910 and 1985 with the cat drivers from Florida, Wisconsin, and Virginia. Smokejumpers from 1949, 1994, and 2002, comparing gear and whistling like they inexplicably do.

Crouching on the saw-chip floor and spitting tobacco or sitting back in the plastic chairs with their heavy black boots up on the table. Wearing cotton logger shirts, or green Nomex, or blue uniforms with gleaming badges.

Then we can all say what we thought all this was about, what really happened—and why.



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Kip Gray

He'd Rather You Call Him a "Learner" Not a "Survivor"

As you're about to discover, Kip Gray has an important story—and insights and learning—to share with us.

This man's unique perspective helps enrich his stories, his learnings. In 1999, after working on engines on Oregon's Ochoco National Forest for seven seasons, this wildland firefighter made the jump to the structure fire world. For the past 22 years, Kip has worked his way up to his current Operations Battalion Chief position with the Medford (Oregon) Fire Department.

And, of course, there's a key personal wildland fire story that Kip tells ever year when he travels back to the annual South Canyon Fire Staff Ride. On July 6, 1994, Kip was a temporary "fill-in" with Oregon's Prineville Interagency Hotshot Crew. Based nearby on his Ochoco National Forest, Kip knew the Prineville Hotshots, had worked with them, and gone out as a fill-in with them before. He was on that steep Colorado mountainside with them that day when, below them, the South Canyon Fire spotted across the drainage into the drought-stressed Gambel oak and raced up the hill where Prineville and the others were located.

Nine of the Prineville Hotshots and five of their fellow firefighters—three smokejumpers and two helitack firefighters—could not escape those flames. They all perished.

In the following conversation between Kelly Woods and Kip Gray—among other stories and experiences—Kip reflects back on his South Canyon experience. He explains why it's important for him to attend the annual staff rides that honor those who died on this fatality fire by learning and telling the stories from this tragic event.

"If you've signed on to be a firefighter, you've really signed-on for a lifetime of learning. You're never going to know everything you need to know. You're just not. So, you've really signed-on to learning for at least the rest of your career—and, hopefully, for the rest your life."

Kip Gray

**By Kelly Woods, Director
Wildland Fire Lessons Learned Center**

Kelly: Could you talk about why you decided to leave your Engine Captain job to transition to the structure fire world?

Kip: My decision to leave the wildland fire community and the U.S. Forest Service was really because I had two small kids at home and I was looking for a permanent appointment. I had spent two years right out of high school getting structural fire certifications and an EMT license. I therefore had the qualifications to start applying for some of these structure jobs.



Kip (second from right) stands with his fellow South Canyon Fire "learners" (from left): Kim Lightley, Alex Robertson, Michelle Ryerson, and Bryan Scholz. They're on top of Storm King Mountain during a recent South Canyon Staff Ride.

At that time, I was super open with my (Forest Service) boss about doing this. I explained that if the Forest Service could provide me permanent status, I'll absolutely stay—but this is where I'm at in my fire career. I needed to be pursuing all opportunities for permanent work.

Of course, I do miss working with the wildland fire community. There's nothing quite as fun as wildland fire.

One of the things I miss the most about wildland fire is being outside, being in wild places, being in wilderness areas, and just being mobile. Through the course of a single day, we might go from somewhere way up in the Ochoco Mountains down to the Lower Deschutes River or John Day River. You might attack a fire at timberline or you might go down and attack a fire in the lowlands where it's all grass.

And I always appreciated getting to travel about and meeting all kinds of different people, learning the different ways of doing business in different states and different regions. I learned how our wildland fire community is very small. You form important bonds with different folks and their "can-do" attitudes. I always enjoyed that.

I'm certainly not discrediting any of those type of experiences in the municipal and structure world. We do have the same thing. But just by the nature of our assignment, we don't get to travel and bump into other people as much.

I've realized that a lot of the values between the wildland community and the structural fire community are interchangeable. In both, there's a lot of people who want to do the right thing and are really passionate about their jobs and are willing to work hard—often not under the best conditions.

I think there's a common similar attitude, a bond, that all firefighters share.



Kip with his daughters, Kelli (on left) and Sydney, visiting their dad at his Medford Fire Department.

***I do miss working with the wildland fire community.
There's nothing quite as fun as wildland fire.***

Kelly: Could you explain what you do as your fire department's Operations Battalion Chief?

Kip: Our Medford Fire Department has five fire stations with 23 firefighters total on duty each day. I supervise these fire stations. I have five Engine Captains who report to me. Really, what I try to do every day is just get the "roadblocks" out of their way, so they can go to calls. Our department is very busy and the Engine Captains don't have a lot of time to handle logistics and a lot of the more administrative type responsibilities. I try to take that out of the way for them.

