



# Burning Issues

Fall 2008

## FALL BARBEQUE A HIT AT NIFC

On September 24, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service employees hosted the annual National Interagency Fire Center fall barbeque. NIFC employees feasted on a menu including burgers, hot dogs, potato salad, and more.

Typically, around 125 people attend the event which is a fundraiser for the NIFC Employees Association. This year nearly 200 employees took part in the festivities. Dale Bitner, event incident commander, made three emergency trips to the store for more food as the line remained steady around the Jack Wilson Building.



*NIFC employees enjoy lunch prepared by the Fish and Wildlife Service and provided by the Employee's Association at the annual fall BBQ.*

## BE A TWO-MINUTE HERO WITH COMBINED FEDERAL CAMPAIGN!

The collective agencies at NIFC are pleased to announce the 2008 Combined Federal Campaign, with activities to be held between October 15 and November 14. Last year's campaign raised more than a half a million dollars in southwestern Idaho, and the campaign executives at NIFC are hopeful to continue that upward trend in spite of recent economic downturns.

"As federal employees, we are so lucky to have job stability and reliable income, and that's something a lot of our neighbors and friends don't have," says Casey O'Connell, the campaign leader for the Bureau of Land Management at NIFC. "That stability gives us a chance to really dig in and provide help and support to organizations that need us more than ever."

This year's campaign theme is Two-Minute Hero. When federal employees take just two minutes to fill out a pledge

form, they are heroes throughout the year as the money they contribute helps change lives for the better.

The campaign at NIFC will kick off with the Second Annual Fire Camp Pancake Feed held on the lawn across from the warehouse on Wednesday, October 15. "We'll be providing pancakes, eggs, sausage, coffee and juice again, and we'll have yurts set up on the lawn with heaters inside so we won't be deterred by bad weather," assures O'Connell.

Other events during the campaign season will include a pizza luncheon hosted by the National Weather Service and a chili cook-off hosted by the Forest Service.

The campaign coordinators hope to see everyone come to at least one event. "It's always fun to get together with other folks on the base, and we'll be providing assistance in filling out pledge cards," O'Connell said. They will also have information available about select local non-profit organizations to help employees at NIFC get to know some of the groups who do such great work in our community.

Campaign Coordinators:

Dawn Fishler, National Weather Service, (208) 334-9860  
Cindy Knickerbocker, U.S. Forest Service, 387-5609  
Chris Cimbali, Fish & Wildlife Service, 387-5595  
Stephanie Cleary, National Park Service, 387-5884  
Teresa Wesley, Bureau of Indian Affairs, 387-5575  
Casey O'Connell, Bureau of Land Management, 387-5994



## THE FRIENDLY FACE OF NIFC

Sorry, fire directors, it's not you.

Nor is it the smokejumpers, the people who work at NICC, the security guards, or whoever happens to be interviewed on the local news that night.

The real face of NIFC sits each morning at the reception desk in the Jack Wilson Building and tosses cheerful greetings after cheerful greeting to everyone who comes within eyeshot and earshot, whether they've been coming to work here for twenty years or two days.

It's a job that Betty Percival has been doing for 11 years, and if she gets her way, will be doing for a long time to come.

Perched at the main entrance to the Wilson Building, she greets new employees, old employees, contractors, family members, tourists and visitors right up to the president's cabinet level with the same friendly enthusiasm. Betty Percival may be the most recognizable person – and certainly one of the most likeable -- at NIFC.

"I love my job here," Betty says. "Don't tell my boss, but I'd probably do this for free."

Although she never has made a trip to the fireline, flames are part of who she is.

"I married a smokejumper and my dad was a structural firefighter. It's in my blood," Betty says.

Her father fought fire in Enumclaw, Washington, a town about midway between Seattle and Tacoma, at the base of Mt. Rainier. It's the place where Betty was raised.

"When I was in high school, I never thought I'd get out of there," she says. "After graduation, Dad got a job at Elmendorf Air Force Base, we moved to Alaska, and I married a smokejumper."

She's been traveling ever since.

"Let's see. We've lived in Fairbanks, three times in Boise, Washington, D.C., and Reno. All because of BLM fire. We moved to Port Angeles, Washington, after Roy (her husband) retired, but came back to Boise after one short year."

After Roy gave up the parachute, he climbed through the ranks of BLM fire management, retiring as the associate director of fire for BLM. Jack Wilson was the director at the time.



