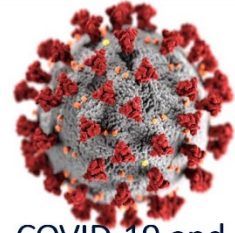


Rapid Lesson Sharing

Event Type: COVID-19 Lessons
on the Lion Fire

Date: April 7, 2020

Location: West of Meeker,
Colorado



COVID-19 and
Fire Season 2020 Lessons

For the latest on COVID-19 visit
[CDC.gov/COVID19](https://www.cdc.gov/COVID19)



Their First Wildfire of the Year In Our New Coronavirus Environment

The South Zone of the Northwest Colorado Fire and Aviation Management Unit took multiple steps to limit and minimize exposure to firefighters. There were good discussions and decisions made regarding COVID-19.

Narrative

On April 7 at approximately 1330, the Northwest Colorado Fire and Aviation Management Unit (NWCFAFU) was contacted to assist the local volunteer fire department on a wildfire in Lions Canyon, located four miles west of Meeker, Colorado.

The initial resources dispatched to the fire included multiple Cooperator Engines, the Rio Blanco County Sheriff's Office, one Type 6 Engine from the Bureau of Land Management field office in Meeker, and BLM Division 14.

Upon arrival, one structure, multiple vehicles and approximately 15 acres of grass and sage had been consumed by the fire. With dormant fuels and strong winds, the fire was spreading quickly north up the canyon. Additional resources were ordered, including one BLM Squad from Meeker, one BLM Type 4 Engine from Craig, and a Department of Fire Prevention and Control Squad from Steamboat Springs.

The Lion Fire burned 229 acres, 200 acres of private land, and 29 acres of BLM-managed lands.

Interagency Coordination and Preseason Training

All agencies responded to the Lion Fire expeditiously with effective coordination.

The preseason training that the BLM and its cooperators participated in prepared all involved to execute a safe and efficient response. There were good discussions and decisions made regarding COVID-19. The South Zone of the Northwest Colorado Fire and Aviation Management Unit made concerted efforts to limit and minimize exposure to firefighters.

Upon arrival, multiple structures and vehicles were burning—instincts to protect life and property took over.

Specific COVID-19 lessons learned from on-the-ground experiences

The following items include COVID-19 key lessons learned during a wildfire, highlighting challenges that wildland firefighters will likely encounter on incidents this summer. These will be valuable in addressing issues and potential situations crews will experience in future wildfire events.

1. Social distancing is tough in stressful situations. The Engine crew discussed social distancing before leaving for the fire to try and abide by the COVID-19 guidelines. Upon arrival, multiple structures and vehicles were burning—instincts to protect life and property took over.

When working with multiple agencies, the COVID-19 mitigation measures and messages varied widely and were hard to enforce or maintain.

2. Maintaining distance is difficult during a public evacuation when property owners and landowners are panicked and looking for answers and guidance.
3. When working with multiple agencies, the COVID-19 mitigation measures and messages varied widely and were hard to enforce or maintain.
4. Briefings with large crowds are hard to conduct in the field while maintaining the recommended six-foot physical distancing. We usually don't have microphones or platforms in initial attack, which made it difficult to voice critical information to multiple crews.
5. Once dispatched, we utilized four vehicles with eight firefighters. Upon arrival, the parking and safety areas for vehicles was minimal—causing a cluster.
6. Upon arrival, personnel jumped into different trucks and engines to engage the fire—creating more “contaminated” surfaces.

Those who did wear masks seemed to be touching their faces more to adjust masks.

7. It is difficult to keep equipment sanitized throughout an incident. (Examples: truck radios, hand tools, chainsaws, steering wheels, compartment doors, etc.)
8. A few individuals wore masks and experienced a harder time communicating. Those who did wear masks seemed to be touching their faces more to adjust masks.
9. Our current agencies' credit card procedures are making it very time consuming and confusing for our employees. Many of the GSA vendors are showing things are in stock when they are not—requiring additional documentation. If we could purchase available cleaning and sanitizing supplies without having to go through these required steps it would improve efficiency and also get the materials to our crews in a faster and easier way to ensure that they are protected while at work.

**This RLS was submitted by:
Incident Overhead**

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