When there's a major incident, a structure fire or a wildland fire of some consequence, or a motor vehicle collision with extrication, I'll respond to serve as the Incident Commander for those types of scenes.

Kelly: Let's talk a bit about storytelling in our firefighter culture. When we get together, that's what we do; we tell stories. We laugh, we learn, and we process the things that have happened. Stories are such a key piece to bring us into that center of the bullseye for the likelihood of learning, right?

How important has storytelling been for you in either hearing stories or sharing your own stories?

Kip: Storytelling within the fire community is very important. I think storytelling begins to validate some of the things that people are learning. Telling real stories helps to prevent oversimplification and biased conclusions about events.

For example, these days in fire classes—whether it's S-290 or 390 or 131, or whatever—instructors use the South Canyon Fire as a case study.

And I've been in some of those classrooms and heard the discussions where nobody knows that I was on that fire. When the group starts talking about South Canyon, I'll hear people say certain things and draw conclusions that, in my opinion, start to oversimplify what happened.

That's probably a normal response that we might all tend to do. I think what folks are doing is kind of saying: *"Well, this makes sense to me, so it must have been this. I can put my finger on this thing right here. That had to be what it is because it made sense to the person on the fire. Therefore, it's not going to happen to me because I can now make sense of what happened so I can prevent this."*

So, sure, if you're just looking at the 10/18, and LCES, and Downhill Line Construction guidelines and all that stuff on paper, you can begin to draw some conclusions. You can second-guess that if they wouldn't have done this or done that, the outcome would have been different. That's why storytelling is so important. It helps add that first-person perspective and experience to what you're being taught.



Kip (on left) during his wildland fire days with crewmate Dax Borgard on the 1996 Sloan's Ridge Fire near the North Fork of the John Day River in Oregon.

For several years, I didn't really talk about my South Canyon Fire experience. And to be honest, I think I just didn't fully understand my own story. I didn't have enough pieces of that puzzle to really feel like I could present it.

Storytelling helps people to understand that it's actually not that simple on the ground in the moment.

There's the classroom, and these days we have some very good courses, but there's still no replacement for somebody who's willing to put into words an event that happened to them and share this with other firefighters. I think there's also a bit of respect that just comes from firefighter to firefighter. When somebody tells me something, and it's coming from a brother or sister firefighter, it tends to carry some weight.

And then there's the learning that takes place by firefighters just chatting with one another. You find somebody you connect with and you share stories and that person is going to say something that's going to stick with you. Some of the best learning is this type of informal learning that takes place between firefighters just talking to each other. It's likely you could not capture this type of learning in any sort of curriculum. It's pretty organic.

For Years, I Didn't Talk About South Canyon

Kip: For several years, I didn't really talk about my South Canyon Fire experience. And to be honest, I think I just didn't fully understand my own story. I didn't have enough pieces of that puzzle to really feel like I could present it.

It wasn't until I started going back to South Canyon to participate in the annual South Canyon Staff Ride, year after year, that those pieces started to come together. And they came together through storytelling. They came together through me being back on that mountain with those other people who had also been there that day in 1994 and hearing their perspectives—their stories.

It came through being up there with one of the jumpers that I had never before met. Even though we were on that fire together, of course we'd never met. I probably saw this person on the way up the hill that day. That was it.

The clarity of what had actually occurred that day came from hearing this person's perspective. I suddenly had a bunch of "aha" moments like: *"Oh, I didn't know you guys did that"* or *"Now I see why you did this."*

That important learning about this incident only happened through storytelling, through other people sharing what they saw, what they heard, what they felt, why they went the way they did.

So, for me, there's no substitute for telling and sharing your stories. And it's interesting how you continue to put the story together for a long, long time afterwards. You just keep learning little bits and pieces—and that's the real value of telling it.

Kelly: Absolutely. Storytelling is a form of sensemaking, right? You have to hear what other people were thinking and feeling to fill-in the story. I think that is such an important piece of the learning because, like you said, if you're just looking at a black-and-white piece of paper and say: "Okay, we're going to study this particular fire," it's easy to make a lot of assumptions about how people made mistakes.

At South Canyon, when we walk on the ground it's always a lot steeper than that black-and-white piece of paper could ever indicate. And everything's a lot farther than it seemed. It's so incredible that so many of you folks who were on that fire are willing to return and keep telling your story for the benefit of the fire community.

This May, when I attended this year's South Canyon Staff Ride, it struck me how many of the participants hadn't even been born when South Canyon occurred.

Kip: Yes, it's an interesting realization when you start to process that.

Kelly: What's it like when people say to you: "Oh, you're a South Canyon survivor." How do you feel about the term "survivor"?