If you know Betty at all, you recognize her great love of sunshine. Most summer days, she can be found basking in the morning sunlight behind the receptionist's desk, visor shading her face. She credits growing up in rainy Western Washington and spending 13 years in Alaska as the reason why she yearns for long, hot days.

"If it never rained or snowed again, I'd be happy, other than the place would dry up and blow away," she says.

Summer is her favorite time of the year for another reason.

"I live for fire season. It's the adrenaline rush, the emergency part of what we do, the vitality of this place," she says. And she recognizes that she has the soft end of the deal. "I don't have to sleep in a bag for two weeks or get dirty on the lines or in fire camp."

Her sunny disposition comes mostly from her mother, someone who, "No matter what happened, always had a smile on her face."

Her friendliness and ability to remember a name means that no one is a stranger for long, once they've been greeted and signed the visitors' log.

What keeps her coming back?

"Oh my gosh. We have some awesome people here and the diversity of my job. Every day is different and it's always fun. The people here are nice, and I can help solve problems. That kind of service is right up my alley. I like helping people."

As someone walks by the desk, she smiles and greets them and engages in friendly banter. It's a typical exchange for Betty, one that likely happens several dozen times on most days. The friendly face of NIFC is in good form.

"I never have had a problem getting along with people," she says.

## U.S. FWS SERVICE EMPLOYEES AFFECTED BY THE OREGON TRAIL FIRE

On August 25 when the human-caused Oregon Trail Fire blew through a southeast Boise community, residents of the area found themselves asking their neighbors from the wildland fire community for direction. U.S. Fish and Wildlife employees living in a subdivision that was directly threatened by the fire as it flanked toward their homes, jumped in to help their neighbors and to assist with the fire suppression efforts.

FWS Fire Director Brian McManus, who lives in the Homestead Rim subdivision, had just settled in for the evening with his family when the president of the homeowners association knocked on his door alerting him of the fire. McManus went to size up the situation, returned home to put on his nomex, and returned to the edge of the subdivision that the fire would reach first.

“I explained to my neighbors what they could do to prepare themselves for the fire to reach us,” said McManus. “I gave them some simple, quick items to do so they did not feel so helpless.”

Chad and Sarah Fisher also live in Homestead Rim. Sarah, administrative officer for the FWS Fire Branch, was on her way home from a fire assignment in northern California when the fire started. Road closures kept her from getting to her home until the situation had calmed down. Chad, FWS National Training Specialist, was at home with their son.

“I got a message on my cell phone from Chad saying ‘Can’t talk now. Fighting fire at the house. Beckett is with

Michael. We’re good at the house. Gotta go.’ which summed up the situation for me,” said Sarah. “But, I really just wanted to get home.”

Chad, whose career includes stints on engines, in helitack, and as a smokejumper noted that the experience will change his perspective next time he is involved in a wildland urban interface situation during a fire assignment. “I will have a lot more empathy and compassion for people whose homes are in the path of a fire,” he said. “Emotions run high and people have to make last minute critical decisions about what is most important to them.”

Chad and Brian’s suppression work and presence on the fireline aided in the eventual containment of the flanking fire which came very close to the edge of their subdivision. Residents of Homestead Rim watched homes above them smolder well into the night.

“One of our biggest tasks was to help calm our neighbors in an intense, highly emotional situation,” said McManus.

With Boise’s heightened community awareness and curiosity about how wildland fire burns and what wildland fire professionals do, McManus and his fire outreach staff have answered requests and conducted community presentations about fire management. One of these presentations was held at the Homestead Rim subdivision one week after the fire burned.

Chad participated in a panel discussion at the Idaho Wildland Fire Conference in Boise in October to study the Oregon Trail Fire. Other panel members include Boise’s Mayor Dave Bieter and Boise City Fire Department Deputy Chief Dave Hanneman.



*FWS Fire Director Brian McManus talks about fire management to a community group at the Garden City Library.*

## WOW BRAVED THE WEATHER FOR THE FITNESS CELEBRATION

The rain was coming down, it was cold, and in no time, the women awaiting the start of the St. Luke's Women's Fitness Celebration were drenched. Despite these conditions, 70 Women of Wildfire (WOW) team members took part in the event on September 20, 2008.



