

IHC Steering Committee Notes Portland, OR

12/8-9/2004

Attendees:
Alice Forbes
Kurt Larue
Jim Cook
Dave Provencio
Terry Marceron
Marshall Brown
Shane Greer
Dave Niemi
Shane MacDonald
Rich Dolphin
Dennis Baldrige
Luther Clements
John Button
Mike Tuominen

IFPM

Discussion on IFPM requirements of ICT5 for senior firefighters. Waiver for next season for seasonals will help. Also discussed the difference between 310-1 and 5109.17: When it comes to issuing taskbooks 310-1 allows you to issue a taskbook prior to taking a required class so you can begin getting stuff signed off. 5109.17 requires that the classes be completed prior to issuing the taskbook, which can delay the process and make meeting requirements of IFPM more difficult.

IFPM Survey: Discussion to send out a separate survey, which will include questions as to who meets GS-401. This could be added to the national survey that is currently being sent out to the Hotshot community.

Shane McDonald was tasked with developing an IFPM survey with a DRAFT due to the committee by February 1. Superintendent and Assistant Supt. PD's and the competencies required for their job don't necessarily support the competencies/quals required for moving up to GS-401 even if they have the education requirement. Someone will check into the competencies required of FMO jobs on the FLERT site and at how the crosswalks affect the crews? The assistant supt. Crosswalks up to the Supt. Level and the Squad Leader crosswalks down to the Senior FF level leaving a big gap in the middle. How will this effect career ladders?

There was discussion about how IFPM affects selective factors as it relates to permanent vs. seasonal. Some discussions that the FFT1 and ICT5 PTB will be combined as both are essentially the same taskbook.

Someone to talk to concerning IFPM for the interior is Grant Beebe with the jumpers out of Boise.

It was recommended that we are proactive toward getting the answer to the question of meeting competencies and getting the classes/training assignments in order to meet those competencies as well as quals.

How do we get the classes to meet 401 without going to TFM, which can cost upwards of \$30,000 depending on where you live. The Snake River Superintendent is currently taking online upper division courses through Oregon State University and the local unit has determined that they are paying his tuition as well as providing on-work time to take some of the classes. There is a need for more to do this.

How much is the cost of each class unit that the gov't is paying for as related to TFM? The estimate was \$120 per unit for tuition. Will the local unit pay for the credits? This will have to be worked out with each unit. There is no national initiative to provide money or direction. How does the \$120 per unit compare to the Tuition Cost of TFM? \$120 vs. \$7,000+. Plus the online courses do not require travel/perdiem costs. People are paid for their time while attending TFM why shouldn't they be paid to take online courses.

Need: Listing of schools where online courses are available. There will be schools in the future that will cater to the IFPM curriculum in order to meet 401. Some schools already providing these courses are: Oregon State University, Boise State, and Truckee Meadows.

Create a school listing and put it on the BLM website. USFS site will link to this list. Leadership website could link to it too.

Changes to Ops Guide

Discussion about no more than 4 fillers on IHC's. If crews exceeded four fillers then they would drop their status to IHC (t). Who is going to police this? If there are only a couple of crews out there that are regularly representing themselves as hotshots even while taking 5+ fillers out then they need to be dealt with on a local basis rather than punishing all crews? If the crews don't have the integrity to do what is right now will a rule in the operations guide make any difference? It needs to be the Supt's decision as to whether the crew meets the intent of a hotshot crew.

This will not be added to the operations guide.

What will be added to the operations guide under the mobilization section is verbiage about crews flying with less than 18. When chasing their rigs they will need to get prior approval.

When crews are flying with more than 20 they will need to get prior approval through proper channels.

It was decided that the quals for the assistant supt would remain the same because by changing them to those matching IFPM would imply that all crews meet those requirements now. If a change were going to occur it was decided that it would wait until the 5-year grace period is up before such a change would occur.

The IHC Mobilization Checklist in Appendix C of the IHCOG will be changed to “IHC Certification/Decertification Checklist”. Crews at anytime during their availability period not meeting the qualifications of the checklist will be reduced to IHC (t).

