

# Findings and Recommendations: Safety

*While scouting the fire, the vehicle stalled and was burned over by the approaching fire. The crew members escaped by running through the flaming front.*



*Fire Entrapment Report*

*An engine burnover occurred during initial attack. Firefighters escaped by running through the flaming front into the black.*

Firefighter and public safety are the first priority in every fire management activity. All Fire Management Plans and activities must reflect this commitment (Federal Wildland Fire Policy 1995). Safety is the responsibility of all of those assigned to the fire.

## Safety

Within the first 24 to 30 hours of this fire, there were several safety-related incidents, such as 1) an engine burn over; 2) a road grader burn over; 3) a safety officer who had to stop a burnout to save engines in its path; 4) three separate incidents where strike teams burned out safety zones to escape the oncoming fire; and 5) many statements of independent actions taken to save structures or escape the flaming front.

People with equipment who responded independently, on their own, to the fire were isolated on a ridge above a burn out operation and didn't have communications with the burn out personnel. As a result, the burn out had to be halted until communication could be established and the safety of the people involved could be assured.

## Finding: Burnover

During the initial attack phase of this incident an HFD engine and two person crew were involved in a burnover, resulting in the loss of the engine and no injuries. While scouting the fire, the vehicle stalled and was burned over by the approaching fire. The crew members escaped by running through the flaming front. The Service ordered an entrapment investigation of the burnover, but it was not complete. It failed to address the risks or decisions made, or identify lessons learned, which could have provided valuable insight to engine crews for reducing the risk of additional burn overs.

The engine burnover is an "entrapment." An entrapment, as defined by the National Wildfire Coordinating Group (NWCG), is when personnel are unexpectedly caught in

a fire behavior-related, life-threatening position, where planned escaped routes and safety zones are absent, inadequate, or have been compromised.

## Recommendations:

The Service will, per policy:

- Conduct a fire entrapment investigation following NWCG guidelines.
- Share the information with the appropriate individuals and cooperators.
- Develop recommendations for improving existing procedures and practices.

## Finding: Inadequate on site reviews

One engine specific burnover and entrapment investigation was previously mentioned. However, fire and law enforcement personnel who were interviewed identified many other burn overs, entrapments, and close calls. These incidents were not adequately reviewed on site to learn what happened, take stress off of firefighters and law enforcement officers, and prevent similar incidents from occurring.

## Recommendations:

The Service and the Department of Energy (DOE) should work with cooperators to:

- Co-sponsor a fire safety workshop with the Tri-County Fire Chiefs to debrief those who were directly involved in the fire (firefighter and law enforcement) on June 27 and 28, at the fire's peak.
- Arrange to have a facilitator at the workshop to ensure that there is a free exchange of information and develop consensus recommendations to improve firefighter, law enforcement, and public safety.
- Create an action plan to implement the workshop recommendations.

# Findings and Recommendations: Fire Management Planning

*Plans must also promote an interagency approach to managing fires to ensure safety, efficiency, and effectiveness.*

**F**ire management plans must be coordinated, reviewed, and approved by the responsible Agency Administrator to assure consistency with approved land management plans.

## Fire Management Plan

The Federal Wildland Fire Policy (1995) requires that all Federal wildland fire agencies with burnable vegetation have an approved Fire Management Plan. Plans must address firefighter and public safety, values to be protected, and public health issues. The plans must be consistent with land and resource management plans, address potential wildland fire occurrences, risks and mitigation, and identify fire management actions. Plans must also promote an interagency approach to managing fires to ensure safety, efficiency, and effectiveness.

### Finding: Fire management plan is inadequate:

The Monument Fire Management Plan does not meet the required standards. Instead, the Monument relies upon the "Arid Lands Ecology (ALE) Facilities Management Plan," prepared for the DOE by Battelle Memorial Institute (February 1993).

### Recommendations:

The Monument should:

- Prepare the suppression portion of a Fire Management Plan in compliance with the Federal Wildland Fire Policy and the Service's Fire Management Handbook. The plan must include an appropriate level of cooperator and public involvement.

