APPENDIX B - FIREFIGHTER AND FIRE MANAGER QUOTES FROM THE SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE
The following are selected direct quotes from the responses to the national wildland firefighter survey. Question 241 on the survey questionnaire allowed the respondents to write in safety issues they felt were important and not covered by the preceding 240 questions. Of 730 respondents, about 300 wrote in comments.

Most of the comments elaborated on the issues rather than raised new ones.

The quotes here were extracted from the questionnaire and sorted by topic. Responses that were unclear or largely redundant were edited out, as were specific names of places and people. Obvious spelling and grammar errors were corrected. The quotes are intended to give the reader a feel for the intensity of the feelings in the words of the firefighters themselves.
Attitudes About Safety

"My 37 seasons have taught me that fundamental 'stuff' works every time. Today's firefighters are prone to slack off of fundamentals, and this causes problems. Egos cause many unsafe situations. Type I crews tend to have egos that lead them to think they know more than management -- hence they don't pay attention. Incident management teams with egos think they 'know the universe,' so they don't listen to important information available around them."

"The problem that underlies almost all other problems is the fact that some crew bosses will ignore the safety rules to impress a strike team leader or division chief of his crew's ability. He will also ignore the fatigue of his crew and volunteer them for every thing to make an impression with his supervisor. The person that speaks out against this is labeled a weakling/trouble-maker/malcontent, so no one speaks out."

"IHC Crews -- after 1994 -- more trouble than they are worth on many fires -- using the safety card too much to get out of working; being arrogant and trying to take over tactics on the fires -- at all levels -- especially in transition from extended attack to Type II. The IHC supts think they are the only ones who know how to fight fire anymore and if it doesn't go their way, they get on their cell phones and tell the world how unsafe a fire is, just to get out of working. Need to FIRE some of the IHC supts. They need major attitude adjustment."

"The people 'on the line' are just young kids -- they're subject to peer pressure to perform, to work hard, to risk too much. This macho attitude, combined with lack of information on fire behavior, plans, weather, makes the crews too vulnerable. Personal attitudes re: safety, fatigue, and accountability need to be changed and all levels of management must get information to crews and crew bosses. Stop treating crews like work mules -- they need information to make wise decisions on the line!"

Safety Policy

"Safety issues short of death do not get adequate attention. More consideration should be given long term effects of smoke inhalation." 

"Too many safety rules. Stay with the basics, LCES AND THE 10 and 13!! Not the 10 and 18 or 25 or 50, etc."

"Management is going 'overboard' with policies and red tape since the South Canyon accident. This field is sinking in all the paperwork, guidelines, policies, and regulations being dumped on us."
"The whole term 'safety' is amorphous. Use 'safe practices' and discuss risk. Objective risk management is essential. Otherwise it's just knee jerk emotionalism."

"Safety training and talks presented in a CYA manner rather than with genuine concern for health and comfort."

"I seriously think we have overemphasized safety to the point we no longer fight fires aggressively!"

"Major safety issue: urban interface wild fires are fought more aggressively than is reasonably safe. Home owners for the most part do not want to risk lives. The problem is overhead tend to take undue risks."

"A more realistic approach to entrapment and deployment scenarios made standard for ALL agencies, especially during training refreshers and basic 32s/190. Example: 100-200 ft. run, using escape routes to deployment zones v. TIME vs. TOPOGRAPHY. With news of deployments and entrapments becoming more frequent, sup., FMO's and all overhead should take decisive action to be sure preventive measures and education of their crews are [adequate]; i.e., how NOT to get into 'these' situations."

"An increase of safety officer presence on the fireline, where accidents occur, would be beneficial."

"We have all the rules, regulations etc. in place but there are still crews getting burned, etc. You should ask: are fire entrapment investigation teams qualified, successful? No accountability for supervisors ... lousy outputs from investigation teams. [N]o blame is ever placed on individuals."

"Lack of safety officers on extended attack fires with high potential for escape."

"The lack of prescribed fire use has resulted in safety compromises. There is a double standard in what is safe on a prescribed fire and wildfire, but often the lack of prescribed fire leads to a more serious wildfire."

