



Fifty-year Anniversary of Landmark "Fire Task Force" Report

June 17, 1957, is a landmark date in the history of fire management safety. It was on this date—50 years ago this summer—that the Forest Service’s Fire Task Force issued a final report to Richard McArdle, Chief of the Forest Service in response to his request for ways that the prevention of fire fatalities could be strengthened. This report marked the genesis of what we today call the 10 Standard Fire Orders and the 18 Situations That Shout Watch Out.

The task force identified eleven factors that seemed to be common to tragedy fires. Most of these were later codified into the Standard Fire Orders. However, while most firefighters are very familiar with the 10 Standard Fire Orders, some of the original insights in the Task Force’s report are worth noting today.

Unexpected Fire Behavior The task force recognized that firefighters don’t always understand the basic elements of what is going on with their fire, or they fail to recognize indicators of change. Today, we call this wisdom “situational awareness.”

Line Supervision The task force discovered instances where the overhead was either busy with a minor job, or was simply not available to make a major decision when necessary. This tendency has come up repeatedly in recent years in connection to tragedy fires.

Firefighting Strategy and Tactics The task force found evidence in their analysis that control efforts were being

made without adequate margin for safety.

Scouting The group discovered instances where ground forces were overly dependent on using air resources for their eyes on the fire. This is even more of a temptation today, with aerial resources over virtually every large fire.

The report went on to state: “Many of these items appear time and again in the summaries of fire boards of review on non-tragedy fires.” That is an admission that the problems in fire safety were not even all that new in 1957!

What is clear is that even though the wildland fire organization has had decades to learn lessons and eliminate accidents, and we have arguably gotten better at accident prevention, we are not there yet. Fire was dangerous and unpredictable then, and it remains so today. What’s more, firefighting is perhaps more hazardous now than it was in the 1950s for several reasons.

- Fuel loadings in many places have several times more tonnage per acre than they had five decades ago.
- Fuel arrangements have changed with the vast spread of fire prone invasive weeds like cheatgrass and the emergence of dog-hair thickets in areas that traditionally had frequent, low-intensity fire.

- The wildland-urban interface has overlaid wildland firefighting with decision-making factors that were essentially unknown to firefighters in the 1950s.

One response to these pattern is vigilance. Safety must continue to be an overriding mindset in training, operations, aviation, and leadership. Safety has to be planted, nurtured, brought to fruition, then mentored in others. Each generation of firefighters has to learn how to do the job with the best possible combination of effectiveness, efficiency and safety.

With fire season now upon us, this report reminds us all to pay special attention to fire safety.

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Case Study Launched about Burned Area Emergency Response

Joining a fire history timeline and case studies on a variety of fire subjects, NPS Fire and Aviation Management has recently published an interactive case study highlighting Burned Area Emergency Response (BAER) to the NPS Fire and Aviation website. BAER is an important, but perhaps little known program that provides “first aid” to the land after a wildfire, preventing further damage from erosion.



The case study integrates images, narration, and text to provide a better understanding of how a severe wildfire can damage the land and the immediate response needed and provided by Burned Area Emergency Response. Rich Schwab, National Park Service National Burned Area Rehabilitation Coordinator noted “this new interactive presentation will help people learn more

about Burned Area Emergency Response and how important it is to protecting life and property from flash floods and debris flows that may occur after devastating landscape fires.”

The BAER case study can be found on the BAER section of the NPS Fire and Aviation website at http://www.nps.gov/fire/fire/fir_baer.cfm.

“While a natural recovery from fire is best, a BAER Team can help the speed of the restoration from more intense wildfires.”
- Narration from BAER presentation

Boatner Gets Leadership Award

The 2006 Paul Gleason Lead by Example award was recently presented to Tom Boatner. Boatner has taken time and effort to mentor and guide firefighters and other fire managers to be leaders during his career. Boatner has also instilled the concepts and principles of leadership throughout every level of the fire organization. Some of these examples include creating a “Leadership Reading List” while serving as the FMO in Montana and sharing this list with the BLM’s Fire Leadership Team to promote a higher level of leadership for the Bureau’s fire program. He also helped promote the “Staff Ride” programs throughout the nation. Boatner is highly respected and viewed by his staff and counterparts to be a true leader who consistently

provides professional insight, decision making ability, and overall management skills. His outstanding leadership helps improve firefighter safety and effectiveness by ensuring appropriate policy and firefighting operational standards are created and enforced. Boatner signifies the true nature of Paul Gleason’s philosophy of being a student of fire and leading by example through his unwavering ability to lead and mentor.