- Develop the plan during the fall of 2000 and implement it prior to the 2001 fire season.

## Fire Preparedness Planning

The Service must develop safe and cost-effective fire management programs in support of other land and resource management plans, through appropriate planning, cooperative agreements, staffing, training, and equipment. Annual reviews and

updates must be completed for preparedness plans, cooperative agreements, annual operating plans, and preparedness reviews. When conditions exceed those of the normal fire year, the Service should develop severity and contingency plans that consider both the agency's and cooperators' needs.

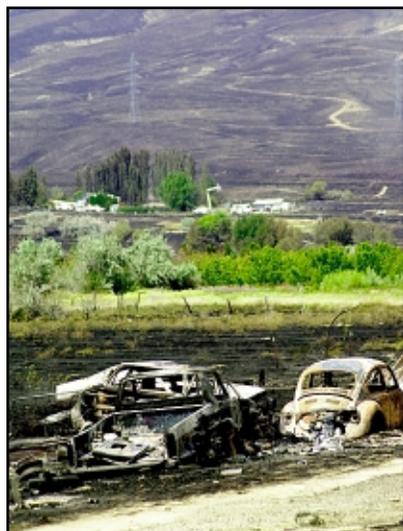
### Finding: Step-up plan

The Monument has not worked with cooperators to develop a step-up plan. To support the suppression portion of the FMP, an operational plan is required that identifies what actions should be taken under certain weather conditions, what actions are required if a fire occurs in a given area of the Monument, what resources will be needed under certain conditions, and what are the key indicators that should trigger certain preparedness actions.

### Recommendations:

The Monument should work closely with local cooperators to:

- Develop a step-up plan for Monument. This plan defines a set of actions to be taken at each planning level; public and firefighter safety are the primary consideration. The plan should include, but not be limited to, the following items:
  - Management direction and considerations
  - Fire prevention/education actions
  - Prepositioning of suppression resources
  - Cooperators involvement
  - Safety considerations
  - Coordination and local Multi-Agency Coordinating Group
  - Dispatch ordering procedures
  - Fire Danger/behavior assessments and notifications
  - Briefings for management and firefighters
  - Joint fire information releases
  - Enhance fire management staffing commensurate with conditions



AP/Wide World Photos

*Fire leaves burned cars and vegetation in its wake in Benton City.*

# Findings and Recommendations: Wildfire Suppression Operations

*There was no delay in suppression tactics due to the “light hand on the land” requirements.*

Management actions on wildland fires must consider firefighter and public safety, be cost effective, consider benefits and values to be protected, and be consistent with natural and cultural resources objectives.

## Initial and Extended Attack

The cooperative agreement between Service, the DOE, and their HFD contractors agrees to “light hand on the land” tactics. This means they will avoid using tractors, graders, and all other ground surface breaking or modifying equipment without prior approval of the Service, *except* when the use of such equipment is essential to protect life, private property, or prevent the spread of fire to the Hanford Site, east of Highway 240.

There was concern expressed that the fire might have been contained earlier if light hand on the land tactics had not placed restrictions on the use of heavy equipment. The final decision regarding use of such equipment rests with the Incident Commander, as specified in the cooperative agreement.

## Finding: Use of heavy equipment

The Incident Commander determined that attacking the fire quickly took precedence over “light hand on the land” guidance in the contract. He used his discretion to send the crews directly onto the Monument area in an attempt to cut off the fire before it could spread. Therefore, there was no delay in suppression tactics due to the light hand on the land requirements.

## Recommendations:

The Monument should:

- Determine the areas best suited for following light hand on the land tactics, incorporating this into the FMP that is being developed. This should include criteria regarding when light hand on the land tactics are to be set aside and shared with cooperators.

