

# Synthesis of Fire Policies Currently Being Recommended

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### June 30<sup>th</sup>, 2020

#### Good Policies

##### Develop a clear national leader's intent on how to conduct fire season 2020.

- Implement a standardized Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) for dealing with COVID-19 incorporating expert knowledge into planning.
- Have clear and strategic direction as to what is and isn't mission-critical work, as well as direction on the priority of incidents.
- Have clear messaging on hygiene and social distancing practices.
- Create National SOPs for disinfecting.
- Provide strategic direction to not only federal agencies, but also partners, cooperators and the public. Be up front about the potential for delayed response times.

##### Ensure fire personnel's safety from COVID-19.

- Implement COVID-19 screenings.
  - Offer temperature screenings each day.
  - Have personnel tested to establish a baseline of health.
  - Develop a questionnaire for recent history to determine exposure risk of personnel.
- Restrict the use of personnel who fall into at-risk groups, i.e., people 65 and older and those with underlying medical conditions.
- Assign a MD or RN to all large incidents.
- Guarantee health care for employees that contract coronavirus.
  - Make workers compensation available and accessible to all employees that contract or are exposed to COVID-19.
  - Require automatic filing of CA-16 when COVID-19 is suspected.
- Incentivize isolation, self-reporting, and working outside SOPs.
  - As employees may be disincentivized to report symptoms due to fear of being quarantined and losing income, it is important to ensure employees will not receive a loss in pay if they report symptoms.
  - Provide paid quarantine and provide alternate lodging for quarantine sites
- Make mental health care professionals easily available.
- Move IMTs to a virtual platform to reduce risk of an outbreak.
  - Identify IMT positions and tasks suitable for virtual work.
  - Go virtual with public information meetings, utilizing Facebook Live and/or other mediums.
  - Allow dispatchers to work virtually.
  - Move briefings to a virtual setting.
- Reimagine fire camps.
  - Do not locate all food, water, communication, medical support, and supplies in a single location.
  - Utilize smaller, self-sufficient spike camps.
  - Do not offer dining hall tents.
  - Provide meals in to-go containers.
  - Make all camps closed so that personnel cannot enter communities putting both themselves and residents at risk.

- Require larger or segregated sleeping areas.
- Offer more hand-washing stations and shower units, and enforce their use.
- Increase the number of garbage receptacles.
- Have camp crews solely responsible for cleaning/sanitizing.
- Keep distance between individual modules.
- Restrict access to essential personnel only.
  - This requires a clear definition of 'essential personnel.'
- Have in place a specific ambulance and medical tent allocated for suspected cases and/or incident-within-an-incident planning and operations in case of a COVID-19 outbreak.
- Prepare for outbreaks at dispatch centers.
  - Consider off-site dispatch centers.
  - Cordon off dispatch from the rest of the office, if sharing with other operations.
  - Coordinate with neighboring dispatch centers to develop a plan and agreement to support any center that must go offline due to quarantine or exposure at the office.
- Allow fire caches to order supplies directly from the company rather than through intermediary vendors.
- Require the use of face masks and/or shields to be worn inside vehicles.

**Keep firefighters healthy to reduce the risk of contracting COVID-19.**

- Use closest agency resources first due to increased risks associated with travel.
  - Keep resources in GACC until PL4 of PL5.
  - Modify dispatch procedures to keep resources from travelling to, through, or from areas known with outbreaks.
  - Reduce number and types of resources ordered and only order the bare minimum personnel to respond to an incident.
- Pay firefighters commensurately for the increased health hazard inherent with COVID-19.
  - Pay firefighters Portal-to-Portal.
  - Salary firefighters based on 16-hour shifts, overtime, and hazard pay.
  - Pay firefighters to be on call.
  - Pay firefighters and support staff hazard pay regardless of assignment.
  - Have longer periods of paid time off between incidents.
  - Increase work-to-rest guidelines but still compensate for a full 16-hours.
- Build more rest and recovery time into the season.
  - Reduce work hours to allow more time for refurb, disinfecting of vehicles and tools, hygiene, and sleep.
- Utilize different suppression tactics that reduce exhaustion and exposure to smoke
  - Reduce the use of mop-up as this has been found to be taxing on firefighter respiratory systems. Allow fires to go out naturally.
  - Utilize more managed fire rather than full-suppression in all low-risk fires.
  - Modify fire suppression strategies to use existing features as well as point protection to limit the numbers of personnel needed in creating fireline.