**Resource Availability**

"There is a tendency for management at the Forest Supervisor/District Ranger level to not make qualified firefighters available because of their perceived need to meet targets. This forces a limited number of resources to work longer and more assignments. Fatigue sets in causing accidents, poor decisions, poor strategy/tactics. Management needs to stop
managing for risk avoidance when it comes to targets vs. fire assignments. The system needs to acknowledge that safety is more important than targets."

"District and Forest level management making decisions to leave critical fire and aviation positions vacant for long periods of time -- in excess of 6 to 18 months or more -- in order to save money or lack of decisiveness. Lack of emphasis at the Forest and District Management for the Fire Program. District FMOs with little experience, diluted responsibilities, and lack of real interest in that portion of their responsibilities that include fire."

"The idea that we will actually do 'less with less' is not valid. I see firefighters being directed to do the same (or more) with less."

"Fire management personnel having to work in multiple projects due to funding short falls."

"We rely heavily on VFDs who don't have adequate equipment, communications, training, and protective gear."

"Greater demands are being placed on fewer and often not as highly qualified employees."

**Fuel Management**

"Fuels management by the land management agencies (FS, BLM) needs to get rolling -- without this, fires are just going to get bigger, more expensive and more dangerous. Fuels management should be a major program for all agencies with land management responsibilities. (This is the biggest long-term safety consideration that can be made.) Prescribed fire, with its attendant gains in individual fire experience, would be a part of a fuels management program."

**Priority Setting and Political Pressure**

"The other stumbling block to a safe organization is no dollars and no one with the [nerve] to tell Congress -- 'no dollars, no fire protection!'"

"The attitude that all wildfires are emergencies that justify taking risks."

"Political pressures to protect homes and private property from members of the public that don't understand safety issues. Members of the public unsafely defending private property and endangered firefighters who must protect the public."

"Unrealistic suppression expectations."
"Egos." [P]olitics -- too much pressure to protect certain areas, etc. [is putting firefighters in the middle, sometimes violating our own standards. Politicians using emergency situations [to make] themselves look good...making a lot of controversy from the inter relationships of governments at all local, state and federal levels."

**Accountability**

"General lack of accountability on the IC staff."

"Accountability is our major concern. Already this year we have had shelter deployments with reviews that were a joke. The Dome Incident is a prime example. Major screw-ups, yet the review said everyone did a wonderful job. How do we expect things to change when nothing changes?"

"Too many supervisors let safety violations 'slide by' without pointing them out. Most people will take whatever they can get away with and will continue to violate rules involving PPE, tool and equipment use, safety practices and standard firefighting orders until upper management comes down hard. SAFETY HAS NO SUBSTITUTE! Get rid of those who refuse to follow safe practices."

**Personnel and Pay Policies**

"FS hiring new employees through Peace Corps, DEMO or any of the few other methods without requiring firefighting as a requirement of the job."

"We work longer and then get more fatigued because we watch others, say finance, make A LOT more money, work a less demanding job (not battling a blaze, hiking, sweating and getting dirty) and get hours near the crew's level. Most seasonal firefighters work 6 months a year trying to get the most money they can to live through the winter."

"The problem with BLM's fire program is no career ladder is available. The good, qualified, and competent people leave the fire program because they can't earn a living."

"Not enough recognition for individuals who do outstanding work. Not enough emphasis placed on 'professionalism.'"

"Regular government employees that normally work in programs other than fire, but are expected to work fire when needed, if they are qualified: 1) do not get time for P.T., so are less likely to be in good shape. 2) Are not able to leave regular job to go on training assignments as much as they should -- difficult to gain experience. 3) Are not given credit for work in fire program when performance is rated, resulting in their being less likely to seek experience but settle for minimum to be qualified."
"I have seen pay inequities adversely affect the cohesion and working relationships of crews. In order to alleviate budget constraints in other resource programs, I have been required to use permanent employees at a GS-9 or GS-11 level in crew person positions filled with some seasonal employees at a GS-4 or -5 rate, these employees having the most fire experience. This is a serious problem -- especially to the seasonal fire employee!"

"There are very few full-time firefighters in Region 8. There are a lot of people who fight fire, but very few that get credit for it. Example: Using people over 50% of the time in fire but their PDs say they are a timber marker or Rec tech etc. These type of people sometimes don't get the fire training they need. If they are used as firefighters then their job description should state that. We need more full-time firefighters on the districts in Region 8."

