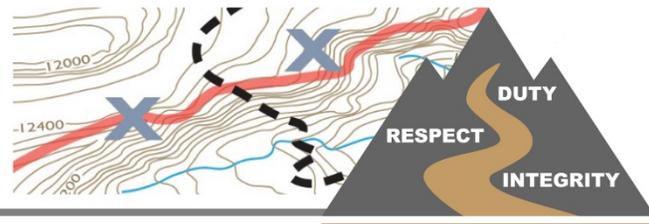


Tactical Decision Games



Wildland Fire Leadership Development Program

CHAIN OF COMMAND – WILSONIA PILE BURNING

INITIAL FACILITATOR INFORMATION—NOT TO BE SHARED WITH STUDENTS

Author(s)

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Target Audience

Burn Boss Type 3

Training Objective

Given the following scenario, the Burn Boss will be confronted with an outside resource going around the chain of command and will need to deal with the situation. The player should verbally communicate their responses to the appropriate individuals.

Resources Referenced

- **Burn Boss Type 3, (Player Role)**
- John – a local unit maintenance worker
- Joe – Smoke Eater Contract Crew Boss
- Smoke Eater Contract Crew (20 people)
- Local cooperater engine

SCENARIO INFORMATION TO BE SHARED WITH STUDENTS

Facilitator Briefing to Student(s)

Pile burn specifications:

- Size – 40 acre area with approximately 500 piles
- Adjacent Fuel Models – 8, 9 and 10
- Topography – west facing slope, 10% average, 6600 feet
- Objectives – ignite and chunk slash piles to consume all fuels; minimize creep
- Pile Location – adjacent to and within sight of an inholding wildland urban interface (WUI) community. Nearest piles to the structures are less than 100 feet.

Current conditions:

- Date – November 30
- Time – 1000
- Temperature – 36°
- RH – 41%
- Winds – calm
- Patchy snow covering 50% of the ground

You are the Burn Boss on the Wilsonia Pile Burning Project with the objective of protecting the adjacent community. While most of the community has been supportive, some residents have vocally criticized your agency for cutting trees and then burning them. The previous week, the area received about a foot of snow. Temperatures have warmed since then and snow cover has melted to about 50% of the ground. Surrounding fuels are still wet.

This is the second day of the project. Yesterday the contract crew working for you ignited about 200 piles. You gave your briefing earlier this morning and the contract crew is ready to ignite another 200-300 piles. Progress is good and the piles may be completed today.

Prior to igniting the dispatcher calls and asks for an update.

Take 2 minutes to develop your response to the dispatcher.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION FOR FACILITATOR ONLY

Facilitator “Murphy’s Law” Suggestions

In order to meet the objective of the scenario, the facilitator must use the primary what-ifs (refer to the “key role playing script” for a detailed role play for either the facilitator or another participant).

Primary What-ifs

- Just before ignition, the Burn Boss overhears John, a local unit maintenance worker, call Joe, the Contract Crew Boss, three times on the radio. His first call is letting Joe know that yesterday’s piles weren’t chunked and are a mess, the second call is telling Joe there is significant pile creep, and the third call is requesting Joe bring his contract crew back to yesterday’s piles to secure some creep. John sounds clearly aggravated. The Crew Boss is standing next to the Burn Boss and asks what to do.

Additional What-ifs

- A local cooperator engine pulls up Code 3 responding to a smoke report. They want to know why you didn’t notify anyone you were burning.
- An angry resident walks up and demands to know “what in the hell is going on?” This person is irate that there is fire burning near his cabin.
- You get a radio call from the dispatch saying that residents have called to complain about an unattended fire burning outside the piles.

- The FMO arrives on scene and wants know why there is pile burn creep all over the place.
- The dispatcher calls to inform you that residences are complaining about the smoke.
- A tourist drives up with broken English and wants information about the local area.

Facilitator's Notes

This scenario is designed as a seminar or simulation-style TDGS.

The idea with this TDG is to address the importance of following the chain of command regardless of the personalities involved or the perceived urgency of the situation. There is also a secondary issue of not becoming distracted by outside people or events. Of equal importance is the fact that piles are one of the most common causes of escaped prescribed burns in the nation. In addition to the primary objective, this is most important take home message for the players and should be emphasized in the AAR. Items to consider are the need for frequent and long term patrol, chunking piles, securing piles with handlines as necessary, and the realization that conditions change during the course of pile burning such as snow melting. Long range weather forecast monitoring is essential.

