National IHC Steering Committee 2004 Newsletter

Chair: Shane Greer
(719) 488-1242
sgreer01@fs.fed.us

Revised National IHC Operations Guide

During the National IHC Steering Committee meeting in San Diego on February 3-4, 2004, the committee did some minor revisions to the most current edition of the Operations Guide (2001). Most revisions revolved around updating course numbers in Appendix B, NFES numbers in Appendix A and clearing up the verbiage in Appendix C to more clearly define status as a certified IHC. Please disregard all older versions of the guide and print a copy of the revised one. You will know it is the correct version if you see "Revised 2004" in the footer on each page. The revised Operations Guide can be found at: http://www.fs.fed.us/fire/people/hotshots/2001_IHC_Ops_Gde.pdf

Hotshot Crew Histories

For a while now Dave Provencio, Fire Operations for the Intermountain Region, has been working on putting together a book of IHC histories. The steering committee has contacted Dave with our interest in helping him with his initiative to complete the book and help keep it updated. Future plans will be to put it on a web site for easy access. We would like to request that all IHC's please submit a crew history for this program. It does not need to be long and it doesn't matter how long the crew has been around. This should be a very interesting product and will hopefully capture all crew's histories in one easily accessible place.

Please send your information to Shane Greer, Chair, National IHC Steering Committee:
Email: sgreer01@fs.fed.us
Hard copy: Pike Hotshots
ATTN: Shane Greer
P.O. Box 1602
Monument CO 80132

We would like them to have the following information:

- Crew name
- Crew logo
- A write up of the history of the crew including when it began, where or if it has changed duty station and anything else you would like.
- A complete list of past Superintendents including names and dates of service as the Superintendent.

National IHC Workshop

One of the IHC Steering Committee responsibilities is to recommend the timing and agenda for a National Interagency Hotshot Crew Workshop. This has been on a four-year cycle in the past. After much consideration, our committee has agreed that a 2005 workshop is not necessary at this time. Money is not the only issue, although it is part of the equation. Our advisor's stated that we would need a strong agenda to support any request for funds for the workshop. They also informed us that the past two National Fire Management Officer's meetings have been cancelled after being planned. The Regional Hotshot Committees have not forwarded any major issues at this time that show that we need to get all superintendents together to discuss. There is merit in the superintendents getting together to meet each other, but this in itself doesn't justify the expense. The committee will revisit the National Workshop needs at the next meeting and would appreciate input from the crews through their geographical representatives on issues, training, or other reasons for conducting a workshop.

IHC Committee Roster and Working Team Points of Contact

POSITION	NAME	PHONE	AGENCY	TERM	TENURE
Chair	Shane Greer	(719) 488-1242	USFS	2 year	2004
Deputy Chair	Marshall Brown	(509) 784-1016	USFS	2 year	2004
Supt – R1, R6	Marshall Brown	(509) 784-1016	USFS	4 year	2004
Supt – R2, R4	Shane Greer	(719) 488-1242	USFS	4 year	1999
Supt – R5, R10	Dennis Baldridge	(619) 445-5032	USFS	4 year	2000
Supt – R3, R8, R9	Rich Dolphin	(505) 630-3032	USFS	4 year	2004
Supt – BLM	Shane McDonald	(775) 753-0378	BLM	4 year	2003
Supt – BIA	Luther Clements	(541) 553-1146	BIA	4 year	2004
Supt – NPS	Brit Rosso	(559) 565-4342	NPS	4 year	2002
Fire Operations	Greg Greenhoe	(406) 329-3296	USFS	None	1999
Agency Administrator	Terri Marceron	(928) 214-2433	USFS	None	2004
NIFC – USFS	Jim Cook	(208) 387-5204	USFS	None	1999
NIFC – DOI	Kurt La Rue	(208) 387-5439	BLM	None	2002

