

Boots in the Forest

RANDY SCOTT

By Jaimie Olle

“This building is my world,” Randy Scott says motioning his arms in a widespread motion around the cavern of an industrial warehouse boasting rows of organized shelves and pallets. The space is home to the Boise National Forest Warehouse, a storage space for various departments from the Forest’s Supervisor’s Office as well as a fire cache servicing local incident management teams during fire season.

After taking the position of materials handler and warehouse foreman in December of 2008, Scott took the initiative to streamline the warehouse and inventory procedures. And it shows. The building is meticulously categorized with purpose, making items accessible and easy to find, an especially crucial factor for the fire cache portion during hectic summer months.

While the warehouse is home to materials belonging to a wide range of disciplines including timber, trails, public affairs, minerals, and heritage, Scott’s chief focus is the Type 3 fire cache and command trailer. Added in 2010, the fire cache serves a Type 3 incident management team, and is utilized by the Boise National Forest, Bureau of Land Management and Idaho state entities. During fire season, Scott oversees between 20 to 30 people who help him pull orders, complete inventory, and prepare items for the fire line.

“I’m here for one major reason—to support the people on the ground: the firefighters,” Scott says when considering the complicated process of working between multiple agencies and large volumes of supplies. “My biggest priority is to get stuff out to them.”

Scott also oversees the Fire Transportation Office, which operates out of the same building. When Type 1 and Type 2 incident management teams arrive in the area, they turn to Scott to secure rental vehicles for them during their assignments in the area. Accurate data entry and recordkeeping are crucial aspects of Scott’s position. Maintaining up-to-date logs of vehicles, invoices, and supplies help to ensure that firefighters and incident management teams get what they need in the most timely method possible.

Some of the best days on the job, for Scott, are when his efficiency pays off. He keeps a radio perched right outside his office, allowing him to listen for resource



Randy makes his way down from the upper levels of the Type 3 fire cache that he manages.

orders coming into dispatch. The minute he hears an incident commander requesting supplies, he gets to work pulling the materials for the order. He proudly announces that the command trailer or supply truck often will be ready to roll as he gets the official order from dispatch.

In some cases, incident management teams will ship supplies to the National Interagency Fire Center (NIFC), which is located just down the street from the warehouse. Scott facilitates the transfer of these materials to the Boise National Forest Warehouse, where he inventories and readies the orders to be shipped out to the fire line. Essentials for firefighters generally consist of Gatorade, water, ice and Meals Ready to Eat (MREs).

Although the warehouse is Scott's primary domain, he also assists the Forest's road maintenance crew when needed. Scott joined the Boise National Forest 17 years ago as an equipment operator, and still considers it his "first love."

"I really loved my time as an equipment operator. The forest was my office," Scott says with a nostalgic-laced grin spreading across his face. "Some of the best days were when I finished a project. I could look back at the smooth, level surface and say, 'I did that.'"

While his job title may have changed, his love for the Forest and the outdoors has not. Just a few years shy of retirement, he's looking forward to spending more time with his beloved dogs, who are his go-to hunting partners.

"I love to partake in the forest that we help to maintain. Ultimately, we're doing all of this for the people," he reflects, moving his gaze across the expanse of the warehouse. "The reason I do this," indicating his workspace, "is because it allows me to do that," pointing his index finger at the numerous pictures of his dogs, hunting trip and the forest.