

Staging Area

and thought process that accompanied it, which is much more effective than tracking those things through e-mail threads from a large group of colleagues. You have everything in one place. Make a comment and everyone gets it.

We've also been using "GoToMeeting" through the neighborhood, which has really improved the effectiveness of our meetings. GoToMeeting is a tool that lets us all sit at our own computers and see the same document in real time. The presenter [of the document] can manipulate it, and we see it as it happens. We can then pass the presenter controls on to someone else, and they can manipulate the same document or put up something else.

Becoming more effective in how we meet electronically is really important. I think the writing is on the wall that we'll soon be cutting back on the amount of face-to-face meetings we can have, so we must get better at these other ways of communicating.

JM: Have you expanded your network of colleagues and contacts through the neighborhoods?

PS: Our neighborhood is private so we aren't really trying to bring other people into our discussions. But [the neighborhood does provide] easy access to our source documents—our charter, strategic plan, etc.—[as well as information on] who we are, what we do and how we run the team, which has helped us quickly integrate new members into the group.

New members can also look at our [previous] discussions to get up to speed on the important topics. All of this is packaged much more clearly in the neighborhood than [it would be if we relied on] e-mail.

JM: Would you recommend the site to other individuals and groups?

PS: It's really useful for any group that needs to share documents and track their discussions. I help teach a National Fire Danger Rating System course, which is presented every 2 years, so we need to inform previous graduates of significant updates and changes. To do this, we've set up a neighborhood as part of a continuing education effort that helps keep graduates up to date.

Want More Information?

To find out more about the neighborhoods or any other aspect of the LLC, you can track down either Nasiatka or Christenson in many

FireFit Footnotes

The importance of making a mental checklist

By Bequi Livingston

As you continue on your trek for wellness, it's important to adequately prepare yourself to either begin a fitness program or to continue with your current regime. One good way to accomplish this is by creating a "mental checklist" of procedures that will help you physically and mentally ready yourself for the tasks involved in maintaining an effective fitness regimen. Below, I've listed three major items you should include on your mental checklist.

- **Obtain medical clearance.** Always consult your medical provider before starting a fitness program, and continue to receive check-ups after you've started your program. For wildland agencies that have implemented the Interagency Medical Qualifications Standards Program (MSP), all personnel must obtain medical clearance prior to participating in any wildland fire operations that require successful completion of the arduous Work Capacity Test (WCT). Agencies that have not yet implemented the MSP will be required to complete a health screening questionnaire, which will determine whether personnel receive clearance or if they need further medical examination.
- **Educate yourself.** Although you might think you know exactly which type of fitness regime is best for you or your crew, you must determine what's "right" versus what's "wrong." The wrong exercises could be detrimental to your overall health and cause injuries. A wealth of fitness information is available, but it's important to use the correct information for wildland firefighting. Two great resources to help you determine which exercises are best for wildland firefighters are:
 1. The FireFit Program (www.nifc.gov/FireFit), which was developed to address fitness for wildland firefighters based on job specificity.
 2. "Fitness and Work Capacity," Second Edition, by Dr. Brian Sharkey, which addresses the physical and mental demands of wildland firefighting.
- **Purchase the proper PPE.** Just as you wouldn't wear a tank top, shorts and sandals to a fireline, you shouldn't exercise wearing wildland fire boots, a Nomex shirt and a hardhat. Statistics have shown that wearing inappropriate personal protective equipment can lead to injuries. For example, exercising in inappropriate footwear can cause shin splints and lower back pain, so make sure you purchase the appropriate footwear for the exercise or activity you want to perform. When considering other exercise apparel, select clothing made with material that helps maintain body temperature by wicking moisture away from the skin and enhancing quick evaporation. Try to avoid common materials, such as cotton and certain synthetics, which tend to hold moisture close to the skin. Lastly, don't forget simple things like sunscreen, eye protection, headwear and bug repellent to limit the effects of the environment and to ward off those irritating critters.

Bequi Livingston is the regional fire operations health and safety specialist for the U.S. Forest Service, Southwestern Regional Office. Livingston is a certified Personal Fitness Trainer, Fitness Specialist and Fitness Instructor. She is currently completing her college education in exercise science and athletic training. She owns a fitness consulting business, "BodySense," and developed Fireline Fitness in 1984 to provide a balanced fitness program for wildland firefighters. Livingston, along with a team of other interagency fire experts, recently developed the national FireFit program endorsed by the Federal Fire and Aviation Safety Team.

of the neighborhoods on www.myfirecommunity.net, or you can contact them the old-fashioned way by sending e-mails to either pnasiatka@fs.fed.us or dchristenson@fs.fed.us.

Josh McDaniel is the editor of *Advances in Fire Practice for the Wildland Fire Lessons Learned Center*. Check out the site at www.wildfirelessons.net/AFP.aspx. ▶