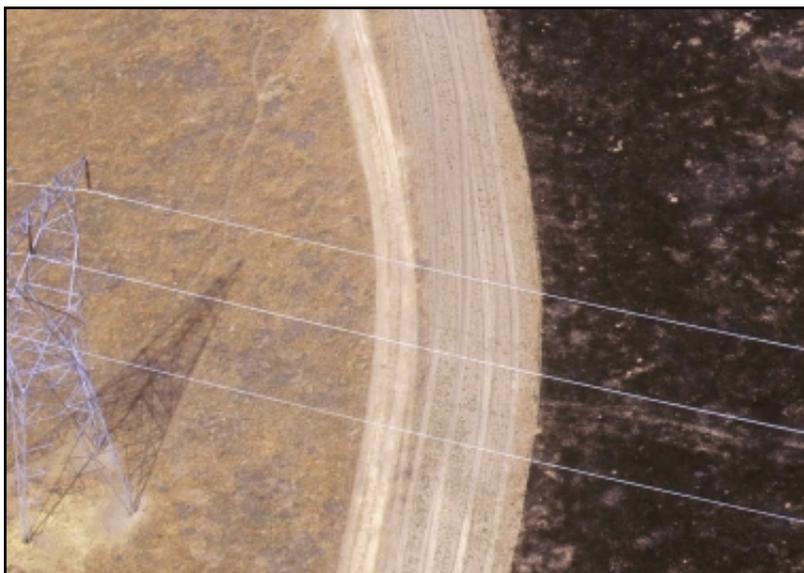
## Managing the Incident

The Agency Administrator plays a very important role in the management of any fire. The Agency Administrator is responsible for the safe, effective, and efficient management of all wildland fires within their land. As identified in the Service’s Fire Management Handbook, the Agency Administrator’s role and responsibility to the Incident Management Team is to:

- Develop a delegation of authority which includes specific, measurable objectives to be accomplished by the Incident Management Team, as well as limitations of that authority.

- Brief the Incident Management Team on the situation, safety, cooperators, social and political concerns, objectives, and expectations. Assign a liaison to interface with the team.

- Provide a signed Wildland Fire Situation Analysis (WFSA) and establish daily re-certification procedures. The WFSA must describe the situation, evaluate the expected effects, establish objectives and constraints for the management of the



Kari K. Brown

*The WFSA assists in decision making, such as using a dozer line as a firebreak.*

fire, select an appropriate alternative, and document the decision and rationale.

- Define situation update requirements, time frames, and the person who should receive these reports.
- Set clear and measurable standards for safety. Highlight known hazards in the area.
- Provide oversight to the Incident Management Team to assess the effectiveness of the strategy in meeting objectives.

**Finding: Inadequate WFSA**

An adequate WFSA was not prepared, nor revalidated or updated, as conditions changed.

**Recommendations:**

The Service's Regional Office should:

- Arrange for the Refuge Project Leader and his representatives to receive additional training in the development and use of the WFSA.
- Direct the Refuge Project Leader and staff to produce those portions of the WFSA that can be developed prior to the 2001 fire season by working jointly with the cooperators.
- Develop a small network of fire management expertise that can be rapidly deployed to assist a refuge when the burning conditions are above normal.

**Incident Complexity Analysis**

The Incident Complexity Analysis document assists the Agency Administrator and staff in analyzing the current or predicted complexity of a fire situation to determine the appropriate type of team to use. This document is prepared concurrently with, and attached to, a new or revised Wildland Fire Situation Analysis (WFSA). The WFSA is a required decision-making process which allows the Agency Administrator (or representative) to assess the fire, establish objectives and constraints, explore alternatives, and select an action plan.

**Finding: Incident Complexity Analysis**

The Agency Administrator and ICT4 did not adequately assess the complexity of the fire and assign the appropriate level of incident management within the first 10 hours. This resulted in transfer of command five times within the first 27 hours. A guide for assessing fire complexity can be found in the Service's Fire Management Handbook.

**Recommendations:**

The Refuge Project Leader and representatives should:

- Become skilled in using complexity levels to arrange for appropriate incident management. These complexity levels should be pre-identified and correlated with fire danger indices to establish needs ahead of time.

