



Forest
Service

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Subject: Bull Fire Entrapment Facilitated Learning Analysis (FLA)

To: Larry Sutton, WO/NIFC

Enclosed is the final report for the Bull Fire Entrapment Facilitated Learning Analysis. The Bull Fire Entrapment occurred on April 29, 2011 and was followed by an analysis the first week of May. As part of the content of this report, the team documented the lessons learned by the participants of the group session (approximately 40 attendees) in one section, and included the lessons learned from individual interviews within the section of lessons learned by the FLA team. There is also a list of “25 Nuggets” – a synthesis of the items from these two sections. Upon review of the FLA by the Regional Office, six systemic or agency-wide concerns became apparent.

Shelter Deployment

For many firefighters the fact that deploying a shelter triggers a Serious Accident Investigation is an unconscious deterrent to using the shelter when necessary. Some have articulated that the sense is that when you deploy a shelter others will think that you’ve done something wrong (i.e. you’re to blame for having gotten yourself into a bad situation) and that they would be punished for using what some consider to be a safety tool (albeit a “last resort”). Deployment related to using the shelter as a shield is not differentiated from deploying for full use. There are bad experiences with SAIs for deployment or stories of bad experiences that permeate the fire culture.

Safety Zones

Lookouts, Communication, Escape Routes and Safety Zones (LCES) are well understood in the fire community. All firefighters know that they need to establish safety zones. However, there may be a gap in understanding when a safety zone is really “established.” If a safety zone requires emergency action to physically construct it *after* a situation that would trigger the need occurs, then the safety zone should not be considered to have been “established,” but was merely a plan.

Mental and Physical Rehearsal

While we have fire specific training, annual refreshers, and organized crews do address mental and physical practice, we must continue to emphasize the need to create “muscle memory.” Only through practice and in particular, simulation, can our firefighters develop the automatic response that will be there for them in times of high stress and possible panic. We must emphasize not only “how” to deploy a shelter, but “when”...including using the shelter as a shield. Also, there may be tasks for which firefighters need to remove their gloves (such as taking weather) or other times where they may have their gloves off. Mentally and physically practicing putting gloves on quickly could decrease injuries.

Helispot Locations

Particularly in years with severe fire behavior, we need to pay even closer attention to the choice of location for our helispots and whether or not they need to be staffed. There could be practices related to locating helispots ahead of the fire that we should be reviewing, and or additional considerations that should be taken.



Risk Management

Risk management appears to be considered at all levels of firefighting activity and is being discussed even at the level of the individual crew member. While we discuss and look at limiting exposure by taken action earlier we need to understand and consider all variables – those directly related to the fire and those that may be related to either the location or personnel. If we consider it to be less risk and exposure to take earlier and quicker action we need to watch that we don't become too mission-focused and perhaps downplay risks unintentionally. Specifically, we need to make sure our mission focus to put out the fire and limit exposure is balanced with the “here and now” situation and risks. While there are many lessons learned and safety reminders that surfaced during this FLA, these items could benefit from attention at the agency level.

Multi-Region Issue

In addition to the agency-wide concerns, several things about our Forest policy and attitudes towards engaging wildland fire on the international border need to be addressed:

- 1) Better understanding of the risks involved with cross border firefighting, particularly in regards to limitations on aircraft use for emergency evacuation, the risk exposure of overnight spike camps in areas where potential risks are high for illegal activities and where there are limitations on the use of Forest Service LEO's.
- 2) Improved protocols to understand the appropriate extent and depth of incursion in which we engage firefighting efforts within Mexico.
- 3) Protocols put in place to better define approval process for authorizing when firefighters make cross border incursion for firefighting duties.
- 4) Better upfront coordination with Customs and Border Patrol to understand what is needed to meet customs regulations for cross border incursions by our firefighters and aircraft.

The Region suggests we work with Regions 5 and 8 to address international border concerns. Thank you for the opportunity to share our learning experience. Our next steps include sharing this report with our fire community and then working with FAM at the Washington Office level on next steps.

/s/ Faye L. Krueger (for)
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Regional Forester

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