COMMITTEE	CHAIR	PHONE	AGENCY	POINT OF CONTACT
SHWT	Paul Broyles	(208) 387-5226	NPS	Brit Rosso
IOSWT	Bob Leverton	(719) 553-1411	USFS	Rich Dolphin
IBPWT	Hallie Locklear	(208) 387-5583	FWS	Shane McDonald
National Operations Group	Alice Forbes	(208) 387-5605	USFS	Shane Greer
IC/AC	Paul Hefner	(208) 634-0710	USFS	Dennis Baldridge
NFES	Kim Christensen	(208) 387-5400	BLM	Chris Theisen

2003 IHC Survey

During the 2003 fire season a survey form was sent to all of the Interagency Hotshot Crews in the Nation. The National IHC Steering Committee requested each Region to collect the completed survey forms, and submit the forms to the IHC Committee. Not all of the survey forms were completed. This did not allow the IHC Committee to provide the fire community with national totals and averages for all of the IHC's.

SUBJECT	R-1 R-6	R-2 R-4	R-3 R-8 R-9	R-5	R-10	NATIONAL AVERAGE
Total # Of IHC's Responding In Each Group	16	16	18	23	2	**75 Crews**
1 – FIRE ASSIGNMENTS						
Total number of days committed to fire (including travel)	1,585	1,780	1,811	2,450	216	**7,842 Total**
Average number of days committed to fire (including travel)	99	111	101	106	108	**105 Days**
2 - VEHICLES						
Total miles driven during the fire season (total for all crew vehicles)	646,200	895,200	1,565,100	1,142,109	N/A	**4,248,609 Total**
Average miles driven per crew during the fire season ***(includes all crew vehicles)***	40,387	55,950	86,950	49,657	N/A	**58,238 Miles**
Total number of vehicle accidents	9	6	3	7	N/A	**25 Total**
3 - ACCIDENTS						
Total number of lost time injuries	12	N/A	18	29	0	**59 Total**
Average number of lost time injuries	0.75	N/A	1.0	1.30	0	**1.02 Average**
4 – PRESCRIBED FIRE						
Total prescribed acres treated	21,347	N/A	88,032	21,765	60	**131,204 Acres**
Average prescribed acres treated per crew	1,334	N/A	4,890	946	30	**1,808 Average**
5 - RETIREMENT						
Total number of career employees that will be eligible for retirement in the next 5 years	4	N/A	4	8	1	**17 Total**
Total number of IHC Superintendents that will be eligible for retirement in the next 5 years	3	3	3	7	1	**17 Total**

For more information contact Brit Rosso of the Arrowhead IHC.

Physical Fitness Training Reference

Last year, the National IHC Steering Committee submitted a project proposal to MTDC suggesting development of a Physical Fitness Training Reference that would be used by the general wildland fire community that provides information and references necessary to establish and conduct physical conditioning programs to prepare and maintain firefighters for the physical demands of their positions. The document envisioned would incorporate a variety of physical conditioning technique and theory and not be limited to a single regime of exercise drills. It would be comprehensive, outline long-term objectives and provide models for a variety of crew configurations. It would also include nutritional requirement information and guidance for individuals who will be involved in planning a physical training program. Recommendations for physical training equipment profiles for individual unit programs would be an important part of this document.

At their March 2004 meeting, the National Fire Operations Safety Council concluded that Fireline Fitness is the top priority for project submission for MTDC's consideration. Bequi Livingston, the Lead Coordinator at the Southwest Fire Use Training Academy has developed a Fireline Fitness manual which is an excellent template for use by anyone wanting to develop an on-going PT program. This document can be viewed at:

http//:www.fs.fed.us/fire/safety/fitness/Fireline_fitness/index.html

These two proposals dovetail well and in no way require higher physical fitness standards than are already in place. For more information contact Steve Karkanen of the Lolo IHC.

Fire Replacements

Recently various groups have brought up issues concerning fire replacements on incidents. It is the responsibility of all of us to know, understand and follow the guidelines for fire replacement. Cost management on incidents is everybody's responsibility and we need to adhere to policy and work within it in all that we do. Below is a link to the Incident Business Practices Working Team web site. On the site you can find the handbook, contact information and various other things. If you have any questions on fire replacement you may want to check the site and contact them if you need to. Understanding that at times fire replacement can be cumbersome and inconvenient we need to do what is asked of us to hopefully avoid more restrictive policies.