Changes will be posted in the Operations Guide on the FS website with a notification through the IHC community when it’s posted and the changes to look for.

Type 1 Crews vs. IHC crews.

The current typing of crews doesn’t match the current typing of all other resources (E.g. Engines typed 1-6 etc). The IOSWT looked at this issue and at one time recommended 5 types of crews but never came to a consensus. Dispatch doesn’t care whether they get a Type 1 or Hotshot crew.

There is a liability issue with current type 1 crews taking IHC assignments and representing themselves as hotshots and not correcting IMT’s when shown in IAP as IHC.

Shane Greer had written a white paper and presented it to the group. After discussion of what crews are to be listed as Type 1 it was decided that Alice Forbes would take forward the proposal that a change be made in policies and charts to read that Type 1 crews are IHC’s. In doing so it would take changing the IHC footnote in the National Mobilization Guide and Fireline Handbook to read, “Type 1 crews are limited to certified Interagency Hotshot Crews that meet all the elements in the National Interagency Hotshot Operations Guide (2001)”. The Red Book would need to add the same IHC footnote. Current Type 1 non-IHC crews would be required to either become certified IHC’s or change their status to Type 2 IA. The ROSS system would not need to change.

The type 1 contract crew proposal has been dropped for now. If the above becomes policy it may affect contract crews in the future. There are some contract crews now that meet the type 1 specifications but not IHC.

Baldrige will present the proposal on Greer’s white paper to the IC/AC group. Alice supports the proposal.

GS-7 Squadleader

Both Region 6 and 5 ran into brick walls with trying to get their GS-7 PD's classified. R5 had support from the directors until a couple weeks ago and then withdrew the support because with 2 GS-8's, 2 GS-7's, they would be different than the rest of the country and it would effect the apprenticeship academy. There are 286 squadleaders nationally.

Alice supports the GS-7 and will take it forward. She needs to be sent the standard PD that R6 or 5 had.

Related subject brought up was R-3 not having PFT GS-8 Assistants.

Radio Update

We have been tentatively approved for 1 permanent, use anytime, IHC frequency and 8 frequencies for Intra Crew to be used by Hotshots only at incidents. Communications unit leaders will have the pool of freqs. that can be used as intracrew for those crews that ask for them at incidents. The Hotshot Hotline will still exist if on a fire where those frequencies don't work or you have some other problems.

It has taken a lot of work to get these Frequencies and so it needs to be emphasized that the hotshots need to stop using their private channels otherwise these freqs. could go away and any chance of getting more freqs. would go away. A presentation should be made at the workshops by the NIFC Radio Guys to pass along this info and then reinforce the need to stick with them.

The NIFC radio shop also has authority to use 12 of the Family Radio Service – like frequencies and the radios that go with them. They have approximately 30 of these radios to be used by crews as an intersquad radio. They would like some crews to give these radios a trial.

168.350 and 163.100 are often used as deck even though they are nationally available frequencies for travel and the like. If on an incident where these frequencies are assigned as the deck frequencies then you must stay off these frequencies.

They are looking for 1 or more hotshots to detail to NIICD (NIFC Radio shop) to assist with the hotshot hotline and other duties. This would be a good opportunity for someone that was on light duty.

Letter issued through the NMAC authorizing the use of Intra Crew Frequencies should be presented at area workshops.

Medical Standards

CHS is the contractor. 4-6 week process to get people through the physicals and screening processes. There may be some boilerplate waivers for various items that are not life threatening, otherwise individuals have to resolve medical issues before taking the pack test. If you aren't on top of it, it could take until July to get on board.

Can mark on the form so that if you have folks not living close by they can take the test close to them.

Luther Clements will do a write-up for the newsletter on the Medical Standards process.

Survey

The national survey that everyone completed was presented to the group. Some questions concerning IFPM should be added to it in the future or as a separate survey. Due to some erroneous answers it was discussed as to whether to write up an instruction sheet so people knew what we were trying to get from them.

