

**From:** FS-Office of the Chief

**Sent:** Friday, June 27, 2014 2:55 PM

**Subject:** "A Week to Remember, Reflect, and Learn"/Coordinated Response Protocol

The National Wildfire Coordinating Group (NWCG) has designated the week of June 30th through July 6th as "A Week to Remember, Reflect, and Learn", to commemorate the 20-year anniversary of the South Canyon fire accident and the one-year anniversary of the Yarnell Hill fire accident, to honor the memories of all fallen wildland firefighters, and to reflect on lessons learned from different types of wildland fire accidents (see attachment). The U.S. Forest Service is participating in this commemoration at the national, regional, forest, and district levels.

While wildland fire accidents often attract more attention than other types of accidents, I am profoundly affected by each and every U.S. Forest Service employee fatality. I am proud that we have identified Safety as one of our five focus areas and that we have set a goal of becoming a zero-fatality organization. I believe that one of the keys to reaching this goal is to learn all we can from accidents that occur on National Forest System land and that involve U.S. Forest Service employees. This requires survivors and witnesses to be willing to share what they know about the actions, circumstances, and events surrounding accidents. Unfortunately, due to a variety of factors, over the years many U.S. Forest Service employees have lost trust in the agency's accident investigation process, have come to fear it, and have consequently been unwilling to share what they experienced and know.

As part of our participation in "A Week to Remember, Reflect, and Learn," I am beginning an effort to restore employee trust and enhance our ability to achieve our goal of becoming a zero-fatality organization by introducing a new way to manage required serious accident response activities. This new approach is called the "Coordinated Response Protocol" (CRP) and it has been developed to enable us to learn all we can from tragic events while minimizing impacts to survivors and witnesses. I fully support this principle-based approach, which primarily focuses on employee wellbeing and learning.

The CRP has several unique features. It uses pre-trained response team members who work collaboratively under a response team leader to lessen potential further harm to our employees. This process seeks to minimize the number of interviews to which our personnel are exposed and controls access to our people.

The CRP synchronizes all groups, including the Learning Review Team; Peer Support/Critical Incident Stress Management; Law Enforcement and Investigations; Union; Communications; and Human Resource Management. It also makes every effort to coordinate external investigations, such as those required by Occupational Safety and Health Administration; National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health; Office of Inspector General; state and local law enforcement; coroner's offices; and other cooperators and partners.

The CRP includes a Learning Review that replaces the Serious Accident Investigation process. The Learning Review will normally be used to respond to tragic incidents such as fatalities and multiple hospitalizations. The Learning Review collects information to help build individual and organizational products to support our ability to learn from the event. I also invite you to view

my short video [Introducing the CRP](#). **I assure you that Learning Review information will *not* be used as the basis for disciplinary action or to blame employees.**

The Facilitated Learning Analysis, or FLA, is meant to help us learn from near-miss and less serious incidents. It became part of the Forest Service corporate practices last year and will continue to be used to learn from incidents with unintended outcomes that do not meet serious accident criteria.

The CRP and FLA processes are scalable—they can expand and contract, similar to the Incident Command System, to help meet unanticipated demands and complexity. The guidebooks that support these processes are evolving; living documents that will be updated at least annually.

To develop and implement the CRP and help the Forest Service otherwise evolve as a learning culture, we have created the Office of Learning (OOL). Comprised of components of Human Factors Risk Management Research, Development, and Application (RD&A) and the Office of Safety and Occupational Health, the OOL will move us toward our goal of being a “zero-fatality organization” by recommending system and policy improvements based on understanding past and current events.

These changes signal a significant shift in methods ranging from problem solving to deeper system insight and learning from events. We consider learning to be fundamental to prevention and critical to safety as a Forest Service core value.

As a leader of the U.S. Forest Service, I cannot adequately express the anguish it causes me that we cannot change the events of the past. As we mark milestone anniversaries of the South Canyon and Yarnell Hill Fire accidents, I believe that the highest tribute that we can pay to all employees who have lost their lives or suffered serious injuries in the line of duty, as well as those who have survived or witnessed those tragic events, is to create a lasting legacy of continuously attempting to effect positive change. That is what we are attempting to do by introducing the CRP.

Additional CRP information including Frequently Asked Questions can be found on the [Safety Engagement SharePoint site](#). For additional information, please contact Steve Schlientz, Director, Office of Safety and Occupational Health, at [scschlientz@fs.fed.us](mailto:scschlientz@fs.fed.us).

Chief Tidwell