



Burning Issues

Summer 2014

The interagency wildland fire community recently joined together in honoring all wildland firefighters who have lost their lives in the line of duty and recognizing the dedicated men and women who put their lives on the line daily to protect communities, watersheds, and wildlife.

2014 marked the 20-year anniversary of the South Canyon Fire (Storm King) accident, that occurred on July 6, 1994, and the one-year anniversary of the Yarnell Hill Fire accident, that occurred on June 30, 2013. Although these accidents were separated by 19 years, they are bound together by several tragic similarities. Both accidents were burnovers; resulted in multiple fatalities of highly trained, skilled, and experienced wildland firefighters; and both occurred during wildfire seasons in which 34 wildland firefighters lost their lives in the line of duty (including 19 at Yarnell Hill and 14 at South Canyon).

Employees at NIFC started the week with an overview of The 6 Minutes for Safety topic for the day and the viewing of the WFSTAR's 1994 South Canyon Fire on Storm King Mountain (2014) video, created by Eric Hipke, a South Canyon Fire survivor.



On July 2, people were asked to Take 5 @2. This is a new effort that stems from the annual fire refresher modules (WFSTAR) built by NIFC.

Recently, the WFSTAR module-builders took a deeper look into statistics of historical burnover fires. Some surprising trends came out of this analysis. One trend was the timeframe of fire blowups and burnovers. Of twenty fatal burnover fires, fifteen of them occurred within the timeframe of 2 p.m. and 4:30 p.m. This probably doesn't surprise experienced firefighters much, as this timeframe is during the hottest, driest part



of the day...when fires can blow up quicker and faster. Taking five minutes at 2:00 p.m. as a tactical pause, firefighters can remember that it is the beginning of the most dangerous part of the day for fighting fires, and reflect upon those that have lost their lives due to burnovers.

The "Week to Remember, Reflect and Learn" offered an opportunity for all of us to not only demonstrate our sincere appreciation for wildland firefighters and the sacrifices they make, but also to renew our commitment to enhancing the safety of the men and women dedicated to protecting lives, property, and natural and cultural resources throughout the country.



Photo by Wade Ward/Prescott Firefighter

SMOKEJUMPERS CONSTRUCT TRAIL TO HONOR FELLOW ‘JUMPER’

About 50 smokejumpers — from Idaho’s Boise and McCall smokejumper bases — turned out on May 16 to build a one-mile segment of trail in the Boise foothills in honor of Mark Urban, a veteran Bureau of Land Management smokejumper who died last year on a jump near Prairie, Idaho, northeast of Boise.

“We thought this would be a great way to honor Mark’s memory,” said Jim Raudenbush, base manager for the BLM’s Great Basin Smokejumper base in Boise, where Urban worked. “Mark loved the outdoor lifestyle, especially mountain biking and hiking. This trail will exist as a permanent tribute to him.”

The new trail, dubbed the Urban Connection Trail, links two other trails in the Ridge to Rivers trail system. The smokejumpers rerouted some existing trails, constructed several long switchbacks, and installed some erosion control features. The new trail has sweeping views of the verdant Boise River and the tree-filled east side of Boise.

“The effort was great,” said David Gordon, Ridge to Rivers division manager for the Boise Parks and Recreation department. “The smokejumpers accomplished in a few hours what would have taken my crew two days to do.”

Ridge to Rivers began as a partnership between the City of Boise, Ada County and the Bureau of Land Management in the early 1990s with a vision of linking neighborhoods in the valley to public lands in the hills above, and connecting people to the natural environment. It has since grown to include more than 150 miles of trails that draw users of all ages and abilities to the outdoors.

Given his strong connection to both the outdoors and his friends, the Urban Connection Trail linking other trails in the system is a fitting tribute to Mark Urban.

An 11-year veteran smokejumper, Urban, 40, died in a parachuting accident last September. He left behind a wife and an extensive network of friends and colleagues. Nearly 800 people attended a memorial service last fall for Mark Urban at the National Interagency Fire Center. Urban was described by friends and colleagues as a man of many passions and talents — an avid bicyclist, river runner, world traveler, skier, surfer, musician, and devoted husband, who was well-liked and highly respected by other smokejumpers. He was also remembered as a quiet leader who “simply got things done,” said Phil Lind, a fellow smokejumper.



The Smokejumpers also rehabilitated unusable trail segments using barriers and fabric matting. Photo by Eric Walker, BLM.