It was decided that instead we would present the survey at our meetings and describe what was meant by each question. It was also decided that an End of Season Report would be written using the statistics from the survey to be presented to various audiences including line officers.

Cramer Developments

The IC resigned and is doing 18 months federal probation rather than face criminal charges. He also waived his right to privacy.

In order for the government to defend you in these cases you need to have a plan, follow the plan and not break the law (policy). If you are doing this you are working within the scope of your duties.

If you don't do the above you may get prosecuted and held accountable. This includes following the 10 Standard Orders and 18 Watchouts as well as following any forest policy that may exist such as not fighting fire midslope.

Another lesson learned is that if you have a type 3 fire and you don't have properly carded people on the line for fire supervisors (e.g. Division Supervisor as Ops) then you need to be on the fire line to ensure the safety of crews.

Management culpability on Cramer. Acting FMO was wearing 3 hats that day. Can't do this. People can only do one job at a time. "No collateral duties"

Liability insurance doesn't protect you from criminal charges. It only provides defense in civil cases.

Non-Cache Nomex Pants

Can buy your own but can't use project dollars for them (USFS). There is no liability to wearing your non-GSA pants as long as they have an NFPA 1977 label on them and they meet the intention of Nomex pants (no big holes or oily).

IRPG

Jim Cook is looking for 3 supts from the committee to look at the white pages (p. 70 – 95) to check for accuracy and have any comments back to him by April 15th. There will be a revised edition coming out next summer.

USFS Red Book

Red Book Reps are retiring and two are needed to sit on committee. It involves 2 meetings per year. Each region will be kicking a representative to the committee. It is felt that it would be good to get some Superintendents involvement because of their operational background.

Flying vs. Driving

Shane Greer, Jim Krugman and Bill Waterbury will draft a new driving vs. flying policy. Already some work done by R1 towards this end. R5 has an old policy that really isn't followed any longer.

There was already some discussion that it should be a policy based on mileage ranges such as 0 – 300 miles drive, 301 – 750 drive or fly and 751 + fly. This is only if the ordering unit doesn't specify whether to drive or fly.

It was discussed that the flying range could be based on 15 hours of driving x 50 miles per hour (average speed for rigs with breaks and everything).

The pros of flying are that it costs an average of \$390 per person to fly people around the nation last season. However, we don't know if bus costs and any equipment costs ordered through supply come into the equation.

The cons of flying are that most of the superintendents have had experiences in the recent past where they traveled in excess of 16 hours and by the time they got to their destination they had to sleep most of the next day anyway. Most times the crew's rigs arrive only a few hours after the crew gets on the line or to camp. The other negative is that we often arrive without the necessary equipment of a hotshot crew and the fire has not planned for us to arrive that way.

It was decided that we should come up with a computer-mapping program that would show areas that crews could get to in one day's drive. Not just line of sight mileage based, as many crews have to drive the opposite direction in order to get out of the mountains.

Dennis Baldrige will present to Incident Commanders/Area Commanders group that during incidents they specifically request us to drive if they want us to arrive with equipment, or plan on ordering all the necessary equipment to outfit us, especially since we can't always fly with saws and can't fly with firing pistols.

There was also discussion about the rumor that we fly to satisfy the jet contract and Alice informed us this was not the case. Alice will write up something saying that we "don't fly to meet the jet contract."

San Dimas Production Study

San Dimas will be conducting a crew production rate study, if they get funding. They will be going out with various crews during the season to measure production rates in various fuels types. Someone from San Dimas should come to the workshops to make a presentation.

It is felt that the current production rates are no longer representative of crew's abilities.

Marshall Brown will make contact with San Dimas to determine if they can come to the workshops.

Crew Combination During Shoulder Seasons

Crews are capable of combining after the season to meet a variety of needs (Rx, Wildland Fire, Fuels projects etc). The crews also have the skills to provide support to wildland fire use. All crews have GPS and computer capability. We need to know what technological skills Fire Use Teams are looking for from the Fire Use Modules (GPS track logging, Arc View or other mapping skills, 24 hour weather data collection etc?). We could meet these needs as well as fire use modules.

