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FROM : National Wildfire Coordinating Group

REPLY TO : NWCG@nifc.gov

DATE : 08/08/2008

SUBJECT : SAFETY ADVISORY : Incident Medical Plans and Emergency Communications

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Reduced visibility due to smoky conditions surrounding incidents, competition for air ambulances, in combination with highly congested communications traffic can contribute to a delay in response time.

SAFETY CONCERNS TO PERSONNEL:

In the event of a medical emergency on the fire line, request that radio channels be cleared for emergency traffic through the Communications unit.

Incident Communications unit should immediately obtain from personnel on scene the following information: mechanism of injury, all significant medical findings, initial vital signs, patient location, medical transport vs. MEDIVAC, need for additional resources, and any other pertinent information with a bearing on resolving the incident.

The term “**MEDIVAC**” should be used for life threatening evacuations only. The term “**Medical Transport**” should be used for non-life threatening injuries or illnesses.

The patient’s name, crew affiliation or other personal identification information should not be communicated over the radio.

As a minimum, incident Communications unit should immediately communicate this information to the Incident Commander, Operations Section Chief, Medical Unit Leader, Safety Officer, and Finance Section Chief.

All employees on an incident need to read and understand the Medical Plan *each* day.

Employees on the fire line need to know their location on the line, distance from drop point and other access points.

Supervisors on the fire line need to know where employees are working on the line.

Know the process. Know the procedures. Know your role in each.

Prior to each operational period, line supervisors need to identify specific MEDIVAC sites, ensure appropriate first-aid supplies are available, and identify EMT's, or other trained personnel to assist in a medical emergency.

Medical Plans need to clearly identify appropriate timeframes:

Medical Plans should account for time lags due to the dispatch, travel to incident patient assessment, packaging and travel to medical facility.

In a medical emergency the urgency and severity of the situation, often indicated by the victim's vital signs, needs to be clearly communicated to medical responders.

Remember just like having good Situational Awareness, escape routes and safety zones, continually assess your situation and always keep in mind the nearest medical evacuation location, know your Medical Plan and clearly identify your emergency traffic.