Smokejumpers Joe Wyatt and Todd Johnson take a breather on the upper section of the Urban Connection Trail near Boise, Idaho. Photo by Eric Walker, BLM.



The job completed, some 50 BLM and USFS smokejumpers hike down the Urban Connection Trail. Photo by Eric Walker, BLM.

NPS BRANCH OF STRUCTURAL FIRE HAS MEMORIAL BRICK PLACED AT NATIONAL FALLEN FIREFIGHTER MEMORIAL



Don Boucher, National Capital Regional Fire and Emergency Manager, holds the new brick at the National Fallen Firefighters Memorial Park.

Members of the NPS regional and national structural fire program offices joined together to place a brick representing the program on the Walk of Honor at the [National Fallen Firefighters Memorial Park](#) in Emmitsburg Maryland. A special place of remembrance where firefighters are honored for their dedication and ultimate sacrifice, the Walk of Honor connects the monument, the historic Fallen Firefighters

Memorial Chapel and Memorial plazas. The entire monument contains more than 10,000 inscribed bricks from individuals, fire departments, and corporations.

Each of the staff members for the Branch of Structural Fire had very personal reasons for contributing and wanting to see the stone placed in the memorial.

Hal Spencer, NPS Structural Fire Chief sees the placing of the brick as a way to show our commitment to honoring those who have fallen in the line of duty. In addition, he feels it symbolizes the NPS ongoing recognition of the dangers firefighters face every time they are called to respond to an emergency in our parks, and it serves as a permanent reminder for future NPS firefighters that the NPS **will always** make it a priority to ensure our own firefighters have the best training, equipment and apparatus. “To have our brick represented on the walk that leads to the wall with the names of firefighters that have died in the line of duty is an honor for us all.”

For Structural Fire Training Specialist, Eric Anderson, it was the husband of a friend who he had in mind in the placing of the stone. His friend’s husband was Michael Chiapperini, a firefighter in upstate New York. He was killed responding to a house fire in the early morning hours

of Christmas Eve day in 2012, leaving behind a wife and three children “As a firefighter, The National Fallen Firefighters Memorial has always been a meaningful and special place, but recently the memorial has taken on a more personal meaning to me. One of my best friends was present in Emmitsburg last October, when her husband’s name was added to the memorial.”

“We are motivated to ensure that we do not place any more of our brothers or sisters names in the monument” Brian Johnson reflects. “Early in my career I had a fire captain and a mentor, Roc Manchester. Throughout my career I remember the lessons of fireman-ship, leadership, and friendship that he taught us. Roc died while on duty at the MCAS El Toro fire department in Orange County, California. His name lives forever on the wall near our brick.”



“When I read the names on the memorial plaques and look at the brick with our Arrowhead on the walk, I feel proud that we are supporting this effort” says Don Boucher, The National Capital Region’s Regional Fire and Emergency Manager. Don represented the National Park Service on site when the brick was placed in late May 2014. Don feels empathy for the families who lost loved ones, and says he struggles with what we can do to reduce the number of fallen firefighters each year. “I believe our efforts in the last couple of years have made a difference but we can always do more.”

The stone joins many others that will always recall the memories of friends, colleagues, and lost loved ones.

RAMP SERVICES AND NIFC'S AVIATION ROLE

Ramp Services is one of the lesser known facilities at the National Interagency Fire Center. Recently, *Burning Issues* caught up with Don Hubbart, who is the Training Manager and all-around expert at Ramp Services. When *Burning Issues* arrived, Don was rebuilding a flight helmet. He works amazingly fast.

BI: What is Ramp Services? What is the main thing Ramp Services does?

DH: "Our job is to handle tactical and logistical aircraft for fire. We take care of all aircraft that come on the ramp. That includes marshalling in the airplanes, parking, fueling and securing them. We assist the pilots in any way needed. We also provide electrical and pneumatic power for the aircraft while they are parked. This enables the pilots to use their radios, check their systems, etc. We have tow bars and tugs, and we can move any aircraft we have on our ramp. Ramp Services manages 17 acres of blacktop, and we can accommodate eight C-130s, two 737s 200's, or six to nine lead planes. We also launch and recover smokejumper aircraft.

"Ramp Services is the only *federal government* Fixed Base Operator (FBO) in the Lower 48 states. A FBO is a facility that provides fuel services, parking, launching, potable water and lavatory service, etc. Alaska Fire Service has an FBO in Fairbanks, but for the contiguous 48 states, this is it."

BI: What else does Ramp Services do?

