



File Code: 5130

Date: July 27, 2008

Subject: Safety Stand-Down – Monday, July 28, 2008

To: All Fire and Aviation Operational and Support Elements of the US Forest Service in the Pacific Southwest Region

At a time that is appropriate to on-going operations and meaningful in achieving the intent, all operational elements of Fire and Aviation Management in the Pacific Southwest Region are to engage in a one-half hour safety stand-down on Monday, July 28. Intent of the stand-down is to discuss mutual responsibility to identify and mitigate fatigue, both personal and within the unit or module. This applies to all operational elements, including but not limited to: initial attack forces, all aviation elements, incident management teams and forces assigned to on-going incidents, area command teams, ECCs, dispatch and coordination centers, fire caches, and forest FAM personnel. I would ask that you include your agency administrators and others outside of FAM who are supporting this effort.

Fatigue affects judgment, decision-making, and performance. It is often insidious, as among its effects is the inability to self-diagnose. Simple evaluation of the duration of assignment or work-rest ratios are inadequate indicators of the potential for fatigue related errors and accidents. It requires constant attention. Credible information on fatigue and its effects can be found on the following site and should be consulted to support your efforts during this stand-down:

http://www.fs.fed.us/fire/safety/h_s_rpts/spring_2002/wandf.htm

I want to personally stress the importance of this act; it is not symbolic. Some will complain we are simply too busy to take one-half hour for this purpose, I agree it will take time “away” from our operations. ***However, we simply cannot afford NOT to take the time to consider whether we are creating the momentum of our efforts, or being swept along by them.*** I ask that you look at this effort as an investment, as time to reflect on those things that have life and death implications, and that you engage in it with the purpose of ensuring fatigue issues will not be the cause of the next accident in your unit.

I am proud of every one of you for your excellence and your efforts in performing the daunting task of the last sixty-plus days. Like you, I am saddened by recent events and want them never to be repeated. Do I think fatigue contributed to these tragic outcomes? I don't know. But I do know that fatigue is something we cannot ignore or take for granted.

Thank you for your commitment to this effort and to each other. God bless you and keep you safe.

/s/ Ed Hollenshead

ED HOLLENSHEAD
Director, Fire and Aviation Management