"I want to thank each and every WOW team member for their participation this year," Bridgit Downing said. "I'm so proud to be the team leader for such a fine group of friends, co-workers, and wonderful women!" Downing extended a special thank you to Betty Percival and Lydia Mawson for all their help and support.

For the fourth year in a row, the WOW team received a Team Flag for having the most participants from a government agency. The 2008 flag is now on display beside the other three flags at the receptionist desk in the Jack Wilson building.

Hoping to uphold the four-year tradition, Downing believes it's not too early to start thinking about the race next year that will be held on September 26, 2009. "It would be fantastic if we could have 150 team members next year! If we start recruiting now, we could really reach that goal," Downing said. "Talk it up!"

## U.S., AUSTRALIA EXCHANGE FIRE MANAGERS

As with many families at this time of the year, Bodie Shaw's family is preparing for a new school year. However, this school year will be much different for the Shaw children. They will be starting school in Australia, some 8,000 miles from their home near Boise.

Shaw, Deputy Director of the Bureau of Indian Affairs Branch of Wildland Fire Management, is embarking on a six month exchange program with the Australian state of Victoria. Alan Goodwin, Deputy Chief Officer of Victoria's Department of Sustainability and Environment, will be visiting the United States.

The purpose of the exchange program is to further international wildland fire management agreements between the United States, Australia and New Zealand. More than 50 years of exchange study tours have shown that the three countries share similar firefighting skills, abilities and knowledge. The current exchange will build on this knowledge to prepare for future international cooperation.

The Shaw and Goodwin families will live in each other's homes during the exchange. Shaw will be based from the Department of Sustainability and Environment office in Bendigo, Victoria, located about 90 miles northwest of Melbourne. Goodwin will work from the National Interagency Fire Center in Boise.

"My primary goal is to develop cooperative agreements with all Australian states and territories and New Zealand,"

said Shaw. "Presently the United States has an agreement only with Victoria. Having agreements in place with all states and New Zealand would greatly expedite the exchange of firefighters during national emergencies."

During his time in the United States, Goodwin will be studying a national coordination center model, similar to the U.S.'s National Interagency Fire Center. The Australian states share firefighters and equipment but there is no central point of coordination when firefighters are mobilized between states. In addition, Goodwin will explore ways to recognize the training and prior experience of each state's firefighters.

According to Shaw, working with the Australians and New Zealanders makes sense because they are trained to about the same standards as U.S. firefighters and use a similar incident command system. Also, the Australian fire season is opposite the U.S.'s, so the countries can assist each other during their off season. These exchanges may also provide an opportunity to work on other projects of mutual interest such as prescribed fire, equipment development, fuels and training.

Since 1951, a number of wildland fire study tours have been held between the United States, Australia and New Zealand. In recent years, the tours found a strong similarity between training, equipment and firefighting techniques, which has developed into an exchange of wildland firefighters. On five occasions (2000, 2002, 2003, 2006, 2008), Australian and New Zealander fire managers assisted with wildfire suppression in the western U.S. The U.S. sent fire managers to the Australian state of Victoria in 2003 and 2007.



## THE GREAT BASIN TRAINING UNIT LAUNCHES FIELD 420

It didn't feel like training—but it was. The wind was howling, and a few miles away, a massive wildfire was cranking, thrusting a tremendous smoke column into the sky. Crews had been pulled off the lines and nature was in the driver's seat. Owing to the perilous conditions, the only resource that could safely work the fire was the incident's single heavy helicopter. In the afternoon planning meeting, the Planning Section Chief looked over the faces of the command and general staff. "Let's figure out a plan for tomorrow, folks," he said calmly. "We're back to square one." In the back of the yurt, a small group of students and cadre listened attentively. This was no simulation; it was the real thing.

The cadre and students were invited guests at the incident command post, which had been set up in a cow pasture in northeastern Nevada. They were actually at a training session entitled Field S-420. This training course is an innovative presentation of S-420, Command and General Staff. In essence, Field S-420 places a cadre and a group of students on the ground at an actual incident. The incident management team (IMT) and the incident itself serve as a learning laboratory.

Field S-420 was pioneered in the Northwest geographic area in 2002 when the geographic area training representative, Renee Beams, conceived the idea as a practical and effective way to deliver critical training and address the backlog of employees who needed the course to advance their ICS qualifications. Beams saw offering S-420 in a field setting as a workable alternative to the traditional, scenario-driven S-420 course that had always been held in a classroom setting. Since then, Field S-420 has been conducted a number of times in the Northwest. This year marked the first time the course has been conducted in the Great Basin and Northern Rockies.