"Fire management positions such as DFMO ADFMO are not always filled with skilled individuals. Too much emphasis being placed on easy fixes, when a full evaluation of skills for all positions needs to be done. Take a serious look at the fire managers."

"Some individuals in the fire program are . . . enjoying a free ride . . . have slipped through the cracks and obtained supervisory positions (single resource boss, etc.). They have no intentions of working or fulfilling their responsibilities. This poses an incredible safety problem. We could really use a method of evaluating these people who are already supervisors and demoting or weeding out these weak to non-existent links in the chain of command."

"Favoritism (good old boy), back stabbing, spineless jellyfish . . . clueless . . . FMO's in [blank district]." [But did you like them?]

"Concentrate on new hires. Make it easy to go [to fires] penalize no go. We now do [it the] other way around."

"Giving seasonal firefighters too much responsibility with little or no supervision by an experienced person."

"No opportunity for careers for upcoming seasonals. We lose our experienced people, who would like a career, because of no benefits available and short seasons. Crew turnover from college kids have left many organizations very depleted in experience."

"Give firefighters a reason to stay. Some of us want to be professional firefighters. We love our work. If California Department of Forestry can give their seasonals full benefit packages, why can't the federal government?"

"Let[ting] the fire grow so [overhead people] can stay longer and make more money."

"[T]he VERY BIG PROBLEM of non-fire project work taking priority."
"There are just not enough people available to fight fire anymore... I think the real problem is lack of incentive. Once a person hits the overtime cap, the money incentive diminishes rapidly... I find it objectionable that supervisors get paid less. FLSA has always had that backwards, i.e. that work supervisors on fire can't get full OT after hitting the OT cap but that non-supervisors (on fire) would normally hit the OT cap, yet still get paid full OT. The supervisors (Unit leaders, Section Chiefs, etc.) are doing the more demanding work and the higher skill level work. ... Higher pay should be the reward for higher level work, i.e., full OT in an emergency setting like fire if the person is doing supervision work. No doubt, management will say that there is nothing they can do about it... they won't consider... trying to do anything that would return the expectation that firefighting is part of an Agency culture, i.e., that if a person wants to advance in the Agency they do participate in firefighting efforts. Until an Agency is willing to make fire experience part of the job selection process, or to incorporate fire management expertise in performance ratings, there is no serious agency commitment."

"[L]ack of hazard pay on control-prescribed burns. Controlled burns can be as dangerous (lives have been lost), and as hazardous (often MORE smoke must be endured by firefighters). By not paying hazard to firefighters, it possibly instills a sense of complacency. 'Well, if we are not being paid hazard pay it must not be hazardous' type of attitude."

"Concerned that EEO and the push for women in fire has placed women in positions that endanger themselves and others. Especially fire management officers. Also it has hurt the image of excellent women firefighters with outstanding abilities."

**Dispatch**

"Lack of dispatch training and standardization."

"Dispatchers need to be qualified in that area. Don't hire some broken down FCO -- and put into the coordinator's jobs."

"Limited career ladder for dispatchers; really good ones are few and far between."

**Equipment and Protective Clothing**

"Protective equipment mandates made based on liability and accountability concerns rather than genuine concern for health and comfort."

"It does not matter how many radios are on a fire if people are lacking communication skills."
"Another major flaw in safety is poor radio communication. Training is needed in programming and communicating effectively on radio."

"More money to provide new technology to firefighting."

"[N]ot having the money to replace, and upgrade equipment. All our fire money gets tapped for salary or overhead (pay the light bill, etc.). We are under-equipped and under-trained -- an accident waiting to happen."

"NOMEX and fire shelters did not work on South Canyon. Fear of speaking up and unfamiliar fuel types was a factor. Education and experience in fuel types, and the ability to question authority without fear of reprisal would make NOMEX and fire shelters unnecessary."

"Some firefighters find it hard to fork out the money for a good pair of boots. [I]n some cases I have seen firefighters with feet so sore from blisters and such that they cannot perform at 100%. A possible solution may be some sort of allowance for footwear, socks and boots."

"Lack of use of new technology in fire equipment -- especially fire shelters."

"Boots. better standards of the type of boots required for fire; brands, styles, etc. -- too many foot and ankle injuries. People should absolutely not be allowed on the fireline without proper footwear. Send them home."

