National IHC Steering Committee Conference 18-20 November 2014

Introduction/ Election of new National Chair and Co-Chair (Clem)

Brian Cardoza (Idaho City IHC) elected as Chair
Paul Cerda (Alpine IHC) elected as Co-Chair

-Regional Round-Robin and Update

R4-R2 (Cardoza) and ICAC update—New saw qualifications white paper viewed favorably by ICAC group

R4 working on crew out of region rotation and East and West will be combining as one.

R5 (Tishner) - Developing T3 IMT for fire assignments relying heavily upon IHC overhead.

3rd year of testing out of region rotation continues to go well.

R6 (Schuh) Working on IBC update. White paper regarding the purchase of supplemental foods completed and sent up the chain of command.

R1 (Wood) - Big issue/concern is upcoming Fire Hire

R8/National Diversity (Montijo) Concerned that USFS is failing at attracting diversity. In R8 making efforts at local high schools, Job Corps and Vets Fire Corps to get the word out on what we do. Biggest issue is the hiring of crew overhead.

BIA/Logistics (St. Goddard) No significant logistics issues. Some BIA crews receiving new Crew Carriers and working on CDLs for overhead.

BLM (Livingston) Vet Corps crews starting to temporarily utilize IHC overhead. White paper shipped off to OWCD on T1/T2IA standards.

R3 (Fisher) Big issue is upcoming fire hire. R3 crews were very busy this year and out of region rotation system works very well
**Fire Hire Update (all)**

Biggest concern is that the enormous certificates of eligables does not work.

**Type 3 Team Update (Kuo)**

New T3 PTBs for OPS, Plans, Finance and Logistics on the way for nationally available T3 teams. Local T3 standards to remain the same.

**Lessons Learned Center Update (Russo, Dotson)**

Website updated, working on more interactive alternatives.

Working on a National MEDEVAC channel similar to what R5 has. Urges IHC to report when they cannot talk directly with MEDEVAC ships.

National accident numbers indicate that snags continue to be one of the biggest safety concerns

Regen on new Hotshot Crew Carriers being looked as well

John Burfiend new Director at NAFRI- Given Yarnell Hills Fire tragedy this is a good time for Management to start accepting the risk that the on the ground folks are accepting everyday. Urged IHC overhead to make the leap to management.

**Radio/Inter-crew frequency Update (Lopez)**

Clarified that the Inter-crew channels and even the NIFC tac channels are not truly exclusive use and are licensed for use thru out the country.

Clem described the need for more frequencies for the IHCs. There are 50 more crews than there were when the original 4 channels and code guards were issued.
The cost of purchasing new crew frequencies is prohibitive. New UHF radios in development may be a temporary fix as might military surplus short range radios but these are both band aid/temporary fixes.

Jumpers and Helitack have their own dedicated frequencies but the process was difficult and lengthy and was accomplished due to aviation safety considerations.

Cerda pointed out the need for cross training of IHC overhead into the commo arena. Communications technology has become so complicated that this is becoming a serious safety concern. The number of communication related Safenets continues to rise.

Lopez reminded all that the unauthorized use of frequencies is punishable by up to a $10,000 fine per transmission and that FCC enforcers have been to fires in recent years. Also reminded the group not to put Inter crew frequencies into mobile as the increased power of the mobiles is outside the intended use of those frequencies.

Digital vs Analog- digitat may be far better when multiple users are on one frequency as you can be physically closer to each other before you begin to experience any bleed over.

Bottom line on Inter-Crew frequencies and communication is that given that number of IHCs and the small number of frequencies and the fact that most anyone on the incident can use those frequencies—we are definitely heading for a problem. Everyone needs to file Safenets every time they encounter problems with this issue. Meanwhile we will just have to do what we have to do in order to communicate with our crews and operate safely.

Cerda will draft a white paper explaining in detail how IHCs operate and why we need to have more frequencies available for use by IHCs.
IHC –vs- Potential Type 1 Contract Crew(all)

Strong opposition by all on the potential for the development of Contract Type 1 Crews. Clem will present the arguments to the Operations group. (Operations group in complete agreement)

Number of IHC was also discussed with Operations group. Group believes that the current number is more than adequate.

Short Haul update (Anderson)

New 10 minute video update should be available soon (see talking points that he sent out)

SIHCO Update(all)

- Increase number of radios to 7
- Change Sawyer quals to 50% agency qualified and 4 Type 2 (B) Sawyer
- Include the imbedded reviewer in the initial certification process. Imbedded reviewer must be past or current superintendent not from the same home unit as the crew being certified.

-Crew Quals SQDB must be CRWB qualified

Assistant STL OR TFLD + ICT4

Superintendent DIVS + ICT4 + FIRB (much debate and disagreement on this issue)
Crews need to focus on lowering the average weights of their packs down into the 35 lbs range. (currently at 45 lbs average)

New updates available now on fire shelters, chaps and gloves

New no shrink, no melt t-shirts now available through Department of Defense

Domitrovich study on physical fitness and physical exertion levels for groundpounders indicate that on the job we are operating at a level much higher than the WCT evaluates us at and at a level akin to professional athletes. Results of study will likely be posted at Lessons Learned site.

Dan Olsen

Agreed that we need to determine if we need more IHC before we even begin to address the Contract Type 1 Crew issue and that whatever the case all must meet the standards

Agrees that a Nation IHC Program Manager is needed. All other programs have managers why not us.

Steve Gage

Also agreed that we need a National Program Manager and this will be addressed at the national level

Clem and others brought up that we are a National Asset we are not utilized that way by our regional and local handlers and there needs to be a better understanding at NIFC of the actual needs and usage of Hotshot crews as IHC are often hoarded by IMT and or local/regional management

Fly vs drive- Steve wanted to utilize one or two of the new Sherpa aircraft for moving IHCs around. IHC group strongly disagreed.
Steve agreed to bring up the issue of allowing the purchase of supplemental food.

**IHC Vehicle Update (Halston)**

Regen issue-still no exemption yet for the emission system

**Leadership Subcommittee Update (Olpin)**

Requested IHC representation on the Leadership Committee. Cerda volunteered to do this

Kuche suggested looking outside the box for alternative leadership courses

**Aerial Firefighting Update (Bolz)**

Chris Bolz explained what they do evaluating the use and effectiveness of fire retardant.

**Risk Management- Program Update (Sutton)**

Began with the crew frequency issue and was asked to bring this issue up at his level as a serious safety concern. He also urged all to continue to file Safenets every time we run into this problem and to be very specific and detailed

-CISM – big push for more of this post Yarnell. Currently setting up regional teams for this. Classes are available to be part of these. Emphasis is that these teams be made up of peers and fellow wildland firefighters.

-EMS/Shorthaul- Group working on this relying heavily upon the NPS which already has this in place. Bridger Teton and Wenatchie Helibases might be up and running as short haul qualified bases this year and would have EMTs available as well. Ships at these bases would remain multi-functional not just for short haul.
Urged us all though to not base our actions or inactions in the field on weather or not a short haul ship is available.

-EMT/EMS-There is still no agency intent regarding this issue. There are 3 ways to go at this point 1. Maintain the status quo 2. Cease and desist all EMS or 3. Recognize and develop our EMS capabilities

Only 2 regions, 4 and 5 have a Medical director

There is some support at higher levels for getting EMT on the PDs and Red Cards and looking into utilizing something similar to the Army’s Combat Lifesaver program for WFF

-Medical Standards-Medical exams still a work in progress would be every third year with lesser exams in between. Still trying to streamline the whole proposed process