*NIFC alum Merrill Saleen brought a tremendous amount of expertise to the courses.*

In 2007, Madonna Lengerich, an instructional specialist at the Great Basin Training Unit at NIFC, caught the vision for holding S-420 in the field. She attended a session of Field S-420 in the Northwest as an observer/student, and set about adapting Field S-420 for the Great Basin. This wasn't as easy as it sounds. Lengerich had to create a set of instructional materials, adapt the structure of the course, recruit instructors and position coaches, and start talking incident management teams into playing the role of a gracious host.

It was also imperative that Field S-420 meet the NWCWG objectives for the course. The course focuses on training learners in teamwork, active listening, decision-making and planning. These topics are presented in a group setting during the course, and learners integrate classroom material with their observations of an IMT in action. Learners gain skills in identifying issues and solutions—especially as they see a functioning IMT deal with the challenges of a real fire.

The 2008 fire season was the introductory year of the Great Basin's Field S-420 program, and it was a resounding

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*Not your typical fire training classroom, but the food was good.*

success. As the course coordinator, Lengerich was able to put on two sessions of the class. She was joined by NIFC retiree and former Type 2 incident commander Merrill Saleen as the lead/team building instructor and one coach each for safety, operations, and information. Former Type 1 incident commander and retired Boise National Forest fire management officer (FMO) Steve Raddatz, and Greg Burch, zone FMO for the Caribou-Targhee NF came on board as the Operations Section Chief coaches. Former Wyoming State FMO Steve Eckert and Rick Belger, Idaho Falls BLM FMO, joined the cadre as the Safety Officer coaches. Two PIO2s, Robbie McAboy and Barbara Bassler, coached the information officer students. In all, 20 Type 2 command and general staff trainees in the Great Basin and Rocky Mountain geographic areas were able to take the course.

According to Lengerich, the most rewarding aspect of successfully launching Field S-420 has been helping reduce the backlog of trainees needing the course. “We only had three applicants from the Great Basin who couldn’t take the training assignment this summer,” she said. “The few extra spaces we had enabled us to help out our sister geographic area, the Rocky Mountain, by taking four of their trainees through the course. We took a huge step forward in meeting the Great Basin’s Type 2 IMT needs for next year.”

By all accounts, this modality of training is being well-received. “The two teams that hosted our sessions this summer both felt very good about the experience,” Lengerich added. The students are very enthusiastic. Virtually all students noted on their evaluations that taking Command and General Staff alongside a real incident

management team assigned to a real fire made the training more relevant, more challenging, and a better use of their time.

“We have to be more creative in development and delivery of adult education [in the wildland fire community],” Lengerich said. “Fire is hands-on. It’s always better to see, touch, feel and taste it in the field than to ‘powerpoint’ it to death and try to simulate a complex fire in the classroom.”

If you are a trainee with an initiated task book for a Type 2 command and general staff position, the Great Basin Training Unit will sponsor Field S-420 again next fire season. Contact Madonna Lengerich at extension 5306 for more information. Nominations are due April 1, 2009. Information is also on-line at [nationalfiretraining.net/gb/](http://nationalfiretraining.net/gb/).

Who knows? You might find yourself in a cow pasture a couple miles away from a cranking fire.



Former Boise smokejumper Lee Rickard (right) and fellow Operations Section Chief trainee Bill Panagopoulos of the Ely District work up an ICS 215.

## NIFC PARTICIPATES IN UNIQUE LOCAL FIRE EDUCATION EFFORT

This fall, National Interagency Fire Center representatives to the Treasure Valley Fire Prevention and Safety Cooperative are performing in fire prevention skits throughout the Treasure Valley and surrounding area. NIFC’s Jennifer Smith of the BLM’s External Affairs shop and Kelly Cardoza with the USFWS Fire Management Branch both play roles in the skit which includes messages about wildland and home fire safety and prevention.

The Co-op members dress up as clowns or don a puppet to present the skit creating a fun method for reaching children. Cardoza’s alter ego is a clown named Coco who wears nomex and always gets a good lesson in fire safety and prevention.

Smith operates the sound system keeping the wireless microphones cued up and bring music and sound effects into the show for added entertainment. “Music really enhances the involvement from the kids,” said Smith. “When the clowns and puppets start to dance the kids join and it is very entertaining.”

