



Mark Bernal
Incident Commander
Southwest Area
Incident Management Team 5

Date: June 18, 2020
To: Agency Administrators – Bush Fire
From: Mark Bernal, Incident Commander
Subject: Relinquish Delegation of Authority

Effective June 19, 2020, at 0600 hours, I relinquish my delegated authority (Bush Fire Delegation of Authority and Letter of Intent, 06/15/2020) as Incident Commander of the Bush Fire and return management of remaining incident resources and activities. The terms of this release and transition have been discussed and mutually agreed upon by all involved parties.


Mark Bernal, Incident Commander
Southwest Area IMT 5

6/19/2020
Date


Thomas Torres, Deputy Forest Supervisor
USDA Forest Service
Tonto National Forest

06-19-2020
Date


Dan Colgan, Central District Manager
Arizona State Dept. Fire and Forestry

06-20-2020
Date

INTERAGENCY INCIDENT MANAGEMENT TEAM EVALUATION

APPENDIX I

Incident Management Team Performance Evaluation						
Team IC	Mark Bernal Jeff Andrews (Deputy IC) Andrew Mandel (IC Trainee)			Incident Type	Wildfire – Full Suppression (Human Start)	
Incident Name	Sawtooth Fire			Incident Number	AZ-TNF-001306	
Assignment Dates	June 15, 2020 – June 18, 2020			Total Acres	151k acres as of June 18, 2020	
Host Agency	USDA Forest Service			Evaluation Date	June 19, 2020	
Administrative Unit	Tonto National Forest			Sub-Unit	Mesa Ranger District, Tonto Basin Ranger District	
<p>At the conclusion of each incident management team (IMT) assignment, the agency administrator or representative should complete this initial performance evaluation (sections 1 - 5). This evaluation should be discussed directly with the incident commander. The initial performance evaluation should be delivered by the agency administrator without delay to the incident commander, the state/regional fire management officer, and the chair of the IMT's home geographic area multi-agency coordination group to ensure prompt follow-up to any issues of concern.</p>						
<p align="center">Complete the follow evaluation narratives and rating for each question</p> <p align="center">0 - did not achieve expectations, 3 - met expectations, 5 - excelled</p>						
<p>1. How well did the Team accomplish the objectives described in the Wildland Fire Decision Support System (WFDSS) the Delegation of Authority, and the Agency Administrator Briefing?</p>						
Circle one	0	1	2	3	4	5
<p>(Explain)</p> <p>All firefighting management objectives and COVID-19 related objectives were met in a competent manner. Primary objective to protect human communities and property were met as well as containing the fire within identified boundaries (Hwys 87 and 188). The Team's tactics saved Mt Ord from being destroyed by wildfire despite the large amounts of fuel along the slopes. The Team arrived in a very quick time frame as requested by the forest in order to relieve an ad-hoc forest Type 3 organization. Team took over fire at 0600 the day following the initial start at 1400. This was much appreciated by the Forest!</p> <p>The COVID-19 objectives were exceeded in several ways. The leader's intent included: <i>"extra ordinary need for the IMT and the assigned resources to perform its responsibilities in different and innovative ways that seek to accomplish the firefighting objectives as well as maintaining the health and safety of all incident related personnel from the significant health threats posed by the COVID-19 virus."</i></p> <p>The Team arrived prepared to manage both the fire and the COVID-19 viral hazard. They had a very good understanding of existing direction (sometimes conflicting or redundant direction) and worked to incorporate them into Team process while effectively communicating the purpose to personnel. The IC showed strong leadership-by-example in promoting social distancing and other measures to reduce exposure, including wearing masks as ways to model expected behaviors. The Team effectively monitored behaviors of incident personnel against required standards and reacted in a timely manner. This required daily course correction to continue meeting objectives while reacting to safety concerns surrounding COVID-19.</p> <p>The Team attempted to incorporate the use of available video technology (ZOOM) to allow participation of key team members, firefighters, forest stakeholders, and other incident personnel to minimize the gathering of large groups. And, the Team worked closely with others to identify, share and document key learnings as well as identification of issues for use by other Teams and agency personnel to incorporate into future incidents. At times, the Team struggled with incorporating video technology (ZOOM and Facebook Live) into meetings.</p>						

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2. How well did the Team manage the cost of the incident? Did the team follow agency incident operating guidelines? Were follow-up issues identified and documented for the Agency Administrator ie; invoices, OWCP and vendor issues?