**Radio Communications**

Radios provide a crucial communication link during a fire. It is not uncommon for radio communications to be somewhat limited during initial and extended attack operations, if not pre-planned. A potential problem exists anytime a firefighter cannot contact the fireline supervisor. Operations must cease until positive contact is attained/maintained; positive communication is paramount in providing a safe working environment.

Heidi Brunkal/USFWWS



Note the fire whirl (to left) that preceded the plume.

Heidi Brunkal/USFWWS



The fire moved rapidly over dry cheat grass, producing 12 foot flames.

**Finding: Radio frequencies**

There was no previous agreement as to which frequencies would be used on an incident. Fire teams continued to use just one frequency as the complexity increased, even when aerial resources were being used. There was no authorization in place to use each other’s frequencies.

Even when the frequencies were known and more were added, radio communication was effective only within line of sight. A Safety Officer had to be used as a “human repeater,” instead of being able to do his job as a Safety Officer.

People with equipment who responded independently, on their own, to the fire were isolated on a ridge above a burn out operation and didn’t have communications with the burn out personnel. As a result, the burn out had to be halted until communication could be established and the safety of the people involved could be assured.

When radio frequencies were overloaded, there was an attempt to use cell phones. Generally, cell phone numbers were unknown; some of those that were known were no longer accurate. Cell phones should never be used for tactical communications.

**Recommendations:**

The Monument, DOE, and the cooperators should:

- Arrange for authorizations, agreements and procedures to be in

place to use each others’ radio frequencies; the procedures should be tied to the annual operating plan.

- Make sure that adequate repeaters are in place to eliminate “line of sight” issues.

**Incident Qualifications**

Fighting a fire of this stature requires hundreds of people with a wide range of talents. Only qualified people will be assigned duties in wildland fire suppression. The National Wildfire Coordinating Group National (NWCG) establishes minimum fire qualification standards acceptable to all agencies. Local agencies can raise the standard to a higher level.

**Finding: Qualification standards**

Some of the fire personnel in assigned positions on the fire did not meet NWCG qualification standards. One example was a Division Group Supervisor who was only qualified as a Firefighter Type 1. The accepted interagency standard is the Wildland and Prescribed Fire Qualification System, PMS 310-1 (January 2000).

**Recommendations:**

The Service should:

- Work with cooperators to understand and accept NWCG’s training, qualifications, and certification standards.
- Address these standards in the agreement between the Service, DOE, their HFD contractors, and other cooperators.

Heidi Brunckal/USFWS



24 Incident Command Post (ICP)

Paul Erickson/Tri-City Herald



On the right, Benton City residents evacuate, while those to the left return to get their livestock.

# Findings and Recommendations: Resource Ordering and Dispatch Operation

*The Service does not have an agreement for dispatching services.*

Organizations with dispatching responsibility, in conjunction with cooperators, must ensure that dispatch standard operating procedures are developed. Agency Administrators must also ensure that an annual review verifies that required elements are updated and in place and that written, approved procedures are fully implemented and followed during dispatching operations.

## Resource Ordering

On June 27 at 1440, the HFD made the first resource request for one airtanker to the Central Washington Interagency Communication Center (CWICC) in Wenatchee, WA. The HFD does not normally order from and had no agreement with CWICC. The CWICC Center Manager called the Monument's Fire Management Officer, who confirmed that HFD was working a fire for the Service. The Service only had an informal agreement with CWICC for support dispatch services.

The request was honored and the airtanker departed Wenatchee at 1509 with load and return instructions. CWICC initiated a request for a lead plane in accordance with Northwest Geographic Area policy.

Once the mobile command vehicle was established at the Incident Command

Post (known as 24 Command), HFD transferred ordering responsibilities to the 24 Command, and continued ordering resources beyond mutual aid directly from CWICC.