**Organization**

"Reorganization makes it hard to locate 'who' is responsible and has authority for management decisions."

"The basic tactical unit on a wildfire is the Division. There has been no dialogue on how to strengthen the effectiveness of this basic unit. Division supervisors do not delegate enough responsibility to strike team leaders -- the division supervisors. Strike team leaders and crew supervisors need to bond in a fashion -- to agree on the objectives and strategy to meet those objectives. Division supervisors do not have all the answers, they need to solicit ideas from those below. We all want to feel like our ideas amount to something. We all want to be part of the TEAM. Part of the problem is the attitude of IMT and their unwillingness to accept outsiders as equals."

"Smokejumpers are not automatically a Type I crew. A key component of a Type I crew is working together on a regular daily basis and permanently assigned overhead. This is not true on all smokejumper assignments."

"F.S. personnel micro-managed."
"Need to 'rethink' the ICS systems! All the failings predicted for ICS prior to its inception are coming to pass. It is a poorly designed system based on theoretical management principles, not reality! Bring back the sector boss position -- will help with the Division Supervisor problems."

**Insignia**

"We need ways of universally identifying . . . personnel on the fireline . . . Firefighters with experience, such as engine foremen, helitack, crew leaders, etc. need to be recognized . . . by . . . individuals from other agencies. Such recognition is necessary in dealing with crews one is unfamiliar with, especially if their training and qualifications are less than one is accustomed to."

"There is a real safety need to expand the classification of Type II crews -- one crew has 24 hour training/no experience, another crew has 80 hour training/avg. 6 years experience. Both are Type II crews -- which do you put constructing hot line? How do you know which crew is which?"

**Information Flow and Briefings**

"[P]oor maps on most fires too little info on the maps such as safety zones . . . not enough copies."

"[P]oor communications set-up using 1950s - 60s technology."

"Predicted fire behavior is often given in generic terms and does not focus on local fire behavior, specific topography, or exact locations. By the 10th day of a fire, this briefing is given in terms of 'same stuff, different day.'"

"Safety of fire personnel who are not on a crew -- these people frequently miss out on briefings, situation updates, fire behavior and weather updates."

"Following South Canyon, I was surprised to find out that some of the jumpers didn't have adequate knowledge of weather (i.e., 50 mph winds) this is one of the worst critical bits of information one should obtain."

"On Type I and II incidents and on some extended attack incidents, it used to be that most briefings, meetings, schedules, etc. revolved around the needs and schedules of operations. Now it seems that we have done a 180 degree shift, operations constantly must schedule around the rest of the functions, e.g. division supervisors being pulled off line 1600 to attend briefings."
"Individual firefighters should be allowed and encouraged to attend meetings (ones involving overhead and crew bosses) in order to be better informed. Crew bosses (in my experience) rarely properly pass on information regarding strategy, concerns, etc."

"Sometimes there's too much radio talk in the first few minutes of a fire (initial attack)."

**Crew and Team Attributes**

"A big problem is general lack of interest in the fire program -- [people] don't feel it is part of the job they got hired to do."

"Lack of line officer support to prepare, train locally or locally deal with human dynamics within crews/initial attack modules."

"Morals and ethics of our younger persons has changed over the past 25 years. Trust in one another is much harder to instill. A building block to 'Safety' = Trust + Reliability."

"[M]any crews . . . formed and dispatched have people who have never worked together before. Ensure that there is support for crew supervisors to 'send someone home' if the firefighter is causing unusual disruptions in crew performance. Reasons . . . may be safety related [e.g.] lack of adequate physical fitness, negative attitude, and/or discriminatory behavior."

**Crisis Leadership**

"Many agency administrators do not cultivate a positive safety ethic day in and day out well before a fire emergency. Further, they are not addressing critical staffing, funding, & other needs in fire mgt, action plans, and forest aviation plans. Other program priorities divert attention away from 'doing the basics' well." [From an agency administrator.]

"The IC is not identified on small fires."

"I feel most crew bosses have too many people [to supervise] to adequately keep up with all their crew's actions."

"Not enough emphasis placed on 'leadership.'"

"Unwillingness of regular firefighting personnel to supervise Type II crews -- see it beneath them."