NIFC has been involved in the fire prevention cooperative for six years partnering with local federal agencies such as the Boise District BLM and Boise National Forest as well as Idaho Department of Lands, the State Fire Marshal’s Office and the city fire departments of Boise, Meridian, Nampa, and Caldwell.



## NATIONAL EMPLOYEES ASSOCIATION'S UPCOMING EVENTS

With a new staff and new goals, the NIFC Employees Association (NEA) is making some changes in how the committee operates. President Dawn Graham wants to keep most of the same traditions of NEA going, revitalize the events and encourage more interagency participation. "I would like to see more emphasis put on FUN!" Graham said.

Although some minor changes were made, the NEA wants to be sure everyone knows about a few new things. The NEA now delegates agencies to host events. For example, the Forest Service is taking on the Halloween party this year and the BIA will be hosting the Food Drive in November. "This takes pressure off of NEA officers and provides for interagency involvement and participation," Graham said. The officers also hope to spread event locations throughout the NIFC base. NEA officers believe this will promote more participation from folks that primarily work in buildings other than the Jack Wilson.

In the months to come, be on the lookout for a new product from NEA. "We're creating an information bookmark that

will serve as a quick reference for NEA events and projects," says Chris Graves, co-president of NEA. It will be designed as a half sheet of paper with a listing of yearly activities and laminated for longevity. NEA is also developing a web site for information sharing, pictures, etc. And coming up in December, the Christmas Party will be featuring the band "Loose Change" this year. This group has solid reviews and should prove to be a big hit at the annual party.

### Upcoming NEA Events

Date	Event	Sponsoring Agency
October 31	Halloween Party	USFS
November	Food Drive	BIA
December 6	Kids Christmas Party	NPS
December 8	Book Sale / Bazaar	BLM
December 13	Adult Christmas Party	All agencies
December (all)	"Angel Tree" Project	Officers of NEA

## OLD IT EQUIPMENT CAN HAVE A CLASSY FUTURE

Here is a quick quiz. In 2004, how much "e-waste" did the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency estimate was being dumped into landfills annually?

- 300,000 tons
- 1 million tons
- Over 3 million tons

E-waste, typically old computers, monitors and cell phones, is a huge problem. The EPA estimated that more than 3.2 million *tons* of 'e-waste' was being pitched into landfills across the country. The National Safety Council estimated that 63 million computers became obsolete just in 2005.

Dennis Watkins, Property Management Specialist for the BLM at NIFC, is doing something about that. Watkins manages acquisition, receipt, storage, appropriate use, and disposal of property—mainly pieces of equipment. All government property items are accountable and trackable, but different levels of tracking are used for different value thresholds of property.

Not many of us think of *disposal* of property as an important part of our mission, but Watkins does, particularly in the disposal of IT equipment. "It's extremely rare that another government agency will want a used piece of equipment, because they're typically working on about the same replacement cycle. Consequently, disposing of used or outdated IT equipment can be a real problem."

But, as they say, there are options. Since the mid 1990s, Watkins has been an active agent for getting used BLM computer equipment into places where it is still needed—schools.

Government agencies have the authority to donate a wide spectrum of used IT equipment to educational institutions meeting certain criteria, and NIFC takes advantage of that. Over the past three years, NIFC has donated over 1,800 pieces of used IT equipment to Idaho and Oregon schools. The original acquisition cost of this equipment was close to \$2 million.

When asked how he finds school districts that need used computer equipment, Watkins has a ready answer. "Shoe leather and phone work," he replied. "We tend to look for smaller school districts, because they usually have more needs than the larger ones, but finding recipients takes a lot of phone calls and networking."

"NIFC is very supportive of this program," Watkins said. "The average piece of equipment we are donating to schools is only four to five years old. For a school district operating on a limited budget, a four- to five-year old laptop is a significant resource."

Recently, Watkins arranged a donation to the Hagerman School District in south-central Idaho. "Hagerman High School is completely upgrading their computer lab with donated BLM computer equipment," he said. Officials at the school were tremendously appreciative of the donated equipment, Watkins reported. "We had everybody from the principal to the school secretary out there unloading the pieces of equipment."

"Smaller school districts don't have the resources that the larger ones have, and you can see in the administrators' faces that they really appreciate what we are able to give them."