The Paul Gleason Lead by Example Award is presented annually by the NWCG Leadership Committee to remember Paul Gleason’s many contributions to the wildland fire community and recognize individuals or groups that exhibit the same spirit and dedication

to leadership...those who lead by example. This national recognition will acknowledge those in the wildland fire service who exemplify the wildland fire leadership values and principles.





NIFC's Women of Wildfire and the Fitness Celebration

On September 23, 2006, 121 National Interagency Fire Center/Women of Wildfire (NIFC/WOW) team members, including friends and family, donned florescent green shirts with the blazing fire emblem to again participate in the annual St. Luke's 5K Women's Fitness Celebration Run/Walk. The mission of the Celebration is to inspire healthy attitudes and increase awareness of health and fitness.

Almost 15,000 women participated in this 5K event. It is now the best attended 5K race for women in the nation. Bridgit Downing organized the team and ran the three-mile race. The NIFC/WOW team won a banner and team spirit trophy for largest increase in team members this year.

Beneficiaries from this event include charitable and non-profit organizations that improve the lives of women and children in our community including: Girl Scouts of the Silver Sage Council, Boise Parks & Recreation Pioneer Teen Center, COPS for Kids Boise Police Department, and Girls on the Run, Idaho.

Thousands of people noticed the NIFC/WOW team members wearing their vibrant shirts and smiles as they represented NIFC at the Fitness Celebration. Because of this visual impact, the *City of Trees Marathon* coordinators sought them out on-the-spot! The coordinators asked if some



Members of the 2006 NIFC/WOW team.

team members would be willing to serve as community volunteers and help marathon runners cross intersections safely on November 5, 2006 – and they responded to the call! Even the continuous rain didn't dampen *their* spirits!

Lydia Mawson designed our costume fire hats and they held up exceptionally in the rain. Jennifer Smith originally designed the WOW logo and generated logo prints that were pinned on the orange volunteer crew vests. The NIFC/WOW members volunteered at three major intersections for the full eight hours of the marathon. Volunteers were Anne Jeffery, Lydia Mawson, Scott Swendsen, Kris King, Donna Scholz, Elna Black, Howard Roose, Lisa McDevitt, Susan Weber, Myrna Tihonovich, Betty Percival, Marilyn Hankey, Linda Roose, Faye Chandler and Shannon Monch.

We received many thanks and rave reviews. One of the coordinators said, "The Women of Wildfire rocked!" A competitor praised, "I have to say that your volunteers were amazing! They didn't have to be out there in that

rain, but they chose to be there for us. Not only were they out there, but they were there with smiles on their faces... clapping and cheering us on.....I was very moved by their spirit." Crossing guard Faye Chandler made the Channel 2 news and looked great representing us in her NIFC/WOW shirt.

The Boise *City of Trees Marathon* generates thousands of dollars for two local charities, Operation Warm Heart – (for families of military personnel stationed in Iraq) and the Idaho Humane Society. Hopefully, this visible community volunteer opportunity will become an annual tradition for the NIFC/WOW. Mark your calendars - in 2007 the *City of Trees Marathon* will be in October.



Lydia Mawson (left) and Jennifer Smith (right) hold up the WOW shirt design.



Steve Botti, NPS Fire Program Planning Lead, Retires

Stephen J. Botti, Fire Program Planning Lead for the National Park Service, has retired after 36 years with the National Park Service, the last 19 of which were spent at the National Interagency Fire Center. Between Steve’s innovative mind and his spirit of collaboration, fire management in the National Park Service advanced to a new level of professionalism.

In 1971, Steve found employment at Sequoia National Park as a member of the forestry crew. While there, he was exposed to a broad range of subjects, including wildlife concerns, botany, forestry, and fire management.

After his temporary appointment in Sequoia ended, Steve followed a supervisor to Yosemite National Park. For the next 15 years, he worked for both the fire management program as well as the resource management program at Yosemite. During this time, he helped develop the prescribed fire and fuels program, as well as worked on many issues, including wilderness designation, wild river designation, resolving boundary issues, and writing fire management plans.

While at Yosemite, Steve began writing a botany field guide for the park to

replace the severely outdated existing guide. For the next twenty years, this project followed Steve until he finally completed the new guidebook, An Illustrated Flora of Yosemite National Park. Working on the guidebook also gave Steve the opportunity to conduct research on the flora of Yosemite and the relationships of flora to fire and fire management practices. In 1988, personal interest and prior work in fire management led Steve to his position at the National Interagency Fire Center (NIFC).