The facilitator has the option of role playing one or more of the additional roles. This may be effective with the original dilemma to ensure the objective of the game is achieved. However, the facilitator should take care not play too many roles or to dominate the exercise. There should be some room for flexibility to allow the game to take unforeseen directions. Facilitators should be creative and experiment each time they put this game on based on prior experiences with this scenario.

The original scenario relates to the primary objective. The "Murphy's Law – What Ifs" branch into the secondary objectives. These mostly relate to the players being distracted by other people or events. The secondary objectives are best delivered by other role players using the scripts below. The facilitator should designate other members of the group to act as the additional role players during the two minutes the player is considering their original response. The facilitator should brief all role players on when to enter into the scenario. In this way the facilitator can control the pace of the game and throw in "what ifs" as their discretion to keep the game flowing. As with any real life scenario, events are influenced by the personalities of the people involved. These are the unknown human factors. The role playing scripts are intended to allow the role players flexibility to add a human factor component throughout the game. The facilitator should encourage this to run its natural course as long as the players remain serious and stick to the intent of the dilemmas.

Role player scripts have been provided in the amendment section to assist the facilitator with role player prompting. The facilitator must find the balance as to not overload the players but keep as much pressure on them as they can handle.

AFTER ACTION REVIEW

Conduct your AAR at the sand table. The AAR should focus on the thought process, the ideas, and what was communicated in the decision. The AAR should generate discussion on alternatives and opinions. Try to capture how different individuals may have come up with differing resources, checklists, and solutions.

Use the AAR format found in the *Incident Response Pocket Guide* to facilitate the AAR. There are four basic questions in the AAR.

1. What was planned?
2. What actually happened?
3. Why did it happen?
4. What can we do next time?

Other Possible Items to Consider in the AAR

- **Piles are one of the most common causes of escaped prescribed burns nationwide.**
- How much did personality influence the decision to go outside the chain of command?
- What is the potential consequence of going outside the chain of command on any incident?
- Is it ever appropriate to outside the chain of command? If so, when?
- How did the overhead players feel when confronted with potentially difficult situations?
- Did any of the players feel overwhelmed?

TDGS shouldn't have a single solution, keep the focus of the AAR on what was done and why.

KEY ROLE PLAYING SCRIPT

The following role play script is related to the first “what if” which is the key to meeting the scenario objective. THIS IS A CRITICAL ROLE PLAY.

You are John, a local unit maintenance worker. You were driving by and saw yesterday’s piles and stopped. Looking around you see what appears to be creep. After further investigation you see that none of yesterday’s piles were chunked. All the crew did was light the center of the pile and walk away creating what you call “donut holes”. None of the piles were lined as well. There is no one patrolling the area and several of the piles are creeping including, close to ½ acre smoldering. This is all visible from the residences and only 100 feet away from structures.

At this time you hear the rxb3 call your dispatcher to inform her they are beginning to burn a couple hundred more piles.

You feel that the RXB3 is inexperienced and don’t trust his/her skill level. However, you’re friends with Joe, the contract crew boss, and you feel he is very squared away. This whole scenario pisses you off and you feel something must be immediately done.

You radio Joe (using first names) and tell him yesterday’s piles “weren’t chunked and are a mess.”

Less than one minute later you radio Joe again and tell him there is significant creep.

Figuring the burn boss doesn’t know what he/she is doing, you radio Joe a third time request that he bring his crew down and clean up this mess.

If the burn boss contacts you prior to your third radio call with Joe, do not answer. When you do talk to the burn boss you are confrontational and condescending.

ADDITIONAL ROLE PLAYING SCRIPTS

You are the engine captain from a local cooperator engine. You just arrived on scene responding to what you thought was a wildfire and all you found were some piles burning. You're not happy with this and pointedly ask the burn boss why he/she didn't notify anyone of their pile burning.

You are a local resident that doesn't trust the government. You see a smoldering fire burning less than 100 feet from your cabin with no one on scene. You find the nearest person with a yellow shirt (who happens to be the burn boss) and start berating them about their incompetence.

You are the dispatcher and have just received a smoke complaint from a local residence. You call the burn boss and ask what he/she is going to do about it. You are persistent in getting an answer.

You are the unit FMO and decided to check on the piles. You arrive and find pile creep with no one on site. You track down the burn boss and want an explanation why this situation has occurred. You are disappointed in the burn boss.

You are a tourist from Germany and your English isn't very good. You saw the smoke and drove to it. The first firefighter you run into happens to be the burn boss. You want to know, "where is the tree you can drive through?"