

Rapid Lesson Sharing

Event Type: Prescribed Fire Escape

Date: March 24, 2017

Location: Seminole Tribal Fee Land, Wewoka Agency, Bureau of Indian Affairs; Oklahoma

The Self Prescribed Fire Escape review process has been a valuable learning process for the Region and Agency. The Fuels Management Program will implement the recommended actions to better our knowledge and skills in prescribed fire.

NARRATIVE

The Wewoka Agency, Bureau of Indian Affairs, implemented the Self Prescribed Fire on March 15, 2017.

This prescribed fire's area encompassed 515 acres inside the "Self Property" on Seminole Tribal Fee land. It is estimated that this broadcast burn was the first application of fire on this ground in 12 years.

On March 24, the prescribed fire escaped on its northwest corner. The possible cause of this escape may have been embers from the prescribed fire unit.



The Self Prescribed Fire escape resulted in the burning of this hot tub.

LESSONS

- ❖ Ensure the Agency Administrator completes the Fire Program Manager (M-581) course.
- ❖ Complete project files and weather forecast. There were no daily unit logs or a documented AAR on this incident—only verbal statements. In addition, there were no on-site weather logs or monitoring data.
- ❖ Develop a stand-alone complexity analysis for each supplemental prescribed burn plan.
- ❖ Natural fuel breaks are used whenever possible. However, natural features will change over time and with weather conditions. Lack of precipitation in the area allowed for continued drying of fuels—increasing the potential for hold-overs in heavy diameter fuels next to the control lines.
- ❖ Implementing prescribed fire on a first-entry unit has concerns with: very little knowledge of the area and unknown jackpots next to the control line.
- ❖ Other elements related to this incident – **Human Factors:** Personnel confusion from being assigned to fight local fires. Responsibility to local fire suppression efforts from what seemed like a completed prescribed burn. Fatigue from an extended fire season. **Inexperience:** Out-of-state fire resources were unfamiliar with

local grass and oak timber, prescribed fire strategy and tactics. **Environmental:** Thick Bermuda grass burning hotter than expected. **Prescribed Burn Personnel Collateral Duties:** During periods of extreme fire conditions, experienced prescribed burn personnel had to be utilized on wildfires. Several days elapsed and dry conditions led to large fires.

- ❖ Personnel were unfamiliar with the project's boundary.
- ❖ The prescribed fire's transition from Regional to Agency staff did not go satisfactorily. Agency staff assumed that the prescribed burn would be regulated by the Regional Fuels Technician. There was no formal directive or acceptance for the local staff to check the treatment unit post burn. A Prescribed Fire Turn-Back Checklist that the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has used will now be adopted and inserted into each Prescribed Burn Plan. (See this checklist on page 3.)

An additional Post-Burn Monitoring Management Action Point has now also been added. Recommended Action(s) to consider include: A. Identify post-burn personnel and assist with the coordination of GS personnel. A.D. use will be in accordance of the A.D. Pay Plan, 2018: *"The term of is restricted to no greater than the period beginning 24 hours prior to the planned ignition and extending through 24 hours after the perimeter is secured, p. 4."* B. Utilize collateral or fire-qualified Tribal personnel to check the fire perimeter long after implementation has occurred and no active smokes are present.

- ❖ This unit needs to develop long-range Management Action Points.

SUCSESSES

- ❖ The identification of more documentation. Each element will now be supplied with: A ICS-214 Unit Log; Assigned FEMO or designated weather person; Signed Safety Briefing and AAR; and the development of a Burn Boss checklist for a prescribed burn—pre-implementation and post-burn.
- ❖ Personnel needs for the preparation of the prescribed fire's treatment.
- ❖ The use of personnel not familiar with Oklahoma fire behavior and briefings.
- ❖ The long-range planning for mop-up and monitoring.

CHALLENGES

The Wewoka Agency Prevention Technician is the only fire-related position on the Agency's staff.

In Oklahoma, prescribed fire season within prescription parameters is also wildfire season. Wildfires take priority over the planned implementation of prescribed fires. Agency staff have little time to prep and monitor prescribed fires.

Therefore, the Region relies on Administratively Determined (A.D.) fire personnel to suppress wildfires and assist with prescribed fire preparation, implementation, and minimal monitoring the day after implementation.

The Region and Agencies will be researching the feasibility and workforce development of emergency temporary agency hires in the Fiscal Year 2018 prescribed fire season. The Regional Fuels Management program has one Fuels Technician that provides for the planning, implementation as an RXB2, and transitioning the burn to the Agency staff. The hiring of another Regional Fuels Technician is in the process of being announced/advertised.

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Prescribed Fire Turn-Back Checklist

The following checklist should be used to queue a thorough interaction between the Superintendent, Agency Fire staff and Burn Boss (or Incident Commander). This checklist will be completed before off-station fire resources leave a recently conducted prescribed burn.

1. Review the location and status of existing fire using an appropriate burn unit map(s).

- Discuss effectiveness of ignition and any unburned areas that may remain.
- Point out any areas that caused problems or concerns during ignition operations and initial mop-up.
- If natural fuel breaks apply note where they are, how they reacted on burn day, and current condition (do not leave unless line is properly "cold trailed").
- Understand that no further ignition will take place without qualified personnel in place and a new "GO-NO-GO" being completed.
- What fuels are located adjacent to the burn unit?
- Discuss appropriate timing to allow public access back into the unit, if applicable.

2. Discuss short and long-term weather and expected fire behavior.

- Leave an updated NWS fire weather forecast with the project leader.
- Show where to obtain an updated forecast.
- Point out and discuss any weather events of concern.
- Discuss expected fire behavior.

3. Discuss patrol needs and standards. (See Incident Complexity Analysis below)

- Is this prescribed fire being turned-back to an Incident Commander or an Agency Representative (tactical – vs. – administrative)?
- Is there a qualified Holding Boss as identified in the Rx burn plan on staff to handle fire tactics should a problem arise?
- Are the identified Holding Boss and/or Agency Fire staff present during this debriefing, and are they aware of their responsibilities during the remaining operational periods?
- Who will be available to patrol, and what are their qualifications?
- What is the fire monitoring (patrol) schedule (after hours, weekends, etc.)?

4. Discuss what potential problems would look like and what to do.

- All control lines must be properly "mopped," then thoroughly re-checked.
- What trigger points should be monitored?
 1. Does any fire/heat show-up within 100' of the fireline?
 2. Are there any aerial fuels active within 250' of the fireline?
 3. Do you see any internal flare-ups active after the first operational period?
 4. Does fire continue to smolder and burn into natural fuel breaks overnight?
- Have you communicated an understanding of the contingency plan and escape-fire plan?

5. Update and exchange contact numbers between all parties.

- What is the planned location and activity of fire personnel over the next few days?
- If anything is different from expected, discussed, or causes concern, please call and we will send help or discuss options.

This RLS was submitted by:

**The Prescribed Fire
Burn Boss**

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