"The failure at South Canyon was in decision making. You can give all the re-currency training you want but when mental capacities are overloaded, bad decisions occur, and every now and then people die."
"The increase in information dumped on firefighters after accidents is a negative effect on over-all safety 'information overload' -- we need to get back to the basics. 'LCES' -- In a high stress situation you can only remember three things. The basic life savers are the ones you should know."

1) Whether it is on the fire line or in management there is a 'lack of decision' -- sometimes a wrong decision is better than NO DECISION. 2) Lack of first hand experience and not really 'knowing what goes on in the field or on the ground' by RO/WO staff and local line officer."

**Experience/Competence**

"The biggest problem we have in the Forest Service is we have an aging workforce (average age, mid - upper forties). When people get older, they are less inclined to want to stay involved with firefighting. Because we are downsizing, the problem is going to get worse before it gets better. Qualified people are retiring and we are not replacing them!"

"Today's workforce doesn't have time to deal with fires - ologists, single parents. Today's employees are not handy with tools."

"Our work force is getting older and fatter each year. There are very few new hires, and those that come on board often feel fires is for someone else."

"Not enough experienced crew bosses; no 'replacement' of crew bosses as they get older and move out of crew boss jobs, not enough younger, talented replacements."

"Many people in charge of decisions are paper trained but not ground experienced. We are still bringing back retirees instead of training new folks and getting them experience."

"[W]hen all we face is dead-end jobs, it forces our good people out of the system. We need more WAE positions. Experience is our best defense. Please express this idea to Washington."

"Too many people trained in the classroom and checked off with one training assignment are then incapable of calling the game as it should be due to lack of situational experience."

"The other tremendous problem we face is that in about 5 years, most of our experience will retire, and we have not adequately staffed to replace that experience."
"To me, the biggest concern is being from 'area C-EA' and going to the larger western fires. If our crew supervisors have no work experience in the west, I feel they may not anticipate dangerous weather or terrain as well as someone who has done field work in that dry, mountainous environment and neither does the area C-EA firefighters."

"Lack of experience on upper leadership positions. Positions have been filled by individuals because of WHO they are, rather than by years of field experience. Lack of mobilization opportunities for ALL Eastern area crews/overhead. Eastern crews and individuals are not given enough assignments per year to keep refreshed."

"Agency administrators with no fire background and with an attitude that 'anybody can fight fire.'"

"Unqualified division supervisors and strike team leaders trying to send crews into some BAD situations."

"Type I crews can also lack experience . . . and have poor leaders. One of the most dangerous situations that I have experienced on a wildland fire was caused by a Type I crew inexperienced in local conditions and tactics led by a crew boss who did not know how to manage people."

"Not enough experience at the STL level before becoming a division supervisor. Then only minimal OJT/trainee experience at division level."

"Still rely on seasonals in key positions: eng. foreman/ICTY. Don't meet formal quality standards."

"Having a seasonal workforce reduces the skill level of crews and creates a higher risk due to re-training and not having a stable workforce, unlike cites, counties and state organized firefighters."

"Engine drivers having little or no experience."

"Forest Service Mangers (District Rangers), have a mind set that firefighting is secondary to district targets. Experience necessary to maintain qualifications is difficult to attain when managers at the home unit are unwilling or reluctant to allow employees to accept fire assignments."

"Type I teams coming in and ignoring local knowledge is a problem."

"REQUIRE administrators to release experienced firefighters and not hold on to them."

"Under-utilization of experienced, fire hardened technicians . . . (How many technicians do you see on Type I teams in the IC, command and general staff?)"
"The biggest single problem is most agency administrators do not have fire experience and therefore see fire only as a priority when the smoke is flying. Inadequate time is allowed for the preparation necessary to adequately fight fire. They do not see the need to have all agency resources (persons) committed to fire assignments and therefore the few people that can go are soon overused and burned out."

Certification

"Lack of trainee opportunities on actual fires for single resource positions means that firefighters rush through task books when they do get a chance. If certification depends on wildfire experience then we need to be given more opportunities and training needs should be better emphasized for each individual."

"Not all agencies following qualification standards, i.e., I've had to 're-qualify' for a position I've done dozens of times, while another 'qualified' person had two fires lifetime experience at ANY position."