## Finding: Agreement for services

The Service does not have an agreement for dispatching services. HFD uses its dispatch center for initial attack dispatching. Historically, resources beyond mutual aid were not dispatched through Benton County Emergency Services for contracted lands (Service and Bureau of Land Management). HFD made the decision to order through CWICC at the beginning of the incident, both for extended attack and expanded dispatching support services. The Service confirmed this authorization with CWICC.

## Recommendations:

The Monument should:

- Review local mutual aid agreements regarding the use of local resources beyond the initial attack.

- Develop an agreement for local dispatch services for extended attack, Type 2, and Type 1 incidents.

- Become a party to the Tri-County Mutual Aid Agreement.

- Develop an agreement with a Federal dispatch center to access resources outside of the local area. The agreement should address, at a minimum, the following points:
  - Delegation of Authority.
  - Roles and responsibilities.
  - Ordering resources
  - Compensation
  - Necessary notifications

## Finding: CWICC response

The review team met with CWICC and made contact by conference call to the Northwest Coordination Center (NWCC) in Portland, OR. After reviewing the resource orders at CWICC, there was no indication that any resource requests from 24 Command had been held or canceled by CWICC.

Tri-City Herald



*Structure protection in the wildland/urban interface remains a high priority.*

*Communications with 24 Command were inconsistent, which delayed the ordering process.*

**Finding: Communications with 24 Command**

CWICC did have problems returning calls to 24 Command. This led to delays in confirming resource assignments and their estimated time of arrival to the incident. CWICC had questions regarding individual requests that were unclear. Only portions of the large resource request on June 27 was received at CWICC. This was not an isolated case of communication breakdown between incident personnel, 24 Command, and CWICC. Communications with 24 Command were inconsistent, which delayed the ordering process.

**Finding: Timeliness of response**

It appears that resource requests were filled on the date and at the time needed. There are a number of deviations between the requestor's date and time needed and the date and time noted given to CWICC . There were delays in filling "overhead" requests, or orders for personnel assigned to supervisory positions on the fire. These delays are common geographically and nationally.

**Finding: Incident Action Plan**

The Incident Action Plan (IAP) describes necessary resources and assigns them to a specific use. The IAP was built with resources that were ordered, but *not* by confirmed arrival times.

**Recommendations:**

The Monument should:

- Review procedures for transitioning from structural (buildings/municipal)

or local government ordering to Federal dispatch ordering at both the pre-season meeting with cooperators and the local Type 3 team meeting. In particular, all involved with the ordering process should understand the date and time that resources are required at the site. Procedures should:

- Provide the date and time resources are required at the incident.
- Understand estimated time frames involved in routing the orders through the Federal dispatch ordering channels.
- Provide information from the incident to assist the dispatch centers and multi-agency coordinating groups in setting priorities locally, within the geographic area, and nationally.

**Finding: Non-authorized orders for resources**

The DOE attempted to order resources from CWICC and their requests were denied. This is outside of the normal ordering channels, since HFD was authorized by the Service to order for the 24 Command Fire.

A local Multi-Agency Coordinating (MAC) group is made up of agencies and/or jurisdictions that come together to make decisions related to incidents and resource sharing in a geographic area. A geographic area is a political boundary designated by the wildland fire protection agencies, where these agencies work together to coordinate and effectively use resources within their boundaries.

When the local MAC has resource requests, they are processed through the Incident Command's expanded dispatch organization, utilizing the normal dispatch ordering channels. (See the National Mobilization Guide Chapter 30.)

**Recommendations:**

The Monument should:

- Activate their local MAC Group whenever wildland fire activities are affecting more than one agency or there is competition for incident resources in a geographic area.

■ Ensure that MAC groups at all levels do the following:

- Determine the incident priorities.
- Allocate or reallocate resources.