Circle one	0	1	2	3	4	5
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(Explain)

The Team did a good job in managing incident costs. The Team used relatively limited amounts of air resources as part of suppression efforts which helped contain costs.

Some additional incident costs were realized due to the actions taken to address COVID-19 concerns but those costs were carefully considered in coordination with the Agency Administrator. One example was the decision made to hotel firefighters working on the south side of the fire due to high temperatures in the project area and the high priority placed on well-rested firefighters. Options were discussed to estimate costs and establish rationale clearly displayed for consideration. The decision was also informed by consulting the Incident Business Guide to maintain adherence to required policy.

The Finance Chief and her staff worked with a "Virtual" Incident Business Advisor from both the USFS to provide necessary costs to inform required cost sharing between the USFS and AZ DFFM. The use of a virtual IBA was new to the forest and sometimes communication was slow and possibly affected coordination with the Finance Section.

3. How did the Team demonstrate sensitivity to resource limits/constraints and environmental concerns?

Circle one	0	1	2	3	4	5
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(Explain)

The team maintained good coordination and communications with Agency Administrator, District Ranger, and local Resource Advisors from AZ and USFS to implement strategies that met objectives and leader's intent. The Lead READ on the project reported that the Plans and Operations persons were easy to communicate with and were very approachable. Given the pace of the fire sometimes operational information was slow to the READs and they felt uninformed. The dozer line work adequately vetted and READs were allowed time to clear the ground prior to dozer line construction.

4. How well did the Team deal with sensitive political and social concerns?

Circle one	0	1	2	3	4	5
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(Explain)

The Team Liaisons worked very effectively with the Forest and State to understand the political and community needs of the affected cooperators including the local law enforcement, local communities, power line operators, communication equipment managers, ranch operators and others. Daily virtual ZOOM meetings were very useful and appreciated as reflected in feedback from cooperators.

The Liaisons, in coordination with the IC were always very approachable and professional in dealings with these issues. In addition, the Team paid particular attention to possible COVID-19 messaging issues in case the need arose.

5. Was the Team professional in the manner in which they assumed management of the incident and how they managed the total incident? How did the Team handle transition either to another IMT or in returning the incident the hosting agency?

Circle one	0	1	2	3	4	5
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(Explain)

The Team was very professional in the manner they assumed management of the incident from the forest, throughout the incident and in the manner they transferred command Type I Team. Communications with the outgoing and incoming teams, local agency administrators, as well as cooperators and stakeholders during the incident was very effective.

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6. How well did the Team anticipate and respond to changing conditions, was the response timely and effective?

Circle one	0	1	2	3	4	5
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(Explain)

The Team was very engaged in adapting firefighting tactics to the rapidly changing and growing fire. The tactics included burn out operations to maintain identified boundaries and communities and protecting Mt Ord communications equipment. The results were good and met WFDSS objectives. The team was quick to respond to the changing fuel conditions and anticipating changing weather in the planning area.

The changing conditions regarding COVID-19 requirements were monitored. The IC was very diligent and showed strong leadership while responding to incident personnel social-distancing behaviors. When social distancing behaviors did not meet established standards, clear direction and modified protocols were established, communicated and implemented with the IC, led by example.

Good communication was made with Tonto NF fire staff and Agency Administrators. The Team effectively assumed Initial Attack responsibility in a VERY timely manner.

7. How well did the Team place the proper emphasis on safety?

Circle one	0	1	2	3	4	5
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(Explain)

The Team reported ZERO injuries or reportable injuries.

The Team's pro-active management of risk and identifying and mitigating hazards was top priority and always at the forefront of all operations, discussions and briefings. The IC, Public Information, Liaisons were consistent in delivering a good message of safety first with the public and co-operators. The IC and Team showed good compliance and resilience with the evolving COVID-19 requirements (including wearing masks).

The emphasis and communication of safety directives surrounding both COVID-19 and fire operations was clearly displayed by the Team. The Team was prepared to address COVID-19 issues and their preparation served them well during the course of the incident.