"People assume you have experience just because you have a red card. On my very first fire, I was left alone, with no radio, in unfamiliar territory to guard a line in windy conditions. NOW I know better; when you're new, you're likely to just say 'okay.'"

"We are still 'grandfathering' people into positions or letting people skip over the ladder of qualifications to reach the next higher redcard level."

"Qualification standards are different for each agency. (A DvS in one outfit wouldn't make a crew boss in another.)"

Training

"Performance based training system is not working due to abuse and lack of consistency of evaluators."

"[T]here is a huge gap between training and experience. Trainee positions are bottlenecked at the crew boss level. To move beyond the crew boss level there are probably hundreds waiting for trainee positions. Year after year goes by, and they're still waiting. How do we gain experience if not by fulfilling the trainee positions. And yet there is no policy or plan in place to make it happen."

"[T]here are not nearly enough opportunities to be a trainee under the wing of qualified individuals who take the time to show the tasks of a position, as they are normally too busy doing the job to explain what's going on in their head and why they are making the decisions they do."
"I do not feel that a one-time fire training course (initial formal training, the multiple day course) is adequate, ESPECIALLY for those of us who are not frequently engaged in firefighting. We are given half-day refresher courses, but they are inadequate. I feel that we should be more knowledgeable about fire weather, behavior, strategy (ER). You should consider requiring extensive fire training every 5 years."

"Training is available but the money and time to get firefighters to it is often not. We do not have enough career seasonal slots to get our crew leaders adequately trained. The most important safety position on any fire is the crew boss level (engine, crews, helitack). The employees are largely seasonal with no money or time for training."

"Training for seasonals is essential. The more you know on the fireline about fuels, weather, topography and fire behavior -- the more you can watch and recognize hazardous situations. Squad bosses, crew bosses and lookouts cannot always be aware of all hazardous situations. Much necessary training is not given due to district rangers/training specialists, etc. who see seasonal fire crews as merely a workforce rather than as motivated individuals interested in knowledge about forest resources and government careers."

"More training to all firefighters on fire behavior, beginning -- intermediate -- and advanced fire behavior training for all firefighters! More training that encourages group discussion and class participation."

"Canned training courses that do not allow for regional differences or provide for the flexibility a good firefighter needs. Standardization, regimentation, stiffness that stifles creative thinking and job enjoyment."

"Inadequate urban/interface training."

"Safety and efficiency not taught together."

"Not enough time to properly train seasonals before going into fire season. Lots of non-fire training also must be done -- first aid, haz-mat, driving, etc."

"Priorities for training and training assignments should be based on qualifications, willingness to take further assignments, past performance, etc. -- NOT gender and race."

"Not building up skills of 'militia' or non-fire positions to assist, fill in or replace regular fire employees on teams and local fires."

"Most fatalities occur on smaller fires during initial attack. We concentrate our training on higher rated incident management team positions. Let's focus on initial attack IC training, initial attack dispatching, and cooperator safety awareness (particularly VFDs)."
"I have worn a fire shelter at various times and for various agencies for at least 12 years. [N]ot until I taught the class did I learn that I did not know how to properly deploy it. I found that many of my supervisors did not know either. The new plastic [training] fire shelters corrected this."

"Need more required PERFORMANCE based requirements over a longer period of time to off set poor supervisor 'teaching' or 'grading' you. Task book good start, but one or two incidents not enough; both may be under an unqualified or paper-qualified supervisor."

"Need to concentrate training on areas likely to be utilized. A lot of training goes to waste."

"Stop focusing on only formal training -- there is little follow-up to make sure people get the trainee assignments in a timely fashion. It takes a special effort both at the home unit and at the regional level to maintain skills level ... in areas where there isn't a heavy fire load. An engine foreman who average one initial attack a season, needs off-forest assignment to maintain skills and develop new ones. In '95 a timber tech from a westside forest had 3 off-forest fire assignments while an eastside engine foreman stayed home with 1 IA for the season."

"We are required to put seasonal firefighters through too much training to meet qualification standards. 'WE NEED TO SLOW DOWN, BACK UP, AND STRESS THE BASICS OF FIRE SAFETY FUNDAMENTALS' -- not just cram more training into people -- BACK TO THE BASICS should become the battle cry!!"

