



## Insights and Lessons for Managing COVID-19 Mitigations on Smaller Incidents

*This story will focus on the lessons learned by an Incident Commander without an organized Team and only a few support people during a response to a relatively small fire, Type 3 or 4, while managing COVID-19 mitigations.*

By  
**Derrick Rader,**  
Incident Commander Type 3  
on the Goose Creek Fire

I was initially mobilized with only a handful of people to manage the Type 3 Goose Creek Fire, located 13 miles south of Creede, Colo.

As a local Type 3 organization, we did not have the advantage of weeks of advanced conversations, participation in previous scenarios, and established relationships to draw upon as we formed our initial plans for how to best approach this fire within the CDC and agency guidance to mitigate COVID-19 concerns.

As a Team assembled specifically for this fire, we also did not have the full complement of the Command and General Staff positions considered standard for an IMT3 to mobilize outside their local area. This was our local area and we pieced our IMT together as needed to meet the agency administrator's objectives. Just like most other Type 3 fires, this was how I was going to have to achieve the desired complement within the functional areas during the first two full operational shifts.

As a Team we discussed some of the lessons—relayed in this RLS—that we learned as we hosted 114 firefighters at the height of this incident. We also suggest that some of the lessons we learned—and share in this RLS—should be considered by home units as they prepare for and manage local Type 4 fires.



**Firefighters gather for the Goose Creek Fire morning briefing.**

### Lessons

- Access to showers is critical for resources to maintain good hygiene and need to be made available at Type 3 and 4 incidents. We were lucky to implement a land use agreement with a private ranch in

the vicinity with cabins that could be used for showers. In the absence of that, national contract Virtual Incident Procurements (VIPR) need to be looked at and modified to assist fires with 150 total personnel.

- Masks were made mandatory while inside buildings or when more than one person occupies vehicles when social distancing is not possible.
- Portable toilets that are used for crew sleeping areas need to be designated to specific crews and have signs that no one outside that crew can use them—then enforce this.
- Cleaning of portable toilets was completed daily by service vehicle. Twice a day is recommended if the fire is to be more than 100 personnel for a long duration. Gloves, disinfectant spray, and paper towels were located at each toilet for mandatory cleaning prior to and after each individual use.
- Order enough portable toilets for one toilet per five people. This exceeds the standard of one per ten, but it is necessary.
- The Logistics Section is the backbone to address COVID-19 mitigations. At the Type 3 level, the standard needs consist of a Type 3 Logistics Chief (LSC3), an Ordering Manager (ORDM), a Receiving and Distribution Manager (RCDM), three Base Camp Managers (BCMG), and two drivers. The BCMGs are specifically important in portable toilet oversight.
- A Medical Unit Leader (MEDL) should be a standard order for smaller incidents to be the focal point for a COVID-19 related response. It is vital. If we had had a symptomatic person in camp, we would have had a problem. We used a line Safety Officer (SOFR), but it was not really in their expertise to deal with county health departments and hospitals.
- Limit day shift/night shift briefing attendance to the leaders/trainees that are on the 204s only! All other non-essential personnel need to stay in vehicles, at the camp spot, or at staging.
- Operational briefings for day shift should be completed one hour later to allow for crews, overhead, equipment, and aircraft to complete the proper cleaning of vehicles, aircraft, and be able to complete the “Am I Fit” checklist. If the IMT sets time for this to occur, there are better odds that it will occur. The delay did not have an impact on operations for this fire partly because of the size.
- Pick up times should be one hour earlier to allow for crews to rehab, complete personnel hygiene and body temperature checks.
- Create preorders for Type 3 and 4 incidents so it is easier to get necessary supplies in a consolidated way once a fire starts rather than having to think about everything at the point you are placing the order. The orders should include cleaning products, gloves, medical kits, and other necessary items and, for those of us in this Geographic Area, should be placed to the Rocky Mountain Area Coordination Center (RMAACC) Fire Cache to avoid draining your local supply with multiple fires.
- Incident Commanders/Operations Section Chiefs Type 3 need to check the ordering. Ask yourself: “*Can you live with half of what you want?*”—mainly pertaining to the Operations Section for Overhead, Crews, and Equipment.
- Avoid leaning into anyone’s window or door and do not touch vehicles. Roll-up your window so that you can communicate effectively and not allow people to lean inside your vehicle.
- Avoid touching other’s radios. Incident Communication Technicians (COMT) should always have nitrile gloves on and be cleaning their radio equipment.

- COVID-19 Fire Briefing in the IRPG should be used and implemented in addition to Ops briefings.
- Type 3, 4 and 5 ICs have the responsibility to ensure that best practices for COVID-19 are implemented from the start to the conclusion of any and all incidents. You do not need to be an ICT3 to follow COVID-19 mitigations correctly.
- Virtual crew and equipment time submission worked very well on this incident. The IC created a justification template for NOT signing CTRs by any fireline supervisor. Fire time with the email addresses/phone numbers on the CTR were completed. Photos of the CTRs were taken and emailed to the FSC3's FireNet then TIME put into OF-288 after demob was completed. No signatures were required with a fixed set of hours for all incident personnel.
- It's important for all of us to remember to listen to the medical professionals and ensure that mitigations are made and kept simple for all incident personnel.

---

**This RLS was submitted by:**  
**Derrick Rader, Incident Commander Type 3**  
**on the Goose Creek Fire**

---

Do you have a Rapid Lesson to share?  
Click Here:

[Share  
Your Lessons](#)

---