

Rapid Lesson Sharing



Event Type: Shooting Incident

Date: August 23, 2018

Location: Miriam Fire, White Pass Ski Area
15 miles east of Packwood, Washington

They're Shooting at Us!

On August 23, the Miriam Fire is approximately 3,500 acres, 30 percent contained, with 307 personnel. There are several Australian fire personnel on the incident, including a Safety Officer Type 2 (SOF2) and a Division/Group Supervisor (DIVS), both assigned to Division A/C.

The morning of August 23, a total of 14 persons were assigned to Division A/C: one seven-person National Park Service (NPS) Fire Module, three Type 6 Engines, one Water Tender, one Incident Medical Specialist Technician (IMST), one DIVS, and one SOF2. Later in the day, five Resource Advisors (READ) would arrive in this Division.

There were two (NPS) Lookouts posted at the White Pass Ski Area's Basin Quad Lift (DP-10, north of Hogback Mountain) and two Lookouts posted on top of Hogback Mountain, west of the Pacific Coast Trail (PCT) which is located at the bottom of the mountain. The Lookouts were monitoring fire behavior and making weather observations. Highway 12 is north of Hogback Mountain.

"They have a scoped rifle and are pointing it at us!"

Lookout

Two Individuals put a Scoped Rifle on a Bi-Pod—and Fired a Shot

At approximately 1330, personnel hear what sounds like a gunshot. Some thought it might be an explosion—maybe from the White Pass Ski Area's maintenance crew. Others thought it might have been a tree breaking.

At 1450, the SOF2 and DIVS A/C arrive on Lookout Mountain and talk to the Lookouts.

At approximately 1500, four incident personnel spot two individuals walking down the PCT approximately 200 yards below them. The incident personnel stand up and holler and wave. All four are wearing yellow Nomex fire shirts. Two had bright yellow hardhats. They therefore thought they had been seen by these two individuals.