"We aren't teaching our folks enough about fire suppression strategies and tactics -- we are spending way too much time on how to use our fire shelter instead of how not to ever need it. Anyone who uses a shelter should not be allowed on a fire again because they are a hazard to themselves, and others. They are NOT heroes!"

"Training for look-outs."

"Much of the classroom training is now 'recommended' or optional, and should be 'required' again."

"Training not made available to SEASONALS due to either the scheduling of training during non-fire season, the cost of travel, per diem, etc."

**Air Operations**

"Military helicopters on wildfires. They are very ineffective and extremely dangerous. In my experience as HEBI and HEMG for 10 years this has been true 100% of the time. For example: Idaho 1994 Chicken Complex -- division supervisors (several) requested military bucket work to stop. 'They're not even close to the fire (target).' Professional"
pilots refused to fly while military helicopters were in the area due to safety problems. Even though the helibase requested they go away REPEATEDLY, political pressure pushed them back on us -- the 3rd time this resulted in a FATALITY."

"Do you really want pilots to be 'aerial observers'? I want their full concentration to be on flying activities."

"[T]he helicopter module is misused, overused. Certification of module isn't controlled well. Due to budget cuts, agency managers are eliminating regular full service contracts and crews, using the CWN Program as a cheap way out (ends up costing more)."

"Utilize a good pair of experienced eyes over any fire, IA-Type I."

"We need constant aerial recon. of fires, no breaks for fuel, replace with another plane, and we need very experienced people in fire behavior in the planes. On large fires maybe more than one plane at a time. They also must have good communication directly with the div./group sup."

**Physical Fitness**

"Physical strength to do job assigned."

"Lack of physical fitness requirements for ICS Red Card positions!!!"

"Poor physical condition of Type I resources -- both hotshots and jumpers. Most are excellent, but the low end can be way below the group norm due to the slack national standards."

"The most pervasive safety issue that I have observed is ... the poor physical conditioning of line personnel. People in their 20s are exhibiting difficulty in performing their line assignments because of early fatigue onset brought about by poor physical conditioning. The physical qualifications part of training and qualifications needs to be increased and monitored so that most people need to be physically proactive instead of just lucky on the step test."

"Supts. in Park Service do not allow firefighters (red cardholders) to participate in physical fitness programs if firefighting is not in their P.D. [they] must keep their training to their own personal time."

"I think as a government agency, we need to change the step test. Whoever is on the line actually digging line (firefighters, squad boss, crew boss) needs to pass the mile and a half run. I don't think the step test is a right way to test physical fitness."
"I have experienced numerous attitude and safety problems resulting from inconsistencies between federal, state, and contractor physical fitness requirements. Just because states and contractors say they are meeting minimum physical fitness standards does not mean they are."

"If people were required to do the run instead of the step test we would have very few crews. People on fires are not fit!"

"I strongly feel the step test IS NOT an adequate indicator of fitness. I would also like to see some sort of policy that if you fail the step test a certain number of times, you are given an ultimatum (for example: you have one week to be able to pass or you can't be on a crew)."

**Strategy & Tactics**

"Communications and organization between different fire organizations on fire is a critical problem."

"Would put more emphasis on doing more type 3 incidents than immediately going type 2. Use smokejumpers more for overhead positions because they actually have fire experience."

"Line officers frequently changing objectives and/or dictating tactics from the air or the office."

"Not taking action on small easy to suppress fires then needing to take action on the same fires after they have become large and complex."

"Over reliance on casual/EFF hiring for lower level positions, especially in dispatch as fire load escalates."

"Overhead teams that do not respect local expertise and make tactical decisions that might work back home but endanger lives, and waste huge amounts of money when away from home."

"Need to concentrate our efforts on management of transition fires Type IV to Type III."

"The problem of mixing Type I and II crews on the fireline. The Type I crews push the envelope of safety which is often above the capabilities of the Type II crew. A Type II crew is only as good as its weakest person."

"Tactics could be modified during mop-up phase to allow more fuels to completely burn before 'hitting it hard.'"
"Extra long and difficult shifts in transition from initial to extended attack."

"Safety should be addressed more often during mop-up operations. The long hours of mop-up can dull your safety awareness, and the attitude that mop-up is not dangerous work."

"Primary problem is we are asking firefighters to suppress fires with a much more dangerous fuel loading and priorities for saving homes. We need to ENFORCE better access and clearance, plus reduce fuel loading overall. Bottom line is fires ARE more dangerous now than 50 years ago."