The IBPWT web site: http://www.nwcg.gov/teams/ibpwtnew/ibpwtnew.htm

Intra-Crew Frequency Study 2003 Follow Up

This study, taking place during the 2003/2004 fire season, is designed to evaluate the need for, and use of intra-crew frequencies. The frequencies utilized were two of the National tactical frequencies, and were programmed with CTCSS (PL tone) on both transmit and receive.

The test utilized the Racal radios (only P-25 radio available through the cache at the beginning of fire season 2003) and transitioned to the Bendix King radio due to the lack of fire features on the Racal.

This was not a test of the Racal radio, although it was perceived as that by a number of people, and it wasn't a test of digital on the fire line, although the project was looking at trying to utilize digital in controlled situations.

There were nineteen IHC crews and one Helitack crew involved in the study along with ten personnel from National Interagency Incident Communications Division (NIICD) who were involved in training, support, and the actual study.

Prior to fire season crews involved in the study were trained in general radio use, new P-25 radio operation (digital vs. analog), battery management, antenna orientation and type, and power (wattage) using the lowest power required to accomplish the mission.

The study team worked with crews in the Southwest, Northern Rockies, and the Northwest utilizing frequencies with CTCSS (PL tone) on both the transmit and receive, sharing frequencies with separate tones, and utilizing low power on the intra-crew channel (this was limited due to limited use of the Racal radio).

We learned that to continue this study we need to have some way of having crews concentrated on a fire to really test the concept of using tones. Tones work in some situations, and not in others due to terrain, expectations, crew type, use, etc. We need to look at the feasibility of having a number of frequencies set aside for intra-crew incident assignment (utilizing existing tactical channels hampers the COML on the incident). We need to further explore the concept of lower output power. We need to look at the feasibility of using digital with separate National Access Codes (NACs) as an intra-crew channel.

Testing should continue during the coming fire season with all of the radios currently in use (let the crews use what they already have King, Racal, EF Johnson, etc.). We need to look at going to large incidents, and working with a number of crews (possibly both type I and type II). We propose continuing testing with tones, and if the opportunity arises, utilizing digital.

For more information contact Shane Greer of the Pike IHC.

Inaja Staff Ride

The IHC Steering Committee received a briefing at their last meeting concerning staff ride development. The group strongly supports the staff ride concept and encourages the IHCs in each area to participate where possible in their development. In early March 2004, a group met to discuss developing a staff ride package for the historical 1956 Inaja Fire that occurred on the Cleveland National Forest. The team will be consist of 6 southern California IHC Superintendents and 6 local fire personnel from the Cleveland National Forest. The target completion date is March 1, 2005.

For more information contact Dennis Baldridge of the Laguna IHC, or Jim Cook with the U.S. Forest Service at NIFC, or Carlton Joseph on the Palomar District of the Cleveland National Forest.

Fire Contract Websites

There are a number of major contracts the U.S. Forest Service and other federal land management agencies use to provide services to wildland fire incidents and fuels management projects. The national crew, engine, food, shower and aircraft contracts are located on a single website. Any one wanting to view or download them can do so at the following websites: www.nifc.gov/contracting/

Also, there is a link to the www.fedbizops.gov website that has the synopses and solicitations for new contracts. The fedbizops site can be confusing to navigate when looking for a particular document so the links to the following site are easier to use than going directly to fedbizops: www.fs.fed.us/r6/ppm/fire_procurement
The U.S. Forest Service Region 6 engine and crew agreements, among others, are located here. Most of the agreements, including the engine agreement, are Forest Service agreements. (There is an underscore between fire and procurement in the web URL). The hand crew agreement is an Oregon Dept. of Forestry (ODF) agreement that the Forest Service and other federal agencies use. There is a link at the Region 6 website, under interagency crew agreements, that takes you to the ODF website. Once on the ODF website, you click on “Fire in the Forest” (on the left hand side), “Firefighting Resources”, “Contracting with ODF”, and “Crew Contract Application”.