Decided to leave the issue as is and not try to formalize a process of combining crews.

Rich Dolphin will make a presentation to S-580 Class March 21-25 about the capabilities of IHC's. He will contact Tim Sexton on the subject.

FEMA / All Risk

After the hurricane cleanup last year FEMA became very excited about the abilities of Hotshots and Smokejumpers because of their professional work ethic and organization. In some ways they are more excited about these groups than the IMT's. We can expect more usage in the future.

Shoulder season work could increase with FEMA and Fuels work and now with several 7 person NIMO teams (National Incident Management Organization) based around the

nation to respond to All Risk assignments the shoulder season work could increase. In the future we could see IHC's working year round.

All Risk vs. Choice: There is no choice if there is a presidential declaration like during Space Shuttle incident.

Dept. of Interior crews (BLM, NPS, FWS, BIA) and personnel did not go to the hurricane cleanup because their base 8's come out of project dollars while forest service crews base 8's can be billed directly to F codes. The two agencies are quite different even though their appropriations all come out of Dept. of Interior. This is being worked on so that all can be involved.

Newsletter

Get meeting notes and year end report to Jim Cook by April 1 so he can post on the website. The new National IHC Year End Report will also be posted on the website. We can then use the website to archive old notes, year-end reports and post subsequent notes etc.

Hazard Pay for Prescribed Fire

It was discussed to revisit the issue of hazard pay for Rx fire especially with the recent fatalities and burn injuries over the last few years (Dan Holmes – fatality, Arapaho – Roosevelt – burn injury, Rick Lupe – fatality to only name a few).

The holding lines for units are fixed lines with no options to back up many times (burning in urban interface). Due to unit policies not all hazards are being mitigated. Not all hazards can be mitigated such as rolling rocks, snags, burning trees, steep terrain, and fire behavior. There is already some precedence for paying hazard pay on Rx fire with the steep terrain policy. There are more hazards out there than just steep terrain.

Often times the holding line is the only available route for moving people and supplies around the unit. Due to unit policies/agreements not all tree hazards are being removed nor can be removed due to their hazardous nature (rotten trees). People moving up and down control lines are often in the smoke that hampers their situational awareness in regards to overhead hazards.

Prescribed fire is supposed to be administratively controllable. However, it is only administratively controllable for planning phase and then becomes somewhat uncontrollable based on weather windows and unforecasted weather events once a unit has been ignited.

Dave Niemi and Brit Rosso will work on a white paper with a due date of the next meeting. Alice will take it forward to the agency. Dennis Baldrige will contact Dick King in WO and Ed Hollenshead (USFS) about injury / fatality statistics over time to support white paper.

Niemi will contact Al King (NPS) to see if he has any other statistics. Hazard Pay for Rx has been shot down in the past because it is supposed to be an administratively controllable event.

The Committee and Leading Up

Jim Cook presented some ideas concerning where the committee is headed and things they should consider. Do they want to provide some overall strategy or only deal with issues from a Hotshot-“centric” point of view? There are multiple groups that need our help to get the work done but not necessarily from a purely hotshot point of view.

Some discussions were:

Academy Cadres. They could be an expectation for our Captains/Assistants. The academy classes are the seeds for the future of fire management. We could take more of a proactive approach to developing those seeds.

Training Development is another area that needs our expertise. They are in need of SME’s for course rewrites etc. Deb Epps is the contact.

There is a perceived bottleneck at the Single Resource Boss level. How do we get our folks past it? We may need to change our way of looking at our crews and their role. The 25 person hotshot model may be the way of the future so that we can always have people in training slots to step up their learning.

We could look at our crews as the first screening of the apprenticeship academy. If they can make it past the hotshots then they have a good basis. Each crew could take 2 apprentice positions.

Hotshots could develop permanent cadres of 8 – 10 people on a national basis rather than local.

