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Cramer Fire - Lessons Learned and Agency Actions

The lessons learned from the Cramer Fire tragedy are not new. And there are NO silver bullets available to ensure that another Cramer, Thirtymile, or South Canyon tragedy will ever happen again. No matter the policy, quality of management or the amount of oversight – when it comes to Fireline Survival – the ONLY PROVEN positive actions are those that mitigate the 18 Watch Out Situations and adhere to the 10 Standard Firefighting Orders.

In their **Management Evaluation Report** the Cramer Fire Investigation Team determined that the causes of the tragedy were primarily focused in two critical areas: failures in leadership, and overall failure by leaders and firefighters alike to respond to a rapidly deteriorating situation (lack of situational awareness).

Subsequently, the Cramer Fire Accident Review Board (ARB) issued the **Cramer Accident Prevention Plan** (APP). The Cramer APP identified five "…key actions that would… best prevent similar mishaps in the future." These actions focused on leadership training, assuring leader qualifications, and completing the remaining few action plan items from the Thirtymile Fire, which also focused on leadership failures and faulty situational awareness. In response to the Accident Review Boards, the Deputy Chief for State and Private Forestry committed the agency to implementing a "Leadership Development Strategy." The strategy responds to each of the APP action items, and indicates a commitment to foster and nurture a dedicated leadership development program within the interagency community. THIS IS WHERE YOU NEED TO BE ENGAGED during training and as you gain career experience.

There will not be a long list of nationwide action items resulting from the Cramer Fire, however the agency is debating some policy changes in response to weaknesses exposed by the Cramer tragedy. Proposed changes: 1/ address the lack of ICS qualifications requirements for line officers who must perform supplemental safety inspections (this also responds to OSHA's **Notice of Unsafe or Unhealthful Working Conditions**), 2/ Specify RAWs station maintenance and calibration requirements so no firefighter should ever have to go without a spot weather forecast or the best available fire weather information (this also responds to OSHA), 3/ Provide "Duty Officer" definitions and qualifications, 4/ Strengthening the responsibilities and involvement of the Fire Qualifications Review Committees to insure that individuals are certified appropriately, and 5/ Clarifying that Incident Commanders on Type 3, 4, and 5 fires may delegate support and operations duties to the most qualified on-scene or immediately available, local individual(s).

For information on fireline leadership training, especially for those with ICT3, 4, and 5 responsibilities check out: **http://www.fireleadership.gov/courses/courses.html**.

To Learn more about LCES and how it works and why it is considered essential to situational awareness, check out Paul Gleason's original LCES proposal: (June 1991) **"LCES and Other Thoughts"** - Here you will learn how LCES evolved, and see how Paul's experience and thoughts came together to form the LCES concept.

Remember, firefighter safety is our highest priority, and the responsibility for success in meeting that priority begins with YOU!

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