Dave Gonzales/USFWS

*Refuge engine working on the fireline.*

*The IAP was built with resources that were ordered, but not by confirmed arrival times.*

- Develop and recommend contingency action plans.
- Issue coordinated situation assessments.
- Ask the Northwest Geographic Area Coordinating Group to provide training to the local agency administrators and their delegated representatives.
- Ask the local MAC group to meet at least annually and conduct mock exercises to become familiar with each others' roles and responsibilities, as well as to develop working relationships.
- Include the DOE as a member of the local MAC Group and ask them to bring their resource requests to the local MAC meeting.
- Provide input to the servicing dispatch center's Dispatch Operating Plan. The dispatch operating plans should address, at a minimum, the following points:
  - Authorities
  - Roles and responsibilities for dispatch activities
  - Resource order procedures and flow.
  - Integration of buying teams and sources of supply.
  - Necessary notifications along with time frames.
  - Resources outside the local mutual aid agreements.
  - Dispatch procedures for ordering processing.
  - Communication between incident resources and dispatch center.

**Finding: Dispatch operating plan**

The Monument does not have a Dispatch Operating Plan. This plan outlines procedures for identifying roles and responsibilities, preparedness levels, notification to suppression forces, management of ongoing fire activity, and more.

**Recommendations:**

The Monument should:

- Develop a Dispatch Operating Plan to assist local office personnel with established procedures when key employees are not available. (Refer to Chapter 30 of the National Mobilization Guide.)

*Dave Gonzales/USFWS*



*Suppression efforts to save shrub-steppe-habitat.*

# Findings and Recommendations: Interagency Coordination and Cooperation

*Refuges are responsible for developing agreements with local agencies and fire departments to meet mutual needs for fire protection.*

Interagency cooperation is vital in attaining fire management. The ability of a single agency to implement a fire management program is limited without coordination and assistance from other organizations. Interagency cooperation and coordination of shared resources and common activities is imperative at all organizational levels.

## Agreements and Contracts

Refuges are responsible for developing agreements with local agencies and fire departments to meet mutual needs for fire protection. They should be comprised of two components: the actual agreement or contract and an operating plan. The agreement/contract outlines the authority and general responsibilities of each party. The operating plan defines the specific operating procedures. The agreements and operating plans must also be provided to the servicing dispatch center.

### Finding: Agreements and operating plans

There were not adequate agreements or operating plans in place to enhance safe, effective, and efficient fire protection.

### Recommendations:

The Monument should:

- Meet with contractors and cooperators to identify opportunities to increase the safety, effectiveness, and efficiency of fire protection on the Monument and adjoining lands.
- Review and update existing contracts and agreements annually. Develop new agreements as identified.

### Findings: Agreements unclear or were inadequate

Local fire districts appear to believe that Service philosophy and policy restrict the use of certain tactics and that Federal wildland fire suppression activities would cease at the Federal land boundary. Both of these perceptions were unfounded based on review of existing policy, current agreements, and actions taken during the incident.

Some cooperators felt that the Service's fire agreement with HFD should include lands east of the Columbia River, not just part of the Monument. Revision of the agreement should involve discussion of expanding the agreement to include all Hanford Monument lands.

The cooperative fire agreement between the Service and HFD expires this fiscal year and must be updated. The current agreement is inadequate. The model agreements now available are not suitable for rural fire districts and should be improved.

Additionally, the Type 1 team felt they lacked knowledge of potential radiological hazards at the DOE site. DOE was not included in the MAC and did not have an agreement with the Service; consequently, important procedural information about radiological hazards was not available.



AP/Wide World Photos

*An air tanker drops retardant near the Plutonium Uranium Extraction Facility.*

**Recommendations:**

The Monument should:

- Clarify Service policy and tactical guidance with the local and DOE fire community to eliminate misconceptions regarding perceived restrictions.
- Develop agreements to ensure Department of Energy representation and guidance on these type of incidents.
- Update and improve the cooperative fire agreement between the Service and HFD before it expires. Be sure the new agreement addresses potential radiological hazards for the benefit of all cooperators.
- Prepare briefing information for the hazards on site.

**Finding: Community and cooperator involvement**

There was some level of local and Federal coordination and cooperation, but the level of pre-incident planning and preparedness on the part of the entire community should be improved. DOE is not part of NWCG or the geographic area coordinating group. They should be more involved with other wildland fire groups and increase familiarity with ICS system.

