

All Chairs meeting Bosie February 2014 attended by Pat McDowell

We had a great presentation on Yarnell. It really helped me understand what happened there. While it had nothing to do with prevention, it made me stop and think about how many times I've been in similar situations, but with better outcomes.

Here are some of the memorable messages for me:

The tragedy affects more than just the people on this fire. (This sounds simplistic, but is much more complex and profound) It affects families, friends, a community, a state, state organizations, federal agencies and to some extent a nation. It was a significant loss of life in any context.

There were multiple issues that contributed to the tragedy, but probably no single causative agent.

The issues I picked up on were: communication issues (not just radios, but including radios); confusion about locations of resources; fuels and fire behavior; aviation knowledge; terrain issues and a loss of or mistaken situational awareness. The single causative factor was the combined impacts of many contributing factors...

We heard from FS and DOI leadership on the role of NWCG...there is a changing understanding and redefinition of NWCG and governance. **There was discussion that NWCG is a standards, training, and guidance organization; but not a policy making body or a program implementation organization.** Most of this is due to FACA, but it is also due to the autonomy of the member organizations. This is an important point and a shift in direction. One committee may be sunset as a result. (Policy Committee). Policy is being elevated to the Fire Executive Board. Bottom-line for us is that we can recommend practice, policy or standards but only the employee's agency can establish agency policy. (I think states understand this better than feds...)

Training - A new committee has been added for training. If we are revising a course, Training wants us to get on their radar when we decide to start. This was an emphasis area throughout the meeting. I think the flow of contacts is we notify Elaine and Elaine notifies Deb Fleming who then gets a team together to help us move forward. Of course, there is a form and tracking spreadsheet.

Similarly, for any publications being revised, we need to notify publications (Cindy Wolf) before we start.

These notifications need to take place with the budget submission. That will be around the end of April.

There is a new inter agency IT process. IT requests will have a convoluted excursion through approvals at multiple layers. I think you may have heard me report out on this in our efforts to get a replacement for RAMS...The new IT lead wants us to bring forward a clearly identified "business need" and/or output; but let them design the best means to meet it.

There is some new fire tracking tool being developed named "Irwin" or Erwin" . It's goal is to tie all of these incident related programs together and display them geo-spatially It is starting out with Firecode, and going to WFDSS, Fire Reports, etc. I think they said it would eventually tie 27 independent databases together...The implication I saw was that it might be a decent intelligence tool for prevention education teams, going into a new area...

There was much discussion about Lessons Learned and the use of it as a repository for committee materials and collaboration. . it is available, but our site is not being used.

We will be moving into a records retention plan in 2015. We need to maintain the following permanent records:

Meeting Minutes
Final Agendas and Handouts
Official Memos
Originals of Products and Publications

Program/Business records need to be maintained for five years.

Meeting Notes

The meeting notes need to list:

Attendees
Agenda Items
Decisions
Actions

The text of discussions is not necessary.

The meeting notes need to be kept both electronically and in paper format.

Memos

Memos are the official format for Decisions (not letters) there is a standard format.

#End records

Other administrative subjects were also discussed. These may seem a little disjointed.

Charters -

Charters may need to be revised in light of the refined direction and some other impacts. Branch Coordinators will need to be involved when charters are revised. These will need to be 508 compliant if posted to the web.

508 Compliance -

This was a recurring theme throughout the meeting. All of our electronic publications need to be 508 compliant. Apparently this is easier to do from the beginning. Anything with images can present a problem.

NWCG Web Site -

The Web site is not going away, as previously thought. The website is in need of information from the committees to add depth. Some are sending in content. Others are not. Any content needs to be 508 Compliant. For some documents, templates may exist. Deb Fleming showed a site where these can be found, but I wasn't fast enough to capture it.

??? <http://www.hhs.gov/web/508/>

The NWCG Operating Principles and Guidelines have a lot of instructions about process and publication standards.

Information Technology (IT) Projects -

Any new IT projects will now need to be circulated through that convoluted process I've described that Sam is facing on the RAMS replacement. The acronym is WFIT. John Gebhard, BLM was the speaker on this. More information can be found at <http://www.forestsandrangelands.gov/WFIT/index.shtml>

New proposals need to focus on the "business need" or output desired, letting the IT group design the process.

Interactions with the NWCG Executive Board -

IF asking for action, be sure to include any deadline, so the board won't pass or table a decision needed to meet a deadline.

The "Featured Committee" concept is available, if a committee has a need to interact.

Priority NWCG Focus Areas for 2014 -

Business Processes

Internal Communications

Committee membership based on required skills sets, not on all agencies on the Executive Board having a representative.

Getting NWCG back to basics of: Standards, Guides, and training

Prioritize workloads, and tackle those projects with the biggest impact first.

Make all publications (those to be posted electronically) 508 Compliant.

There was a sort of rambling session on "Evolving Incident Management" (This is out of order with the agenda) - Here are a few highlights.-

FEMA has fully embraced NIMS and is looking at the NWCG implementation as the model. FEMA will be taking over several non fire-specific courses. They are considering some standard courses for positions that have the same basic duties in any response. One of these may be the PIO's. The concept of "Endorsements" was discussed. Endorsements are where an individual is qualified to fill a basic ICS position and endorsed as qualified to respond to a particular type of incident. SO a plans chief (maybe a bad example) could be a plans chief with a fire endorsement and also have a search and rescue endorsement; but not be endorsed for mass care or storm recovery...this concept is still be worked on.

One of the consequences for NWCG is that FEMA is using just three "Types", so NWCG is trying to move in that direction for fire classification. They current plan is to have three types: Initial Attack; Extended Attack; and Complex Fires. This and attrition/mass retirements leads to the concept of maintaining just 42 federal incident management teams strategically positioned around the country (down from 54) and calling them "Incident management teams", with no more Type 1 or Type 2 teams. That led to a discussion of the relevance of the S-420 and difficulties maintaining it. There was no decision in any of this that I saw. As far as relevance to our Committee: the main issue will be the fate of the PIOs and their training courses.

As I understood it, the group working on the EIM project is in close coordination with the AC/IC group and the Training Committee.

In the rotating breakouts I offered two concerns from our committee's perspective, plus a general comment/observation.

The two concerns were: 1) the slowly disappearing membership on our committee (BLM, USFWS; an inactive USFA member, and now an acting from the FS). The result being that two or three members end up doing most of the work, and that all of the member agencies benefit from our work.2) A need for an orientation package for new members of committees that details expectations, roles and organization. Probably at two levels, one (a memo, brochure or letter) from the NWCG EB and one from the Committee with committee-specific details.

My general comment/observation was that a challenge to finding new members is the limits and difficulties of attending meetings and restricting locations. I pointed out that Members have full time jobs and willingly join because they get to travel to new parts of the country, talk with other professionals in the field and obtain their views/issues. Another motivation that sometimes shows up is the desire to "make a difference" or be involved. John Segar offered that the desire for exposure at higher levels was a former incentive for members. At any rate, I felt that the increasing difficulty with justifying meetings was impacting membership

Finally, there were a few "words of encouragement/wisdom" from the Executive Board:

NWCG is doing good work
Keep the Faith and energy going
Remember why we are here
Keep an open line of communications

There was a consensus that the meeting is worthwhile. The format was good, with the chairs to fill the agenda. Having the executive board members present was particularly important.