"Too many non-wildland agencies involved in the tactics and strategy of firefighting in the urban interface."

"Fire management strategy: need the appropriate level of response for the threat. Need to prescribe containment strategies for a variety of conditions for unplanned ignitions on all NF land. Avoid the 'high response' mentality for any and all starts. Put resources where the biggest threat to life, property, resources exists. Put more effort into hiring more firefighters -- get away from the Type II crews. Regular FS employees have too many other jobs to maintain proficiency and training in all areas. We only burn up our most experienced, highly trained firefighters. Better strategies, not more training, is needed."

"Money makes most of fire decisions -- spending cheaply may get you a reward, but compromises safety of firefighters."

"I don't understand a system that allows millions to be spent on major incidents but wants to cut corners on initial attack."

"Lack of safety practices by local volunteer and county units -- SOP for them is to attack the head of the fire -- no anchor pt., no lookouts, no escape routes -- training isn't the answer because they have all had it!"

"I believe a major strategy failure is too few lookouts posted with direct communication with affected resources."

"Inadequate or unrealistic fire management plans. Nation in general still practicing a fire exclusion philosophy -- Put Them Out. Bad deal."

"Downhill line construction: this tactic needs a complete review. Why do it if the life, resource and property values aren't at risk? If there is a 1 percent risk of harm possible to the crews it should not be undertaken."

"Putting crews on the line in the heat of the day and avoiding cool nights needs reviewing. I have seen and heard of few, if any, injuries by vigorously attacking a fire at night."

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Fatigue

"Sometimes long, hard hikes leave crews too fatigued when they reach the fire to adequately react to dangerous situations (i.e., run, outrun fire; reach safety zones, etc.)."

"After two weeks on detail, all Type II crews that I have been on lose cohesiveness and start after each other. It may be a better idea to move R&R back a few days to try and break it up more. Fourteen days seems to be a wall, and then, the IC would rather send you home then on R&R."

"Poor sleeping conditions -- fatigue at camps -- too noisy!"

"Night shifts are important but then the crews 'must' 'must' 'must' get QUALITY sleep."

"Adequate resting areas for night shift workers is needed (i.e. motels, peace and quiet). Time: guarantee 16 hours/day -- those who exceed 16 hours of work after initial attack are released from incident."

Other Issues

"Many state and local governments really know little about the fundamentals of wildland fire."

"Conditions of roads (dirt and gravel) deteriorate as fire progresses which increases potential for accidents, vehicle breakdown, and loss of efficiency. Part of planning process needs more attention to taking care of roads during fire -- not just at end of fire."

Multiple Issues

"My fire experience since 1961 indicates the following are priority safety concerns. 1. Crew transportation (haul roads, excessive speeds, poor drivers, vehicle etc.); 2. Excessive driving speeds of fire traffic and vehicles and unfamiliar roads; 3. Felling activities (snags, green trees, etc.); 4. Crew use and carrying of fire tools (line construction, etc.); 5. Crew activities in steep, rocky terrain (walking, loose footing, falls, etc.); 6. Putting crews in hazardous situations (fire below, no safety zones, etc.); 7. Helicopter bucket drops (crews too close); 8. Health and physical condition of crews (unknown medical problems); 9. Dehydration problems (not drinking enough water); 10. Engine activities (non-use of eye protection by hose person); 11. Rolling rocks on steep slopes; 12. Crew activities during night shifts."

"OPS Chiefs NOT LISTENING to their division supervisors and crew supervisors. A real reluctance to change a plan once it is written (IMTs). Smokejumpers tend to be overrated. Much of their experience is with small fires with fewer dispatches than many firefighters and they are too 'clannish' -- much more than other resources."
"1. General morale (due to changes, low pay, slow career movement), 2. Need to train on personal responsibility for personal safety, 3. Need a way for subordinates to say another has a safety problem (I've heard many hotshot crews talk amongst themselves about one crew they consider unsafe. They don't want to give names. 4. Quit complaining about losing all the experienced people. Start using the younger folks while the 'old sages' are still around to impart some training. Give the younger folk credit; a lot of them have good experience and knowledge. Sometimes the old folks are so stuck in their ways they fail to see new ways that may be better."