

Staff Ride

Resources



Wildland Fire Leadership Development Program

Cart Creek Fire – Discussion Points

Strategic Discussion at Stand #1

There are significant surface features in this general area such as large areas of exposed red rock juxtaposed with stands of dense forest, deep narrow canyons and an adjacent large body of cold water. Other than a cumulus downdraft (which may or may not have been present on the afternoon of July 16 1977), what factors could lead to a rapid increase in wind speed and change in wind direction?

Strategic Discussion at Stand #2

The fuel conditions on this site today are very similar to the conditions that existed immediately prior to the Cart Creek Fire. You can imagine that under a light west wind, temperature of 78°, relative humidity of 33% and mostly sunny skies, the intensity of the fire would allow for direct attack. Was the strategy of direct attack along one flank and an indirect attack along the ridge using natural barriers reasonable based on the expected fire behavior?

Strategic Discussion at Stand #3

From the moment the helicopter dropped the firefighters off at this location they were defenseless against a sudden wind change. There was nothing between them and the fire except a bed of flashy fuels. Their only real safety zone was inside of the fire itself. How could this safety concern have been mitigated?

Thousands of times every year firefighters hike through unburned flashy fuels to reach the edge of a wildland fire. This is a routine event. What lessons from the Cart Creek Fire can be shared with firefighters to give them an appreciation of the high potential hazards associated with walking through flashy fuels into fire area?

Strategic Discussion at Stand #4

Gene Campbell and Dave Noel both had considerable fire experience; Dave was carded as a Sector Boss. They likely both had experiences working many fires under very similar fuel and weather conditions. How could this base of experience influenced their decisions on the Cart Creek Fire?

In 1997, a remote automated weather station was installed approximately one mile south of this location. July observations from this station show that there are frequently early afternoon wind increases and significant wind shifts in this area. How might this information have changed the suppression strategy on the Cart Creek Fire?

Strategic Discussion at Stand #5

In 1979, the recently established National Wildfire Coordinating Group chartered a task force to examine a rash of wildland fire accidents that occurred during the late 1970s. The Cart Creek Fire was one of those fires along with several other notable fires including the 1976 Battlement Creek Fire in Colorado, the 1977 Bass River Fire in New Jersey, the 1977 Honda Canyon Fire in California, the 1979 Spanish Ranch Fire in California, and the 1979 Shipp Island Fire in Idaho. Their Report of the Task Force on study of Fatal/Near Fatal Wildland Fire Accidents gave 22 specific recommendations. How do you think these recommendations might compare to recommendations in other similar reports such as the 1957 Report of the Fire Task Force to Reduce the Chances of Men Being Burned While Fighting Forest Fires; the 1967 Report of the Fire Safety Review Team; or the 1995 Interagency Management Review Team Report?