## THE '88 FIRES: YELLOWSTONE AND BEYOND CONFERENCE

The International Association of Wildland Fire, IAWF, held a conference September 22-25 in Jackson Hole, Wyoming commemorating the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the 1988 fires in Yellowstone National Park and the northern Rocky Mountains. The conference focused on the past, present, and future of our approach to and understanding of wildland fire and fire management.

Approximately 500 people attended the conference, including government employees and retirees, educators, scientists, media representatives, and military personnel, representing the United States, Australia, Canada, Mexico, Portugal, and various other countries. The three day conference included more than 100 presentations and 85 posters; among the presentation themes were “Fire Behavior, Weather and Fuels,” “Wildland Fire, the Media and Public Perception,” “Park Planning and Fire,” “Wildlife and Fire,” “Fire Response and Management,” “Long-term Fire Effects and Fire Regimes,” “Lessons Learned from the Yellowstone Fires of 1988,” “International Perspectives,” and “Greater Yellowstone 2028 – The Next 20 Years.”

Representatives from across the globe presented 20-minute as well as plenary

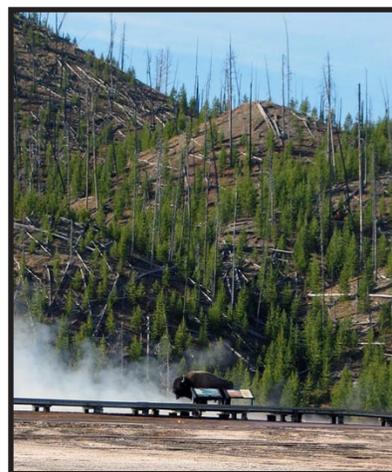
sessions. Several NIFC employees presented on the following topics:

- Rick Ochoa, BLM: “Synoptic Weather Patterns & Conditions During the 1988 Fire Season in the GYA”
- Dick Bahr, NPS: “The Park Service perspective on the 1988 Fire Policy Review”
- Tom Nichols, NPS: “National Park Service Fire Planning in the Future”
- Roberta D’Amico, NPS: “Lessons Learned from the Yellowstone Fires of 1988”
- Tom Zimmerman, USFS: “Management Needs and Challenges Associated with Developing the Future Fire Management Workforce” and “Wildland Fire Management Policy – Learning From the Past and Present and Responding to Future Challenges”
- Karen Miranda Gleason, FWS: “Myth Busting about Wildlife and Fire: Do Wildfires Kill Animals?”
- Tina Boehle, NPS: “The Future of Fire Education and Outreach in the National Park Service”

Proceedings of the conference are being compiled by Tall Timbers Research Station and will be published in 2009.



*Tom Nichols (left) and Dick Bahr (right) presenting their topics at the conference.*



*Areas impacted by the 1988 fires in the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem have recovered well over the past 20 years.*

## LEADERSHIP AND FIRE – AN INTERVIEW WITH NEAL HITCHCOCK

The following questions and answers are excerpts from an interview Charles Kazimir conducted with Neal Hitchcock, Forest Service deputy director of operations, for the Emerging Leaders course.

**Kazimir: If you were to pick the three most important character traits for an effective leader, what would those be?**

**Hitchcock:** First is to be a good communicator. It is important to convey thoughts and ideas, and be a good listener. Second would be the ability to be a good facilitator. Solutions for issues we face today usually require input from a variety of people. It’s important to get groups to focus on what they need to produce, and helping them feel alright about the trade-offs they make. And finally, decisiveness is very important. You have to make a decision on the issue and move on.

**Kazimir: What does it mean to lead?**

**Hitchcock:** A leader is the person in the group that keeps things moving forward. Sometimes leading means providing an incentive and at other times it means providing discipline. A leader knows when and how to intervene to keep things moving toward the goal.

**Kazimir: Are leaders born or made and please explain?**

**Hitchcock:** It’s more of a learned function than anything else. There are opportunities throughout your life to pick up leadership traits. Many of us learned about leadership from our parents, who provided examples and gave us opportunities to lead. Leadership doesn’t happen overnight, it is an ongoing process.

**Kazimir: How do you go about initiating a new idea in order to put it into practice?**

**Hitchcock:** It’s important to articulate the concept. Some leaders do this independently; others use an interactive process with trusted colleagues to gain clarity and support. Then, you must find the resources you need. Getting the right people together and having the money to reach the goal are important. Next, a leader must communicate with everyone involved throughout the project. And finally, you must see the concept through, monitor it, and support the finished product.

