



NATIONAL WILDFIRE COORDINATING GROUP

National Interagency Fire Center
3833 S. Development Avenue
Boise, Idaho 83705

MEMORANDUM

Reference: NWCG#018-2010

To: Geographic Area Coordination Group Chairs

From: NWCG Chair *Wilbur Raage*

Date: April 8, 2010

Subject: Assignment of Trainees to Incident Positions

The Factual Report and Safety Action Plan for the Dutch Creek Incident were released on November 3, 2009. An interagency Serious Accident Investigation was initiated after the fatality occurred, co-led by the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) and the National Park Service (NPS).

Subsequently, the two agencies convened a joint USFS Accident Review Board (ARB) and NPS Board of Review (BOR) to evaluate the Accident Investigation: Factual Report submitted by the Serious Accident Investigation Team. This report can be found at the following internet address: http://www.nps.gov/fire/fire/fir_wil_fatality_investigation_dc.cfm.

The ARB-BOR reviewed the findings and developed eight recommendations described in their Safety Action Plan. Recommendation No. 5 states:

“Ensure trainees in staff/line fire assignments are used only when direct supervisory requirements are met.”

This recommendation relates to fireline situations where critical life-safety decisions are made by personnel on fire assignments. Supervisors must ensure appropriate oversight of trainees in these high hazard, high risk situations that could result in unacceptable consequences. Therefore, the following direction will be included in interagency operational guide revisions:

On wildland fire incidents, trainees may supervise trainees. However, when assigning trainees to positions where critical life-safety decisions are affected, trainees must be directly supervised by a fully qualified individual. The intent of this guidance is to focus the fully qualified supervision where exposure to hazard and risk is the greatest.

For example, a Division Group Supervisor (DIVS) trainee may not work directly for an Operations Section Chief trainee without additional field supervision. The potential for

high hazard work with high risk outcomes calls for a fully qualified DIVS to be assigned supervision of the DIVS trainee.

Using another example, a Supply Unit Leader trainee may supervise a Receiving/Distribution Manager trainee. In this case, supervision may be successfully provided in a lower hazard environment with appropriate risk mitigation.

It is important to recognize that this direction will not change the language in the Wildland Fire Qualification System Guide PMS 310-1. This is not a problem with the interagency qualification system; rather, it is an operational assignment issue of making appropriate personnel assignments on incidents. This direction will be included in the next revision of the Interagency Standards for Fire and Fire Aviation Operations (Red Book) and the Wildland Fire and Aviation Program Management and Operations Guide (BIA Blue Book).

Within a single chain of command, Incident Commanders must assess how many trainees are supervising other trainees, and whether these assignments are appropriately responsive to the level of risk being managed.

cc: NWCG Executive Board
Kim Christensen, NICC