

# Staff Ride Library



Wildland Fire Leadership Development Program

## Battlement Creek Fire–Tactical Decision Game

### Stand 1

**Note to Facilitator:** The intent of this TDGS is to generate discussion regarding the responsibilities of an IC to manage an accident on an incident. Some pertinent things to consider may include:

- Allocation of resources
- Who would handle the incident?
- What areas or evidence to protect?
- How to handle risk management concerns
- Psychological reaction of others on the fire
- Downed aircraft procedures
- The concerns regarding the Rulison Project and their influence on the overall operational plan and suppression strategy

Location: T56 Crash Site

Leadership Elements: Command Presence

Date: July 16

Time: 0855

### Training Objective

- Given the following scenario, participants should apply current procedures and policies in organizing for an incident within an incident.

### Scenario

Airtanker T56 and a Bell 206B Jet Ranger helicopter are the initial attack complement for the Grand Junction BLM. By the evening of July 15, there are three helicopters and three air tankers assigned to your fire on the Grand Junction District, Airtanker T56 is one of those three air tankers. On July 16 Airtanker T56 is again assigned to your fire.

- You are the Incident Commander and you have just heard word that an airtanker may have crashed on the south end of the fire. What immediate actions would you initiate for managing this incident within an incident?

## Stand 2

**Note to Facilitator:** The idea behind this TDGS is to generate a discussion on fatigue management in the era before work / rest guidelines and how that might impact the human factors on the Battlement Creek Fire.

Some other follow-up discussion for this TDGS:

- Effective firing methods and when firing may cause more harm than good?
- What are some alternatives that one might suggest to the Line Boss for the evening operations?

Location: The Cattle Guard

Leadership Elements: Fatigue and Stress

Date: July 16

Time: Day shift to night shift transition

### Training Objective

- Given the following scenario, participants should consider how to manage risks associated with extended shift operations.

### Scenario

You are day shift Sector II Boss (DIVS) on July 16. You have two hotshot crews on your sector that have been firing the cat line from the rock bluff to this location. Up to this point firing efforts have been successful with a strip of 60 to 80 feet burned along the line. It is now 2030 and darkness is approaching.

You have been notified by the nightshift Line Boss (Operations) that you will be assuming the role of Sector II Boss for the night shift and will have 4 Type II hand crews assigned to your sector. The Line Boss further informs you that he would like you to hold the cat line and continue burnout operations along the road to the west. He advises you that you can use the two day shift crews to continue the firing operation.

- It is now 2100 and the burn out along the road is not progressing as well as the burn along the cat line. The Line Boss is calling you on the radio for an update on progress and to reemphasize the importance of completing the burn out. What will you tell the Line Boss?

## Stand 3

**Note to Facilitator:** The purpose of this discussion point is to focus on the use of fire behavior observations and patterns from previous burning periods in order to anticipate future fire behavior.

- On July 16, fire behavior was characterized by intense surface and crown fire and hooking uphill runs. Fire whirls were observed later in the day, with runs occurring around 1600-1700. The fire ran from the road (west) to the top of the bowl (east) in 20 minutes. Locals reported widespread frost a month prior to the fire and current fine dead fuel moistures were at about 7% and live fuel moistures in the 166-194% range.
- Facilitator may want to reference the LCES poster that depicts the similarities of the 1949 Mann Gulch Fire, the 1994 South Canyon Fire, and the 2003 Cramer Fire.

Location: Looking into the 16th Bowl

Leadership Elements: Situational Awareness

Date: July 16 and July 17

### Training Objective

- Following this discussion participants, should be able to describe the observed fire behavior on July 16 and how that related to fire behavior on the following days.

### Discussion Points

What are some key factors that influence fire behavior in brush fuel types?

With the given conditions and observed fire behavior on July 16, what key elements should be considered regarding strategy and tactics for the following operational period(s)?