**Kazimir: Is there anything else you would like to share about leadership?**

**Hitchcock:** Seek out opportunities, recognize when you are in the right place at the right time, and exposure to good leaders, and listen intently.

## WOUNDED WARRIORS GET A TASTE OF DISPATCH AT THE NATIONAL LEVEL

Nothing can be more frustrating for a ground-pounding firefighter than gearing up for another season of chasing smoke across the country, pushing their physical limits and regrouping with old fire buddies, than to be stricken with a season ending injury right out of the gates. Boise Interagency Hotshot crew member, Dereck Bohan and Boise smokejumper Jeff “Tex” Hughes can tell you what it’s like. Bohan was off duty in mid-July when he crashed his motorcycle, breaking his collarbone and receiving a concussion. Hughes broke his femur while landing on a small fire in Colorado in late June. Their injuries took both men out of the line for the rest of the 2008 fire season.

Bohan worried about letting his crew down and felt “really bummed” after realizing his field fire season was over. Fire season is when Bohan and Hughes make a large portion of their yearly salary, so naturally both homeowners worried about how they were going to pay their mortgages this winter.

During the western fire season, June through August, the National Interagency Coordination Center (NICC) regularly brings in detailers for two week intervals to help with the large amounts of resource orders processed through the center. Both Bohan and Hughes had the opportunity presented to work at the NICC during their recovery. It was a win-win situation for the NICC and the firefighters. Bohan and Hughes learned the ins and outs of the Resource Ordering and Status System, commonly called “ROSS” in the logistics and dispatch world. They dabbled in crew movement and incident management team rotations. Updating Wildcad, tracking and statusing became part of their daily routine.

“I gained a respect for how resources are ordered and allocated,” Hughes said when asked about his biggest eye-opening experience at the NICC. Hughes noted his greatest challenge was seeing how hard it was to balance available and needed resources. Bohan said that he now has a much better understanding of the dispatch process as a whole and how, why, and where decisions are made for resources.

Having a couple of good workers come into NICC, learn the system, and not have to leave after two weeks benefited the office. Don Sutliff, overhead and crews desk lead, was a little worried when he learned two firefighters with virtually no dispatch experience would be working for him. But his fears were put to rest after

the two received some training. “The experience was very rewarding because they both fit in and caught on to dispatching duties quickly,” Sutliff said. He added they were “team players” and were able to do the job with little to no supervision after being trained. Having Bohan and Hughes at NICC this summer cut down the number of detailers NICC ordered for the overhead section, which led to less time and money spent on mobilizing and training newcomers, another bonus for the NICC.

As with many unexpected happenings in life, the clouds that lingered over these two after their unfortunate accidents did have silver linings. Although they haven’t been working as many hours as they would have if they were healthy and on their respective crews, NICC provided them with a steady job with some opportunity to work extra hours. Bohan now sums up his fire season by saying it was “a good experience came out of a bad situation.” Similarly, Hughes said it was a different season, but it worked out in ways he would have never expected.

As situations warrant, the NICC has been open to assisting other programs when injuries prevent firefighters from returning to their primary jobs. The NICC staff was happy to have good help and hopes that the two frontline firefighters gained an appreciation for how they, as on-the-ground resources, are utilized from the national level.

### 2008 Facts and Tidbits

- The Glass fire, which burned nearly 220,000 acres in Texas, was the largest fire during the season.
- A significant lightning storm hit northern California on June 22 and ignited nearly 1,200 fires in five days. From June 22 through July 23, 2,093 fires started and burned 1,009,772.
- The national preparedness level rose to PL-5 on July 1 and remained there for 22 days.
- At its peak, more than 21,000 firefighters and support personnel from around the country assisted with suppression efforts in California.
- NIMO teams, incident management teams and firefighters supported relief efforts in the aftermath of Hurricanes Ike and Gustav in September.
- The number of fires and acres reported in California and the Southern Area this year was significantly above the 10-year averages (see table below).

	2008 Fires	Percent of 10-year average	2008 Acres	Percent of 10-year average
N. California	3,796	130	850,579	880
S. California	3,788	124	365,500	265
Southern Area	3,6925	129	2,038,493	240