DH: "We patrol our tarmac every day for foreign objects—mostly litter that blows in. We plow our tarmac when it snows. We provide training for units all over the place. And we do helmet inspections and repairs. We inspect between 800 and 1,200 flight helmets every year. Ramp Services provides this service for all federal agencies doing all kinds of jobs—not just for fire agencies."

BI: How many people work here full time? Do you add employees during fire season?

DH: "We have two permanent, full time employees; two permanent seasonal employees; and one temporary employee. Whenever we get busy in the summer, we bring in detailers to help. Normally, we have one detailer at a time, but when it gets really busy, we'll bring in a second."



Don has worked at Ramp Services for close to ten years.

BI: What kind of training or experience does it take to be detailed here?

DH: "We generally look for folks qualified as a ramp manager or a parking tender. We also get fueling specialists detailed in now and then."

BI: What is the most complicated part of the Ramp Services job?

DH: "I would say the ability to park the aircraft side by side at night would be the most complicated part of the Ramp Services job. The airplanes have to fit a certain way, and if you can't see wingtips at night, you have to constantly walk around and look. You have to know the airplanes—their turning radii, their wingspan and their weight. You have to know where you are going and where you are going to put the plane. If the aircraft have their navigation lights on, that really helps, but of course the ones already parked don't have any lights on."

BI: What oddball experiences have you had at Ramp Services over the years?

DH: "Well, we've watched the Boise Airport Operations guys 'remove' all kind of wildlife from the taxiways and runways. But probably the most out of the ordinary thing is the people [airport employees and crews from different airlines] who walk over here to look at the aircraft that come through the NIFC ramp. We often have unusual airplanes parked over here—planes a lot of people rarely see. So they walk down here and look at the planes."

continued on page 5

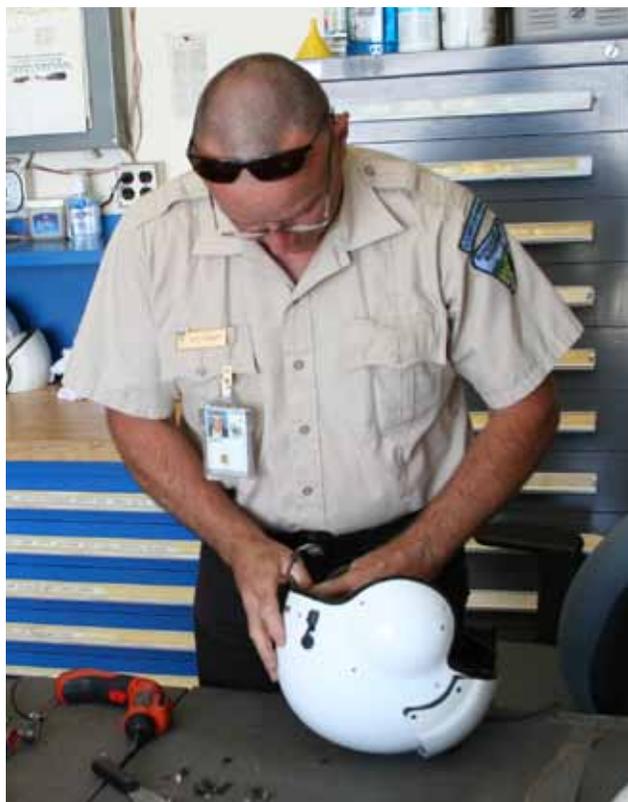
continued from page 4

BI: What has been the biggest change in Ramp Services role over the years?

DH: “One of the biggest changes I’ve seen is a reduction in the air cargo traffic. We used to load a lot of cargo on big airplanes, like 727s and DC-8s. But that has changed. Most of our cargo now is radios for fires. We’re still doing the same job, just not as much of it. Our staffing reflects that shift in mission. We used to have 12 people working here. Now, we’re down to 5.”

BI: What is one thing you think NIFC folks should know about Ramp Services?

DH: “The biggest misconception people have about Ramp Services is assuming that we are not busy because they don’t see airplanes out on the ramp. What people don’t understand is we send most of the aircraft out of NIFC between 6:00 and 8:00 in the morning. And—other than air attack and lead planes—the aircraft aren’t coming back to the airport until it’s almost dark. So most folks at the Fire Center never see the airplanes Ramp Services takes care of. But we are generally busy when it is fire season. We can get an airplane on the ramp at any time, from any fire in the country. That keeps the job interesting.”



Don works quickly to rebuild a flight helmet with a cracked outer shell.