## Stand 4

**Note to Facilitator:** This discussion point is an opportunity to address cultural changes that have occurred in the wildland fire service since the 1970s. In addition, this is a good point for participants to share relevant events from the past.

Location: The Observation Point

Leadership Elements: Human Factors

Date: July 17

### Training Objective

- Following this discussion, participants should have an increased awareness of the significant human factors that influenced the events during the 1976 Battlement Creek Fire and how these lessons relate in today's wildland fire service.

### Discussion Points

What significant human factors do you think influenced decision-making on this fire?

Are the human factors that influence firefighters today similar or different that they were in 1976?

## Stand 5

**Note to Facilitator:** The idea behind this TDG is to generate discussion on appropriate management response:

- Would you still implement your assignment even if you knew that the management objectives for suppression of this fire are suppression at minimum cost, considering firefighter and public safety and the values to be protected?
- How do you properly refuse unnecessary risk?
- How do you measure the resource values of public and private concerns?

Location: The Helispot

Leadership Elements: Communication

Date: July 17

Time: 1100

### Training Objective

- Given the following scenario, participants should consider past accidents or near miss events in regard to current policies for appropriate management response.

### Scenario

You are the Superintendent on a hotshot crew. You and your crew arrive at this helispot at approximately 1100 hours. Yesterday there was extreme fire behavior in the bowl to the north. Today your assignment is to improve the line to the south, which ties into the rock bluff.

You hear word that another hotshot crew is trying to clean up the line below you by lighting the fuels to increase the depth of the black on the line in another sector.

- What communications do you initiate?

## Stand 6

**Note to Facilitator:** First observe a moment of silence for the men who lost their lives in this spot. Some other follow-up discussion for this TDGS:

- Fire shelters were not mandatory for personnel to carry at the time of the fire. The Mormon Lake Hotshots had fire shelters but because of their weight, they were left in camp that morning, a common practice at the time. Had they carried their shelters during this assignment, would that have made a difference?
- After the burn-over occurred, how would you re-integrate the remainder of a crew into the search for victims, treatment of the wounded, or the location of the dead? Or should you?

Location: Anywhere near the Flag

Leadership Elements: Command and Control

Date: July 17

Time: 1430 - 1500

### Training Objective

- Given the following scenario, participants should be able to describe their role as a supervisor directly involved in a line of duty death.

### Scenario

You are the Squad Leader on a hotshot crew in charge 14 crewmembers and you are assigned to do line improvement work. The Crew Superintendent, the other Squad Leader, and 2 crewmembers are conducting a firing operation, some distance away from you, between the rock bluff and the upper helispot. A third Squad Leader and another crew member are located on top of the rock bluff, they are posted as lookouts. You have been directed to move your line improvement squad to the safety zone because of incoming airtankers.

Shortly after reaching the safety zone, the Superintendent informs you by radio that his burnout squad is trapped and unable to join you in the safety zone because they are cut-off by a wall of flames. His voice on the radio is calm without any hint of panic, and you interpret this to mean they are only temporarily cut-off from the safety zone. You begin to witness erratic winds with smoke and flames cresting the ridge where you last saw the Superintendent and burnout squad. After 20 minutes you become very concerned about the well-being of the burnout squad and cannot raise them on the radio.

- What actions do you take next?

## Alternate - Stand 6

Location: The Flag

Leadership Elements: Leading in a crisis

Date: July 17

Time: 1430 - 1500

### Training Objective

- Following this discussion, participants should have an increased awareness of their potential roles in the aftermath of a line of duty death.

### Discussion Points

Solicit observations from the group regarding their perception of their own role if they were involved in a tragedy like the one that happened here. The following is a brief list of roles to consider:

- Line Officer responsibilities
- IC responsibilities
- IMT Command and Staff responsibilities
- Single Resource Boss responsibilities
- Other resources responsibilities
- Notifications
- Evidence protection
- The fire and who deals with it after the tragedy