8. Did the Team activate and manage the mobilization/demobilization in a timely and cost effective manner?

Circle one	0	1	2	3	4	5
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(Explain)

The Team was activated and resources were mobilized very timely. Mobilization speed was realized by the use of ZOOM video technology that allowed some Team members the ability to attend the in-briefing meeting while en route to the incident.

Demobilization was not relevant as the fire was transferred to a Type 1 Team before the incident was finished.

Significant challenges became apparent with the use of the new resource ordering system (IROQ?) with some orders being delayed. The Team worked hard to overcome these challenges.

9. How well did the Team use local resources, trainees, and closest available forces?

Circle one	0	1	2	3	4	5
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(Explain)

The Team met expectation in using local resources, priority trainees, and closest available resources. Andy Mandell, a local Type 2 IC Trainee, was incorporated into the team in a timely manner and provided additional capacity with local knowledge to the Team.

10. How did the Team notify the incident agency regarding triggers for initiating a cost share agreement or large fire cost review? How were those recommendations implemented?

Circle one	0	1	2	3	4	5
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(Explain)

Cost share requirements were clearly understood by the Agency Administrators based on WFDSS planning and triggers were clearly understood. Cost share was not completed before the Type 2 team transferred command to the Type 1 Team.

11. Was the IC engaged and in charge of the Team and the Incident? How well did the IC function and operate as a leader?

Circle one	0	1	2	3	4	5
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(Explain)

The IC was very communicative to agency administrators and was recognized in charge during the incident. The IC, Deputy IC and IC Trainee were very engaged with the Team C&G staff during the incident and made timely decisions and clear decision when appropriate.

The IC seemed to always be present when needed for his Team and Agency Administrators (AAs) and brought forth issues to the AAs when appropriate. The IC was somewhat hampered in communicating issues due to sometimes uneven communications between his C&G Groups. The IC provided good messaging to incident personnel as the needs arose, especially as they related to COVID-19, and included good rationale for the purpose of allowing people to understand the reasoning for the required changes.

12. How timely was the IC in assuming responsibility for the incident and initiating action?

Circle one	0	1	2	3	4	5
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(Explain)

The IC was very effective in assuming responsibility for the incident. Mark made a special point to talk with FS Agency Administrator via Phone as soon as he was alerted that his Team was selected prior to in-briefing to better understand the incident and its management requirements. Mark also worked with Agency Administrators on leader's intent language to be included in the delegation letter. This involvement was very productive as it helped cement alignment between the Team and Agency Administrators.

The Team engaged the Type 3 IC and Team members, Agency Administrators, District and Forest Fire Management gathering information and direction needed ahead of time to achieve a smooth transition, assume command and initiate action in a timely manner.

13. How did the IC show sincere concern and empathy for the hosting unit and local conditions?

Circle one	0	1	2	3	4	5
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(Explain)

Mark showed appropriate concern and engagement for agencies within the planning area although not directly threatened by the incident.

Mark was consistently very receptive and understanding of the affected agencies concerns and responded to those in a timely manner. Mark made himself available to the AA's during daily briefings where key fire and COVID-19 issues were openly discussed and acted upon.

14. Did the Incident Management Team provide an organized financial package (comps/claims documentation completed, payment documents forwarded, I- suite updated, etc.) to the host unit or next IMT prior to demobilization?

Circle one

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(Explain)

TBD

Documentation boxes will be stored at the Phoenix Interagency Fire Center (PIFC) and will contain all information needed if an issue should arise after the Team has demobilized.

15. Other comments:

This was a very unique and somewhat historic incident considering the COVID-19 health issues as well as the very large firesize and rapidly evolving complexity from the moment Mark's Team assumed command. They inherited a 14k acre fire and within 3 days had grown to 150k acres (5th largest wildfire in AZ history). The firefighting operation was complex with multiple values at risk threatened and rapid fire growth in 3 directions. In Summary, the Team did a god job in managing the COVID-19 issues while meeting firefighting management objectives but the Team was sometimes challenged by the use of new technology, COVID19 requirements, and the large/complex nature of the fire.

Agency Administrator or Representative:

Tom A. Torres (Thomas A. Torres)

Date: June 19, 2020 ✓

Incident Commander:

Date: June 19, 2020