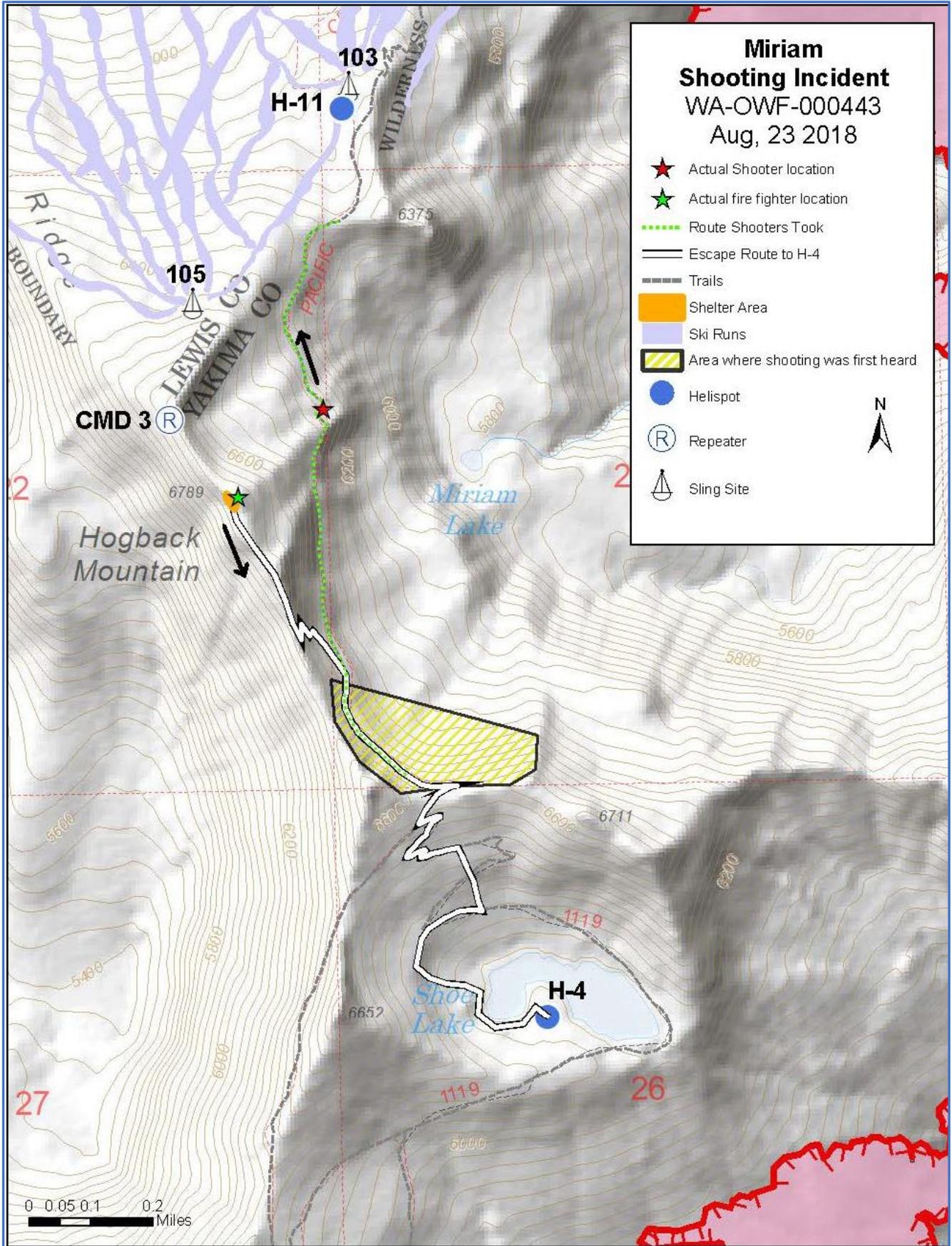
The incident personnel watched with binoculars as one of the two individuals put a scoped rifle on a bi-pod and looked up the mountain toward them. They continued to wave until a shot was fired. They then bailed off the backside of the mountain to take cover as a second shot rang out.

"I told everyone to take off their yellow Nomex shirts to make us less visible."

Safety Officer Type 2

Several More Shots Fired

DIVS A/C notified Communications of the rifle shots and told them to notify the two Lookouts on DP 10 about what happened and tell them to leave the area. The shooter and companion started to walk north on the PCT. The four incident personnel could no longer see them but heard several more shots coming from the direction that they had gone. The four bailed off the ridge, ran to the PCT, and went to Helispot H-4 for a helicopter ride out of the area.



“We had to cross an opening. We took off our Nomex shirts and went one by one across the opening to cover on the other side.”

Lookout

At approximately 1510, the Incident Management Team (IMT) initiated the Incident Emergency Plan (an Incident within an Incident-IWI). The Deputy Incident Commander, Air Operations Branch Director, and Safety Officer went to the Communications Unit.

At this Time, the Following Actions Take Place:

- ✓ Divisions A and C were evacuated.
- ✓ The Sheriff was notified.
- ✓ The IMT’s Law Enforcement Officers (LEO) were responding to area, as well as the Field Operations Section Chief.
- ✓ Helicopters were put on standby for evacuating the four incident personnel from H-4.
- ✓ The ICP was locked down and supervisors were ordered to account for their personnel.
- ✓ The Incident Commander and Agency Administrator were giving briefings (of what they knew) periodically to ICP/Camp personnel.
- ✓ The Sheriff’s Deputies found the rifle shooting individuals’ vehicle on Highway 12 and ran the license plates. They were then able to locate people who knew them and confirmed that they had gone bear hunting near the ski area. The Sheriff’s Deputies then made contact with them.
- ✓ They were cited for entering a closed area—with additional charges pending.

At 1730, the IWI was terminated. Personnel resumed their normal fire management and support duties.

“That was very scary—especially when someone says: ‘Active Shooter’.”