**Recommendations:**

The Service Regional Office and other federal wildland fire agencies should:

- Work with State and local resources to reevaluate current operational plans to bring the entire Tri-County community to a higher standard of preparedness. Jointly coordinate planning efforts to include an accurate understanding of resource agency (Service, DOE) policy and procedures. Pre-establish and practice communication and dispatch procedures.
- Encourage DOE to become part of NWCG or the geographic area coordinating group.
- Encourage DOE to be more involved with other wildland fire groups and increase familiarity with ICS system.

**Communication**

Multi-agency communication was a significant problem at all levels. It improved greatly when the Type I team assumed the lead role in unified command. However, multiple agency involvement led to challenging coordination problems.

**Finding: Transfer of command**

Administration and Incident Command-level personnel felt that the transfer of command from initial attack level to extended attack level (Type III to Type II to Type I ) was clear and well-coordinated; however, many at the division and lower levels of command felt that the transfer of command was not clear or well-communicated. They felt the chain of command was confusing. Oversight became less clear as the fire became more volatile.

**Recommendations:**

- The Service and DOE should:
- Evaluate and revise the established training/drills to provide information about local, Type 3, Type 2, and Type 1 resource ordering.

**Finding: Cell phone communications**

Line-of-sight communication using radios was difficult because of the terrain. Fire command relied heavily on cell phones for communication, but there were difficulties with busy signals, getting recordings, not receiving good signals, overloaded lines, and unanswered phones.



*The road and green vegetation may have spared one home, while others nearby burned.*

**Recommendations:**

The Service and cooperators should:

- Not use cell phones for tactical operations.

- Jointly explore with cooperators potential solutions to radio communications problems.

**Findings: Communication with local community**

Local fire and emergency personnel felt that the incident teams did not adequately communicate or coordinate with them. Liaison from local sources (Benton County Emergency Operation Center, Benton County Sheriff, and local fire officials) found it difficult to gather and obtain information regarding emergency operations from command centers, except under Type I command.

Initial attack and extended attack (Type 3) operations did not choose to use the established local fire coordinator to keep local community informed in early stages of the fire. This is a normal local procedure which was not activated, resulting in confusion among local resources.

There is an expansive, well-organized, and well-equipped local framework for emergency response in the local community.

**Recommendations:**

The cooperators should:

- Evaluate personnel assignments criteria to improve information flow from field units to the Emergency Operation Center.

- Increase communication with local fire chiefs to enhance coordination of preparedness planning, training, and tactics.

**Delegation of Authority**

Delegation of Authority is a statement provided to the Incident Commander by the Agency Administrator delegating authority and assigning responsibility. The Delegation of Authority can include objectives, priorities, expectations, constraints, and other considerations or guidelines, as needed. Many agencies require that written delegation authorities be given to commanders prior to assuming command on larger incidents.

**Findings: Unprepared Agency Administrator**

The Agency Administrator during the early stages of the fire was unfamiliar with the need or procedures for preparation of a Delegation of Authority or WFSA.

**Recommendations:**

The Service should:

- Provide training to the Refuge Project Leader and designated representatives for the WFSA, along with responsibilities associated with a Delegation of Authority. The Fire Management Leadership course will cover these and many more topics.

The Monument should:

- Include Delegation of Authority and WFSA statements in the fire suppression portion of the Fire Management Plan (FMP) to be completed prior to fire season 2001.

**Finding: No Delegation of Authority**

The Type 1 team felt that the WFSA, an important guiding document, was inadequate.

The Type I team was ordered through the Service, and not through the local MAC group that had been formed. It took some time to settle the delegation issue and blend into unified command, and in particular determine who was authorized to sign the delegation. The lack of Delegation of Authority did not hinder suppression efforts, but certainly could have.

The transition from Type 3 to Type 2 IMT was not as effective as it could have been. The chaotic situation and extreme fire volatility hindered transition.