Paul Broyles, National Fire Operations Program Lead, came to NIFC a few months after Steve’s arrival. Since then, the organization has grown and Paul sees the growth partly as a result of Steve’s involvement. “There has been a tremendous amount of change in the NPS wildland fire management program since Steve and I came here over 19 years ago. We arrived at the program center just before the tidal changes of the Yellowstone fires, and were both the recipients of, and proponents for, a variety of NPS and interagency fire policy evolutions since that time. Steve has been uniquely responsible for the growth, both in magnitude and complexity, of the NPS fire program... from an infant program of \$4.5 million

in 1988 to a very robust and mature program of over \$100 million today. The NPS owes Steve an inordinate degree of gratitude for his relentless and successful efforts! We’ll miss him greatly!”

“When I arrived in the winter of 1988, there were only about 10 people working in the office,” says Steve. “At that time, I was responsible for an umbrella of tasks, which included all the planning and budgeting tasks, preparedness issues, the fuels program, public outreach, prevention, information and technology issues, and training. It is exciting and rewarding to see how our organization has grown over the years.”

When people at NIFC speak of Steve Botti, the first thing mentioned is his dedication and support to the personnel at the field level. Many colleagues speak at length of Steve’s tireless effort in promoting fire management during his frequent trips to Washington, D.C.

Steve spoke glowingly about his colleagues at NIFC for the last 19 years.

“I am proud to have worked with a group of dedicated, intelligent, and capable people,” he says. “You would have to call it ‘synergy’ the way people would come together and work collectively and collaboratively to complete projects. It was a thrill to be a part of that in my career.”

Mike Wallace, NPS Fire Director at NIFC, complimented Steve’s performance over the years: “Steve’s intellectual knowledge and experience have been instrumental to the success of the NPS Wildland Fire Program. His leadership in the vast array of programs has shaped the landscape of fire management for the National Park Service and the interagency community.”



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Remembering Those We Have Lost

Losing someone hurts. Everyone experiences this differently, whether losing a friend, colleague, parent, spouse, or child. Loss of life on a wildland fire also brings the bitter irony of our shared failure as a community to meet our own highest priority -- firefighter safety.

When we lose those we love, we find many ways to comfort each other, remember the good, learn from the lessons, and renew our commitment to life. The Wildland Firefighters Monument here at NIFC is one of those ways.

From its inception, the park-like Monument has evolved over time to reflect the heartfelt expressions of the fire community and families honoring the memory of firefighters. The vegetation has grown, bringing some shade. A new patio has been built with inscribed bricks purchased by supporters. A growing number of granite markers line the ribbon-shaped walkway. Visitors have begun leaving behind personal mementos on the stones.

The Monument serves as a place of respite for NIFC employees. Twenty-eight people pitched in on May 17 for an annual Clean-Up Day to pull weeds, trim trees, refurbish benches, and install new markers. "It was a huge success," said Dave Mueller, BLM fuels management specialist and monument task group chair. "The families and friends of those who are remembered at the monument will certainly appreciate how well it looks out there." An annual Family Weekend which followed on May 19 and 20 included Native American healing ritual, an honor guard, the release of doves and balloons, and "talking circles" to share memories of those whose presence is missed.

As part of its care for the Monument, the NIFC Governing Board appointed an interagency task group of employees in 2005 to guide long-term management of the site. A year-round maintenance plan is now used to manage the grounds and various amenities to represent a wildland environment. Special recognition will now be given for those who have died in the line of duty with a purple ribbon insignia on commemorative markers.





Winners Announced in 2006 NPS Fire Photo Contest

There was a tie for both first and second place in the 2006 NPS Fire Photo Contest. The two winning first place entries came from Dinosaur National Monument (NM) in Colorado and New River Gorge National River (NR) in West Virginia. The Dinosaur NM photo, taken by seasonal river ranger Doug Ross, featured rafters on the Green River floating past the Wild Mountain Wildland Fire Use. It was submitted to the contest by fire management officer Mark Rosenthal. Gary Hartley, chief ranger at New River Gorge National River, submitted the other first place entry, which features a prescribed fire at New River Gorge's Sandstone Visitor Center in March 2006.

The second place entry was also a tie between two photographs. Ecologist Gretchen Baker submitted one of the two 2nd place photos, featuring interesting snags from the Border Fire at Great Basin National Park in Nevada. Tom Farrell, chief of interpretation at Wind Cave National Park in South Dakota, was the photographer of the other second place entry. The Wind Cave photo featured firefighter Bill Wartenbee from Custer State Park using a driptorch during the Tower Burn on October 25, 2005.

Third place went to Dave Crary of Cape Cod National Seashore in Massachusetts. His photo of 2006 prescribed burn research plots featured two firefighters using driptorches to light strips in a wooded area.