Public Information Officer

“We don’t think about a Law Enforcement incident like this!”

Incident Commander

LESSONS

- ❖ There was a Washington LERN (Law Enforcement Response Network) frequency programmed on the fire radios, but the incident’s LEOs were from out of state and did not know that. It would have made communication with the Sheriff Deputies easier than cell phone calls.
- ❖ There was a minor disconnect between the Operations Section and the Law Enforcement personnel on communication and coordinating the movement and accountability of resources evacuated off the ridge (Divisions A/C).
- ❖ At Incident Management Team in-briefings, teams should talk with local law enforcement (Partners/Cooperators) about this kind of an event and do some contingency planning (What IF?).
- ❖ Fire managers respond to IWIs by running in to help (accidents, injuries, Search and Rescue, etc.) They do not plan for running away!
- ❖ There was a plan in place (IWI), though it had to be modified. It worked.

- ❖ This shooting incident provides an invaluable lesson for Incident Management Teams to discuss and prepare for!

Timeline/Radio Log

1330: Crews near the Pacific Crest Trail and Shoe Lake intersect hear a rifle shot/explosion/crack
1450: Division Supervisor on Alpha and Charlie Divisions (DIV A/C) and Safety Officer arrived at location
1500: (DIV A/C) Shots Fired
1502: (Field Operations Section Chief- F/OSC) Enroute DP 5 to assist w/AC
1512: (Law Enforcement Officer-LEO) Enroute to DP 5
1515: (Communications-Comms) DIV A/C, LEO enroute
1520: (DIV A/C) Shooter is enroute to base of Quad (ski lift)
1521: (F/OSC) checked availability of LEO helicopter
1523: (Security Manager-SECM) No Sheriff available
1527: (SECM/LEO) Mile Marker 2 DP 10; Evacuate DP 10 as soon as SECM/LEO get to DP 10
1530: (DIV A/C) 2 ATV Active shooters @ Base in Quad (ski lift)
1531: (DIV A/C) Notified White Pass (ski area) maintenance of incident
1533: (DIV A/C) Confirm
1537: (DIV A/C) Provided description of events/suspects
1543: (Base in Quad) enroute to DP 5
1546: (Comms) Yakima Police/Sheriffs ETA 20 minutes
1547: (DIV A/C) Negative can't get out/in safe location taking off yellow shirts to reduce visibility
1552: (Helibase) 4 Individuals enroute to H4 for extraction
1558: (DIV A/C) 4 individuals enroute to H4 call every 15 minutes
1600: (F/OSC) Check Availability King County Helicopter
1617: (F/OSC) 4 individuals at H4 talk to LEOs at DP 10 waiting on additional assistance
1655: (Comms) Advised all resources- LEOs heading up into area on UTVs.
1656: (DIV A/C) ETA to H4 ten minutes
1730: (Comms) All Units resume normal communications on Command
1800: (DIV M) All 4 persons are at helo and enroute to ICP

“As they set up the bi-pod, I transmitted everything I saw to my supervisor (on discreet frequency on Module).”

Lookout

QUESTIONS

- ❖ The Lookout, while in personal contact with DIV A/C and the SOF2, still maintained contact with his Module Leader on their discreet frequency. Was this OK? Did the Supervisor then talk to ICP Communications?
- ❖ How do we streamline and limit radio traffic to the essentials in a chaotic situation?
- ❖ How do we maintain adequate essential communication to those affected?
- ❖ On an incident are we developing relationships and avenues of communication with law enforcement agencies for law enforcement events (active shooter, property owners, marijuana plantations, events at the ICP, etc.)?

*“I am responsible for everyone on this incident
and wanted everyone accounted for.”*

Incident Commander

*“Along the way to H4, I found where two animals had been butchered (marmots),
blood on the rocks, the carcasses thrown down the hill,
footprints and three shell casings.”*

Safety Officer Type 2

This RLS was submitted by:

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