Another website lists contracts and other information on National Fire Plan projects.
www.blm.gov/natacq/FIRE/contracting.html
Once at the website you can click on either an area of the map you are interested in or on the two lists of projects to look at.

For more information contact Marshall Brown of the Entiat IHC.

Canadian Travel

Occasionally Forest Service employees will travel to Canada on official business. Depending on the employee's position and the purpose of the travel, different documents and agency approval processes will be required. A person employed in either a fire position or a non-fire position going to Canada for an emergency (fire dispatch, etc.) must have proof of citizenship (certified copy of birth certificate, naturalization document or personal passport) and proof of identity (driver's license or identification card, or personal passport). The dispatch orders serve as approval for the travel. A person in a fire position traveling for a non-emergency (training, etc.) requires the same documents as for emergency travel, but must obtain prior Forest Service approval with the proper forms. A person employed in a non-fire position going to Canada for a non-emergency requires an official passport and prior Forest Service approval with the proper forms. Applications for official passports and foreign travel approval are initiated through the travel coordinator on your forest. Not all forest travel coordinators may be familiar with foreign travel regulations so they may have to consult the regional travel coordinator. The forest website may have a site for travel (sometimes found in the finance section) that contains the necessary information, contacts and documents. I have included a link to the Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forests' travel website that has some general information and forms. There is also an international programs website at the Washington Office. Employees from other federal agencies should consult their unit or agency travel coordinators for their specific travel regulations and policies.

Canada will deny entry to any person convicted of a felony (which in Canada includes any driving under the influence or driving while intoxicated offense). Canadian officers are very strict about this matter and consider any knowing attempt to breach it as a separate offense. The best thing to do is not to try; and be prepared to leave someone behind if you have to. To remedy this disability requires waiting 10 years from the conviction and then affirmatively applying to the Canadian government for relief. Possessing the correct documents is as important for returning into the U.S.A. as it is for entering into Canada.

A manifest or list with names, dates of birth, and social security numbers will facilitate crew background checks and entry. An equipment manifest with serial numbers and item descriptions will facilitate entry and exit of your equipment. Any vehicles taken into Canada, including U.S. government owned vehicles, require automobile insurance. Canada does not accept U.S. government self-insurance. The forest travel coordinator can arrange for temporary insurance policies for government vehicles going to Canada.

For more information contact Marshall Brown of the Entiat IHC or check these websites:
http://fsweb_ow.ewz.r6.fs.fed.us/financial_mgt/travel/index.htm
http://www.fs.fed.us/global/intranet/gateway.htm

Situational Awareness Firefighting Equipment

What is SAFE?

Situational Awareness Firefighting Equipment (SAFE) is an initiative to identify and field test technologies that can improve the current firefighting process. The program is similar to the Department of Defense's Land Warrior program in that both involve dangerous activities, small units deployed over a wide area, a central command station, and various assets to coordinate and track. The concepts that transfer include knowing one's location and the location of others or nearby events; communicating via voice, text messages or graphics; planning operations based on real-time data; and coordinating activities from a central command station.

What are the Benefits?

There are many potential benefits from the effective deployment of technology, including:

- Increased quality of communications,
- Improved situational awareness,
- Reduced reporting time,
- Enhanced ability to order resources and prioritize resource requests,
- Improved accuracy of resources deliveries,
- Reduced radio traffic, and
- Improve operational effectiveness.

Sample Technologies

The SAFE team is currently investigating the following technologies for potential deployment during the 2004 fire season:

- Satellite phones,
- Wireless GPS devices,
- PDAs,
- Night vision goggles, and
- 3D imaging software.

Prototype Testing and Evaluation Approach

The SAFE team is identifying technologies for use during the 2004 fire season. The system requirements and recommended technologies will be completed in early March 2004. Evaluation criteria, test scenarios, and a job hazard analysis will be performed during March. In April, the technologies will go through an initial field test with an Rx burn test performed later that month. The test results will be analyzed and the team will narrow the hardware selection in May 2004.

For more information contact Steve Karkanen of the Lolo IHC or Bob Roth the SAFE Project Team Leader at the Missoula Technology Development Center (406) 829-6712.