**Specify clear guidelines for aviation operations.**

- Minimize crewmember exposure.
  - Require contractors and agency personnel to carry and use disinfecting supplies for protection of aircraft and personnel.
  - Restrict access to airbases and aircraft to essential personnel only.
  - Require personnel to wear a face covering.

- Isolate aircrews from other aircrews, contractors, and base personnel.
- Identify and assign temporary home bases for resources without a permanent home base.
- Align aircraft, aircrew, and crew R&R to create schedules to minimize aircrew rotations and the need for relief crews.
  - Avoid the use of relief crews
- Require working with local airbases to identify the number of resources necessary to maintain proper social distancing measures.
- Staff with airbases with minimal personnel during standby.
- Utilize virtual briefings.
- Minimize transport of passengers and clean aircraft between flights.
- Introduce national SOPs specifying guidelines and procedures for:
  - Disinfecting aircraft and protecting personnel against COVID-19 exposure.
  - Disinfecting facilities, community surfaces, and equipment on airbases.
  - Wildland fire chemical contractors that identifies procedures and frequency for disinfecting mixing, loading, and testing equipment and supplies, and for protecting personnel against COVID-19 exposure.
- Have contractors and agency personnel document daily activities and interaction for use in contact tracing if an exposure occurs.

**Provide an exceptions and amendments for the following standards and procedures:**

- Amend aviation contracts to include measures for COVID-19, including: sanitizing the aircraft, providing on-site trailers for pilots and other helicopter staff to sleep and eat to reduce exposure at hotels, limiting helicopter occupancy to just the pilot unless absolutely necessary.
- Adjust Type 1 crew standards to allow for more flexibility in numbers and qualifications.
- As most IHCs run with buggies that require a CDL, allow for non-certified drivers with CDL experience to drive if qualified driver get sick.
- Loosen requirements for filling fire support positions.
- Push opening task books without required classes.
- Schedule red card committee meetings throughout summer to get people qualified as soon as they are signed off.

**Reduce fire risks.**

- Apply burn bans and fire restrictions nationally.
- Develop national, regional, and local fire prevention messages and provide heavy messaging to the public on reducing the number of human-caused starts.

**Okay Policies**

- Move to critical mission task forces or pods: create groups of resources able to respond to up to a Type 3 incident that can be tested for COVID-19 and then isolated and staged together in areas of high fire danger. (I'm unsure about the location of this policy)
- Provide access to pre-, during, and post-incident COVID-screening.
  - This is provided as an "okay" policy, due to recognition that laboratory tests are currently being developed under emergency use authorizations by the FDA, meaning that tests are being developed without proper validation.

## Bad Policies

- Revert to the 10 AM policy for the season.
  - This may incline first responders to accept undue risk during Initial Attack in an attempt to keep fires small.
  - This may also lead to more emphasis on mop-up where prolonged exposure to smoke and dust inhalation increases health risks.
  - This will eliminate opportunities to manage fires for resource benefits.
  - This may shift safety risks to aviation crews in places or conditions unsafe for ground crews.
  - This may deplete crew energy or health reserves earlier in season, increasing vulnerability for communities during southern California's late-season peak fire danger.
- Require all modules to be self-sufficient and utilize MREs to allow for remote camps.
  - MREs reduce crew morale, may lead to gastrointestinal issues, and should not be used as a sole food source for extended periods of time.
- Have caterer drop off hot buckets to remote locations.
  - The use of hot buckets should be avoided as this requires multiple people having contact with food utensils.
- Utilize more heavy equipment for creating fireline to reduce the crew resources needed.
- Increase use of aviation resources to substitute for ground crews.

### Resources:

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