Kip: That word "survivor" has a little bit of a stigma attached to it. Rather than "survivor", I think the term should be "learner".

When someone says "survivor", it tends to sound a little heroic. And, of course, it's really not. I, therefore, tend to dislike that term. I'm just a firefighter who was there.

I think there's a lot of lessons that can be learned from survivors, of course. But I wouldn't want that term to detract from any sort of lesson or storytelling or anything.

I think it's important to remember that the folks who we're honoring didn't survive. For me, maybe I just got lucky. I was in the right spot. But it's those folks who didn't survive, that's the reason why we need to tell those stories.



Kip with daughters Kelli and Sydney and son Joey at an eighth-grade honor society recognition for Sydney.

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But it's those folks who didn't survive, that's the reason why we need to tell those stories.***

Kelly: Can we talk about the "honor through learning" concept? That's something we tend to say a lot here at the Wildland Fire Lessons Learned Center. To me, this isn't just about honoring those people who have lost their lives. It's also honoring those people who have been through something and have lessons to share. We need to create a safe environment in which they can share their lessons, their stories. Through all lessons, we honor our whole community through learning.

Kip: Well said. I think that's 100 percent true. In fact, that's what motivates me to continue to return to the South Canyon Fire Staff Ride every year and talk to people. Because it's not always easy. There's definitely moments there where it's hard.

But to not attend that staff ride, I feel like it would be a disservice to those folks who were there that day and never came back home with us. For me, to stay in the firefighting community and call myself a firefighter and not tell those stories—to not share these stories with other firefighters—that would be a disservice.

So yes, definitely, honoring through learning is a valuable piece of our culture.

Kelly: What else compels you to get up that hill every year and meet the people and tell your South Canyon story on the South Canyon Staff Ride?

Kip: What motivates me is to find those people in whom I get a sense that they have a little bit of that *“I don’t think I would have done that; I don’t think I would have made that decision”* bias. Then I talk them through what happened. I try to get them to the point where they can say: *“Well, gosh. I might have done the same thing given what I just learned.”*

Reaching out to those people by telling my story helps motivate me to return to the staff rides.

Kelly: Is there anything that you think we should be trying to do better to capitalize on these learning opportunities?

Kip: It’s been 22 years since I left the Forest Service. Therefore, I’m more out of touch with what’s happening out there in the wildland community. On the structure side, or maybe in general, I’m continuing to strive for a learning culture where we have systems or folks who can tell their stories.

And it’s not punitive. Even though there may not be any sort of discipline, at times it can still feel punitive. Because there can still be a stigma attached to it, like you made a mistake.

As a supervisor, we’ve had close calls and we’ve had near misses since I’ve been here at the Medford Fire Department. We just tell the story. We just talk about it with the rest of the firefighters who were there and with our neighboring departments.

I also like to have the person who was involved in one of these incidents sit down and write out their story. Get clear on what happened and put it into writing. Then we have that to serve as a reference point for talking and discussing what happened.

Kelly: OK, let’s shift gears here a bit. Most of us can probably guess what turned out to be the worst shift of your life. For a change of pace, can you talk about the best shift of your life?

Kip: I think there’s so many fun things that you do out there in wildland firefighting. And that’s something that I probably do miss. It’s just fun to be out there doing those sorts of activities. It’s a grind, it’s dirty, it’s hard, it’s hot—whatever. But it’s also really fun because, like I mentioned previously, you’re out there working and collaborating with those like-minded people.

It’s hard to pick one shift. But a really great assignment I had was in 1998. I took an engine to Florida and we spent three weeks there. It was really a fun, different assignment with different ways of doing business. And it turned out to be like a Region 6 reunion.



Kip visits the Granite Mountain Hotshots memorial in January 2021.

As a supervisor, we’ve had close calls and we’ve had near misses since I’ve been here at the Medford Fire Department. We just tell the story. We just talk about it with the rest of the firefighters who were there and with our neighboring departments.

Most of our Ranger District was there. Other engines and captains and the Prineville Hotshot Crew was there. We all ended up just having a ton of fun and we fought a lot of fire.

And because eventually there was such a bottleneck trying to get people demobed off the fire, they got to the point where they’re like: *“Hey, if you guys just want to disappear, get out of our hair today and we’re still going to pay you for eight hours: Go away.”*

And we’re like: *“We’re out of here!”* So we ended up at the beach and just spent a couple of days hanging out with a bunch of really good firefighting friends. That was pretty fun.

And, of course, there’s been those fires over the years that were fun because you get to do all kinds of different things. You dig line, you do structure protection, you burn-out behind a dozer, you spike out in the wilderness.

Kelly: Very cool. Before we close here, is there anything else that you’d like to add to our discussion?