**Recommendations:**

The Monument should:

- Assure that whenever a local MAC group is formed, members are kept informed of each others concerns and the group's action are not circumvented.

- Have the Agency Administrator and his representatives attend the Fire Management Leadership course and invite members of other fire districts to attend, as well.

# Findings and Recommendations: Commendable Actions

*There was an outpouring of support from members of the community, who offered invaluable assistance in many areas.*

The following findings and recommendations are offered to assist the Service and its cooperators in documenting the fire management actions and assessing the areas requiring improvement. The intent is to provide insights that will improve safety, efficiency, and effectiveness in managing wildland fires.

The 24 Command Fire was an intense fire-fighting operation. Throughout the suppression effort, good judgement, quick responses, and human kindness prevailed, despite the huge challenges posed by the fire. The following are commendable actions:

**Finding: Strong initial response by HFD**

The Hanford Fire Department's (HFD) decision to send multiple engines and a tender on the initial dispatch, and the decision by the HFD Captain and Battalion Chief to call for additional resources while en route to the incident, were excellent decisions given the fire danger conditions.

**Finding: Forest Service employees offer expert help**

Two U.S. Forest Service Forest Supervisors and one Assistant Fire Staff stepped forward and offered

experienced perspectives that helped to assemble and organize a local Multi-Agency Coordinating group (MAC).

**Finding: Cooperators respond well**

Community leaders, Agency Administrators, and others involved with the fire responded to this multi-agency and multi-jurisdictional incident, often having to make tough decisions under incredible circumstances that included threats to the public and firefighter safety.

**Finding: Excellent effort by the firefighting organization**

The firefighting organization at all levels of organization, including local, State, and Federal resources, worked hard under extremely difficult conditions and had many successes.

**Finding: Followup debriefings identify how to improve**

Members of the fire teams and others involved with the fire conducted local area incident debriefings, Incident Management Teams debriefings, and other efforts to discuss the lessons learned and outline what could be done differently.

**Finding: Outstanding community assistance and support**

Finally, there was an outpouring of support from members of the community, who offered invaluable assistance in many areas. They donated food to the fire fighters and the Emergency Operations Center staff. They set up shelters for the evacuees. Community leaders and Agency Administrators also worked hard to cooperate and work together at the local, State, and Federal levels under very trying circumstances.



*A Benton City resident hoses down a family member's home.*

*Bob Braund/Tri-City Herald*

# Conclusion

*Implementation of the recommendations is key to this report's success, and a strategic plan is key to their implementation.*

Completion of this report is an important step in the overall review process, but it is not the end of the process.

First, this report is more than a document. It is a tool that the Service should use to work collectively with local cooperators so all can take ownership in solving areas needing improvement in actions taken to manage future wildfires.

Second, the implementation of the recommendations is key to this report's success, and a strategic plan is key to their implementation.

Finally, the work of the review team is best captured by answering the question, "What should be done today to achieve a desired future for managing multi-agency, and multi-jurisdictional wildfires?" The following summarized recommendations should provide a strategic direction for answering this question and realizing that future.

## Safety

Initiate strategies that will continue to stress the importance of firefighter and public safety.

## Planning

Develop a fire management plan conducted on an interagency basis with the involvement of all partners, and open to public comment.

## Operations

Employ strategies to manage wildland fires that provide for firefighter and public safety, minimum cost and resource damage, and are consistent with values to be protected and management objectives.

## Coordination

Evaluate and revise cooperative fire protection agreements and operating plans annually.

The review team's final meeting on July 28 provided an opportunity for interaction among the cooperators involved with this incident. This meeting was also a beginning, a first step to establishing and renewing partnerships in a cooperative approach to wildfire protection.

After reviewing the events surrounding the 24 Command Fire, it is the hope of the review team that the Service and its local, state, and Federal cooperators will commit the time, resources, and expertise necessary to implement the recommendations found in this report.

Bob Brawdy/Tri City Herald



*A herd of elk finds safety on a dozer's four-blade wide firebreak on the refuge.*