KAAGE NAMED AS DIVISION CHIEF FOR FIRE AND AVIATION MANAGEMENT

Bill Kaage has been named chief of the National Park Service Division of Fire and Aviation Management. He succeeds Tom Nichols, who retired on January 31, 2014.

“Kaage’s vast experience at various levels in the organization, his knowledge of the program and all of its partners, and his demonstrated track record in leading at the national level, made him an excellent fit for this position” said Associate Director for Visitor and Resource Protection, Cam Sholly, who announced the selection.

As the Chief, Kaage is responsible for the overall leadership, policy and program direction for the aviation, structural fire, and wildland fire management programs for the National Park Service. He will administer a budget that exceeds \$90 million in fire and aviation funding for the Service. “I look forward to representing the National Park Service in my new role. We have a great team of passionate professionals who care deeply about the mission, what we do, and those we serve.”

'DISNEY'S PLANES: FIRE & RESCUE PORTRAYS OUR REAL-LIFE FIREFIGHTERS

The Forest Service partnered up with Disney, the Ad Council, and the National Association of State Foresters to launch a series of wildfire prevention public service advertisements featuring scenes and characters from Disney's new high-flying movie, *Planes: Fire & Rescue*.

Planes: Fire & Rescue continues the story of Dusty, a lively crop-dusting plane, who joins forces with veteran fire and rescue aircraft including some brave all-terrain vehicles known as 'The Smokejumpers'. Together they work to protect and fight a massive fire threatening Piston Peak National Park.

So how did the creators at Disney learn about the world of wildland firefighting? After the creators came up with a general script, they turned to the experts with The Forest Service, CAL FIRE and the National Park Service who served as creative consultants. Read the full-story [here](#)

The Disney Channel plans to air a special show highlighting the making of the movie and the additional footage will also be included as behind-the-scenes extras when the film is released on DVD.

You can get a jump start on the action by downloading the free [Planes: Fire & Rescue Fire Activity Book](#) that features themed exercises to teach wildfire facts and campfire safety. (Scroll to the bottom of the webpage).



U.S. Forest Service smokejumper Greg Fashano talks with Taryn Brooks and Golan Yosef of Disney Channel's "Movie Surfers" after landing in a small meadow at Slate Creek on the Shasta Trinity National Forest in California. (U.S. Forest Service/Leo Kay)



NIFC SAFE ZONE

What would you do during a natural disaster? Who could you count on? What survival tools would you need? Would you fight or flight? Where would you go?

How about a concrete building that's 80,000 square feet with an inventory exceeding \$20 million in supplies? How about a building with all sorts of equipment and supplies including batteries, generators, MREs, clothing, first aid kits and tools? There's even training material and fire publications to read during down-times.

The Great Basin Cache (GBK) is located right here at NIFC. This cache not only supplies equipment and tools for wildland fires, it also supports other incidents and natural disasters. National radio systems are included in the inventory which makes communication possible with other survivors throughout the country. A proactive approach to planning an escape route is awareness of weather conditions. This is feasible due to the cache's partnership with the Remote Automated Weather Stations (RAWS) unit.

The Great Basin Cache is the largest of the 15 National Incident Support Caches located in geographic areas across the country. This cache primarily supplies all wildland fire agencies in Utah, Nevada, southern Idaho and western

Wyoming. Although this cache supplies the Great Basin, it is large enough to accommodate the rest of the geographic areas.

Any equipment and supplies used can be ordered and tracked with the National Fire Equipment System (NFES). The trackable and durable items can be returned, refurbished, repaired, restocked and used again. This ordering and tracking system is designed to maintain an inventory to accommodate the needs of many others.

During significant activity and high demands, the cache can be open 24 hours a day. Twenty-four full time employees operate year-round. The staff can expand to nearly 100 during these busier times. These hardworking employees are fully capable of meeting the needs of any wildfire or other disaster that may arise.

Realistically, we all know that the Great Basin Cache won't be used as a disaster safe zone. As for wildland fire and other incidents, this is the best place to order your supplies. With the cache's exceptional ordering and tracking system, a return rate of about 85 percent is achieved for all items shipped to an incident. The cache staff also finds the most practical and cost-effective means to ship items where they are needed. Cache items can also be sent out multiple times each year. With a large inventory and speedy turnaround timeframe for equipment and supplies, it's a resource people count on during emergency situations.



If you have something you'd like to contribute to Burning Issues, please contact Sheri Ascherfeld at sascherf@blm.gov or call 208-387-5144.