Kip: If you’ve signed on to be a firefighter, you’ve really signed-on for a lifetime of learning. You’re never going to know everything you need to know. You’re just not. So, you’ve really signed-on to learning for at least the rest of your career—and, hopefully, for the rest your life.

Because just about the time that you think you know enough to be safe out there, you hear about something—or something happens to you—and you realize: *“Well, actually, I didn’t know that. I didn’t realize that.”*

So, it’s a lot bigger and more complicated than we sometimes make it out to be. We want simple solutions and get clouded by hindsight bias at times. To keep learning, we need to avoid assumptions and try to have a beginner’s mindset in which many outcomes are possible.

Four Individuals and One Group Receive the 2020 Paul Gleason Lead by Example Award

The annual [Paul Gleason Lead by Example Award](#) was created by the National Wildfire Coordinating Group (NWCG) Leadership Committee to remember the late Paul Gleason's contributions to the wildland fire service.

Josh Acosta, Superintendent, Fulton Interagency Hotshot Crew

Recognition from John Wood, Co-Chair, NWCG Leadership Committee:

"You are being recognized for exhibiting exemplary servant leadership and your willingness to assume the Region 5 Hotshot Chair, supporting and leading 45 IHCs. This role was in addition to your service as the Southern California Geographic Area Coordinating Center (South Ops) IHC Representative, the South Ops IHC Coordinator, and the South Ops lead for IHC certification. These roles would have been significant enough, but performing these duties during a global pandemic with unprecedented challenges required exemplary leadership skills and decisive action. Your work with the Region 5 COVID-19 CERT Team to draft a process for certification during the pandemic, ensured crews were able to maintain currency and availability.

You are also being recognized for your unwavering commitment to fellow firefighters through CISM and peer-to-peer support and as a key facilitator of the international fire training efforts with Mexico, helping as an instructor for the various classes, and mentoring program managers on international recruitment efforts."



Eric Bush (on left) and Jeremy McIntosh.

Eric Bush, National Rappel Specialist

Jeremy McIntosh, Equipment Specialist, National Technology and Development Program (NTDP)

Recognition from John Wood, Co-Chair, NWCG Leadership Committee:

"You two are being recognized for your unwavering commitment to make rappel operations safer and modern. Although numerous individuals assisted with the 'Next Generation' project, your motivation and vision following the tragic loss of one of your own became the impetus for such complex change. Honoring our fallen by learning and making the system better for the National Rappel Program and the wider wildland fire service is what right looks like and is commended.

Over a decade, your careers have been dedicated to bringing about this complex change. Your leadership example upheld our values of Duty, Respect, and Integrity and can be seen through the groups you led and the products you influenced. Regardless of the barriers encountered, you maintained high standards for training and certification. You sought feedback throughout the process and actively listened to others. Your leadership efforts make for a safer working environment and will serve the wildland fire service for years to come."

Brendan Finnegan, Captain, Wildland Team Coordinator West Metro Fire Rescue; Morrison, Colorado

Recognition from John Wood, Co-Chair, NWCG Leadership Committee:

"You are being recognized for your unwavering commitment to developing your people and coordinating West Metro's wildland fire response program. As the Wildland Team Coordinator for West Metro Fire Rescue (WMFR), you created and implemented a wildland fire program that produces skilled firefighters ready to protect and defend the communities they serve well into the future. Not only do you develop your people for the future, but you also provide the equipment they need for a successful response.

As the architect behind WMFR's Rapid Extraction Modules (REMs), you took members from various disciplines and built them into highly effective, unified teams. Compassion for your people is clearly evident. Your initiative and innovative leadership style resulted in development of one of the most capable off-road ambulances in the wildland fire service. Your team knows brothers and sisters are ready to respond during their time of need."



NAFRI staff members James McGury, James Wheeler, Julio Ibarra, and Brian Hicks accept the 2020 Paul Gleason Lead by Example Award.

National Advanced Fire & Resource Institute (NAFRI)

Recognition from John Wood, Co-Chair, NWCG Leadership Committee:

Congratulations to National Advanced Fire & Resource Institute's Training Staff and Training Support Department for being selected as one of the recipients for the 2020 Paul Gleason Lead by Example award.

NAFRI staff were recognized for going above and beyond the call of duty to provide high-quality training during a global pandemic.

NAFRI and the following staff members exemplified initiative and innovation with Duty, Respect, Integrity and Courage: Brian Hicks, Gary Luce, Elaine Rodriguez, James Wheeler, James McGury, Bradley Oen, Matthew Edwards, and Julio Ibarra.

Know any firefighters who are good mentors? Provide motivation or vision? Initiate or innovate? Now's the time for their special recognition by nominating them for the Paul Gleason Lead by Example Award!

Simply fill-out this form: [LBE Award Nomination Form](#).