The National Park Service Fire Photo Contest began in 2002 with the need for a cover photo for the Fire Management Program Center Annual Fire Report. Since then, the contest has become a way to highlight fire and fire management activities in the national parks. From 32 qualified entries the first year, the contest has grown each year and in 2006 had 114 qualified entries. Entries are screened to assure that proper safety protocols are portrayed, including correct use of personal protective equipment (PPE) in all photos of firefighters on the fireline. The photos are used on the NPS Fire and Aviation website as well as in various reports and publications.

Entries are solicited each January for the prior fiscal year, and winners are typically announced in March. Anyone may enter the contest; if an entry comes from a private citizen, the National Park Service requests permission for use of the image. A small committee of NPS staff from the Fire Management Program Center at the National Interagency Fire Center in Boise, Idaho selects finalists from among all the entries and the full staff from the Fire Management Program Center votes for the winner. This is the first year that there has been a tie for both first and second place.

Congratulations to all the winners of the 2006 NPS Fire Photo Contest. We look forward to seeing the entries for the 2007 contest – look for the announcement in early 2008.



Look for the contest entries for 2006 as well as previous years at http://www.nps.gov/fire/public/pub_photogalleries.cfm



Inciweb Growing in Popularity

With 500 active users working 253 incidents in 2006, the website Inciweb.org is growing in popularity. The site was endorsed by the National Fire and Aviation Executive Board (NFAEB) as showing promise for federal, state and local users. New users just this year include the National Forests of Florida, the Georgia Forestry Commission and Okefenokee National Wildlife Refuge.

Inciweb.org is a user friendly, one stop location for centralized incident information. There are database 'placeholders' all the way down to the county and volunteer fire department level to post information on wildland fires, prescribed fires, wildland fire use, Burned Area Emergency Rehabilitation (BAER) activities and all-hazard incidents based on information from the Incident Status Summary (the 209).

Steve Botti, NPS Fire Program Planning Lead, Retires

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Throughout Steve's career, he has shown a true selfless attitude by improving both the fire management and resource management programs in the National Park Service. His innovative mind, character, and dedication to advancing fire management within that National Park Service and the interagency community is immeasurable. Steve is truly one of the best managers and leaders that fire management has to offer.

The final honor bestowed on Steve's career came during his recent retirement party. Steve was granted the highest honor of the Department of the Interior, the Distinguished Service Award. The award, supported not only by fire management but also by representatives from resource management and research, was given to him in recognition of

The screenshot shows the InciWeb Incident Information System interface. At the top, there are dropdown menus for 'Select an Incident' (set to 'Incident') and 'Select a state' (set to 'state'). Below this is the 'InciWeb Incident Information System' logo and a breadcrumb trail: 'You are here: National > Florida'. The main heading is 'Florida Incidents'. Below the heading are navigation tabs for 'Incidents', 'Announcements', 'News', 'Pictures', and 'Maps'. A table lists incidents with columns for 'Incident', 'Unit', 'Contained', 'Acres', and 'Updated'. Two incidents are visible: 'Big Cypress National Preserve Wildland Fire' and 'Florida National Forests in Florida Wildland Fire'. To the right of the table is a 'DATA FILTER' section with options for 'All Size', 'Max Age', and 'Max Containment'. Below the filter is a 'FILTERED STATISTICS' section showing '2 Incidents', '2 Active Incidents', '0 Contained Incidents', and '142,515 Acres'. There is also a 'NEWS RELEASES' section with a link to 'Florida Big Cypress Fire Fact Sheet'. At the bottom of the interface are 'AVAILABLE FEEDS' (Incident Feed, News Feed, Google Earth Feed) and 'SHARE THIS' options (Digg It, Del.icio.us, StumbleUpon). The footer contains navigation links like 'Links', 'Terminology', 'About This Site', 'Help', 'Feeds', 'Disclaimer', 'Privacy Act', and 'Log In', along with various agency logos and the text 'version 2.3.1 loaded in 2.19347 seconds'.

his high level of commitment and professionalism and outstanding leadership of the fire management program of the National Park Service.

Now having retired, Steve plans to move into a cabin in rural Idaho and become an active member of the surrounding community. He hopes to work with federal, state, and local agencies on issues that are pertinent to the Sawtooth National Recreation Area. Steve and his wife also plan to do extensive traveling

in their free time as well as write several new books, most likely on topics relating to Yosemite and Sequoia National Park. Lastly, Steve plans to remain a part of the community of the National Park Service by conducting seminars on the flora of Yosemite National Park in the summers and possibly working on some special fire management projects.

Steve, from all of your colleagues, the pleasure was ours to work with you. We wish you the best in retirement.