The committee should not take all the tasks upon themselves but rather establish some subgroups to work on issues. Examples: Training Task Group, Equipment / Vehicles Task group.

Rather than just looking at things from our own point of view maybe we need to start leading up to the rest of the fire community and think of strategy on a larger scale.

The committee will discuss ideas after some time to contemplate.

Hotshot History

Dave Provencio is the contact point for all the crew’s hotshot histories. It was suggested that we come up with a standard template for the crew’s histories. Not all the crews have

responded to Dave. He is doing it on his own as a place to archive the history of the crews past present and future so our story is not lost.

A template will be sent out with the newsletter.

NICC Update

PowerPoint with stats from the season. Approximately 6,000,000 acres burned in Alaska and only 2,000,000 in lower 48. The outlook for next season is for it to be drier than normal and extremely dry in NW extending into Northern Idaho and Montana again.

National Operations Update

More air tankers will be available next season.
IFPM is affecting us all.

SMJ Update

Discussing many of the same issues as us. GS-401 and IFPM are affecting them too. The NW experienced a 400-year drought last season.

They need to be more involved in training cadres and suggested that both Hotshots and SMJ's join forces to meet the training needs of the future as well as some other objectives that are mutually beneficial.

Comment that paracargo is still a highly effective means of getting equipment to remote areas quickly. Used on SISI Ridge fire because helicopters had to fly so far down the lake. It cut the ferrying times of helicopters with equipment down.

Fire Replacement Issues

Hallie Locklear is lead on fire replacement. Well worth having her at your meeting. She had a "greatest hits" list of fire replacement faux pas that make the hotshots look bad. We should not be our own worst enemies.

The hotshots need to police themselves when it comes to these issues. It was suggested that we have a Fire Replacement Darwin Awards. An example of one would be the crew who put in to replace 5 GPS units off of one incident.

Fire will replace items due to wear and tear but often will expect a trade in. Don't trade in your non GSA Nomex.

Shane will work with Hallie on letter to be sent out to all the crews.

Paul Gleason Award

The committee voted on three nominees from the hotshots for the Paul Gleason award. All were either current or former hotshots. Due date for nominations is December 31st.

Dennis Baldrige will sit on committee to select recipients. Every year we need a rep on it. 2006 Rich Dolphin.

BIA Update

The new director of BIA crews is conducting a review on all crews. There have been a lot of changes to the programs. Some of the supts. are open to it and some aren't. Crews have one year to get certified or else their funding will get pulled from them. In many cases the crews are expected to exceed the standards.

There is the expectation that the crews be standardized even though there are differences amongst them depending on where they are located and the local tribes expectations.

The BIA IHC board needs to write a charter.

The crews are having trouble detailing from within to other areas because it's hard to get folks to leave the reservation where they have membership in their tribe. This leaves many crews with a limited pool to draw from. Some crew's carry 22 and others have a hard time filling more than 20 spots.

Dennis Baldrige will go to the BIA crew meeting.

Miscellaneous

Region 6 meeting will be held on Feb 14-17

Region 1 meeting will be held on the week of March 7th

Region 5 meeting will be held on March 1-3

Regions 2,3,4,8,9 will be held and collocated on January 24-27

Region 10 meeting will be held on ?

Members/Responsibilities

Dennis Baldrige – Represents USFS Region 5/10 IHC's. Liaison to IC/AC Committee

Luther Clements – Represents BIA crews and will be leaving the committee. Will need a replacement.

Shane Greer – Represents USFS Region 2/4. Liaison to Operations Committee

Marshall Brown – Represents USFS Region 1/6. Liaison to Equipment Working Team

Rich Dolphin – Represents USFS Region 3/8/9. Liaison to the Incident Operations and Standards Working Team

Shane McDonald – Represents BLM crews. Liaison to the Incident Business Practices Working Team

Brit Rosso – Represents NPS crews. Liaison to the Safety Health Working Team.
Niemi was filling in for Rosso for one meeting.