

LET'S TALK TRAINING

SPRING 2010



Training for the 2010 Wildland Fire Season

As the seasons change, training officers are well on their way to coordinating the training activities of the local unit. The BLM Fire Training Unit would like to remind all those responsible for training of a few requirements. Information about mandatory and recurring training can be found in Chapter 2 of the *BLM Fire and Aviation Training Information Job Aid* which is located on the BLM Fire Training website at http://www.blm.gov/nifc/st/en/prog/fire/training/fire_training/publications/job_aid.html.

Do What's Right

The *Do What's Right* program is intended for all BLM personnel in the fire community, whether you are at a fire base, outstation, or whether you are a smokejumper, dispatcher, firefighter, module leader, FMO, or work in a support position or as a contractor in the fire organization. The program, which was updated for 2010, addresses employee rights, responsibilities, and consequences of actions.

The NIFC EEO office produces and distributes the DVD. If training officers do not receive the 2010 release, contact Debie Chivers or Laura Barclay at 208-387-5454.

Annual Fireline Safety Refresher Training (RT-130)

Annual Fireline Safety Refresher Training is required for all positions as identified in the *Wildland Fire Qualifications System Guide* (PMS 310-1). Whether using the Fireline Safety Refresher Training DVDs or developing a program of your own, the core topics of avoiding entrapments, current issues, fire shelter, and other hazards and safety issues must be sufficiently covered to ensure that personnel are aware of safety concerns and procedures and can demonstrate proficiency in fire shelter deployment. The BLM requires that a minimum of four hours be dedicated to refresher training.

Training officers should refer to the Wildland Fire Safety Training Annual Refresher Training website at <http://www.nifc.gov/wfstar/index.htm> for "Hot Topics" and related refresher information.

BLM Engine Driver Orientation (IQCS Number: BL300)

All entry-level BLM engine crewmembers are required to attend BLM Engine Driver Orientation (BL300) training. The orientation package can be found on the BLM Fire Training website at http://www.blm.gov/nifc/st/en/prog/fire/training/fire_training/projects/engine_training/orientation.html. The package was updated in February 2010 to include water fording information.

BLM Engine Driver Refresher (IQCS Number: RT-301)

BLM Engine Driver Refresher Training is an annual objectives-based training requirement for all Engine Operators, Engine Captains, and returning crewmembers. The training may be provided in any way the local Fire Management Officer chooses as long as all the objectives are met and documented. For convenience, a course titled "Nevada BLM Fire and Aviation Driver Training" was developed and may be used to satisfy the refresher requirement. Supplemental training aides are also available to support the refresher training requirement. Objectives and supplemental training aides can be found on the BLM Fire Training website at http://www.blm.gov/nifc/st/en/prog/fire/training/fire_training/projects/engine_training/refresher.html.

Confusion in the World of Wildland Fire Radio Communication

On what was my first day on the job in an Idaho BLM fire dispatch center in 1984, I was tasked with monitoring radio traffic while my supervisors attended a meeting. Shortly after my supervisors departed, a resource advisor radioed dispatch. His vehicle had started a fire, or was that “afire”? I wasn’t sure if his vehicle was on fire and I should notify the rural fire department or if the desert was on fire and I needed to send wildland fire engines. With additional information exchange, I determined that the vehicle’s catalytic convertor had started a grass fire and wildland fire engines were needed as the fire had grown beyond the resource advisor’s capabilities.

My communication problems didn’t stop there. The Bureau was in the midst of transitioning to a new communication model called “clear text,” but local engine operators were still using 10-code communications with one operator giving a very clear “10-8” as he responded to the incident. The next operator radioed that he was “en route,” and a 10-code reference card on the radio console confirmed 10-8’s meaning for me. Confusing verbiage, numerical or crew-specific code talk, or even today’s newest communication tool called texting can produce unintended communication problems.

Although wildland firefighters are taught about proper radio communication in wildland fire courses, report after report lists “poor communications” as a causal factor in accidents and fatalities.

There are those in our midst that say the 10-code system was a more concise method of communicating and freed the airwaves for more important information transfer. There are others that contend the 10 code was a safety concern, lacking cross-the-board-standardization and more importantly that you had to know the code in order to communicate. Whatever your opinion, the Incident Command System (ICS) requires the use of “clear text” or common terminology across all jurisdictions.

Although wildland fire personnel are taught about proper radio communication in wildland fire courses, report after report lists “poor communications” as a causal factor in accidents and fatalities. Poor communications can be anything from frequency overlap, long-winded or unnecessary transmissions, to misinterpretation of radio messages.

Effective, efficient communication skills is something that each wildland firefighter has the ability and responsibility to develop. In the coming months, BLM Fire Training will embark on a project to identify and create tools that wildland firefighters can utilize to improve their radio discipline. BLM fire personnel are asked to provide input into the project through the *Building Our Future Through Innovation* program (see page 4 for more information).

The first phase of the project is research and awareness. BLM Fire Training staff are in the process of benchmarking organizations outside the wildland fire service. To date they have gained valuable insight that may prove beneficial to how BLM wildland firefighters can improve their radio discipline.

Training officers are encouraged to use the information found within this newsletter as a radio communications refresher/tailgate topic tool until more formal products are developed. During these sessions BLM leaders should focus on practice, assessment and personal example--exhibit effective and efficient radio discipline, conduct crew radio communications assessments, foster proper radio discipline at the lowest levels of the organization, and hold radio discipline practice sessions and assessments.

Whether a leader of one or a leader of organizations, creating a culture of respectful, effective communication is a duty of all BLM wildland firefighters.

Radio Discipline on the Fireline

BASICS

1. Do **not** use radios for communicating when face-to-face dialogue is a better and available choice.
2. Avoid excessive calling and unofficial transmissions.
3. Listen.
 - ◆ Too often we are not listening but making mental notes of what we would like to say in response.

FORMULATING THE MESSAGE PRIOR TO TRANSMISSION

1. Think first, then speak.
2. Use location identifiers or functional titles.
 - ◆ Location examples - Division B, Drop Point 2, Staging Area, Helibase
 - ◆ Functional titles - Taskforce Leader, Medic, Operations
3. Keep your messages short and simple.
 - ◆ Try not to pack 5 seconds worth of information into 30 seconds.
 - ◆ Do **not** use big words when a short one will do.
 - ◆ Leave out unnecessary words.
 - ~ **Bad:** “Ah, Taskforce Smith, this is FOBS Jones. Ah...yeah...ah, roger that...ah...ah...geographical location that we’re...ah...supposed to be moving towards...to ah...rendezvous...ah, that is...ah...met up with the...ah...other crew. Over.”
 - ~ **Good:** “Taskforce Smith this is FOBS Jones. Copy. Out.”
4. Use the phonetic alphabet.
 - ◆ Enunciation tends to be lost on the radio and individual letters can be miss-communicated over the radio.
5. Use plain English aka “Clear Text.”
 - ◆ Avoid using codes.
6. Use standard expressions (procedure words or pro-words) to reduce the amount of time transmitting on frequencies and to reduce confusion.

Expression

Go ahead
Copy
Say again
Standby

Affirmative
Negative
Over
Out
Do you copy
En route
Unreadable

Meaning

Pass your message.
Message received and understood.
Retransmit message.
Message acknowledged but I am unable to reply or deal with it at this time.
Yes.
No.
Information passed waiting for reply.
Transmission finished.
Do you understand, please acknowledge.
Resources heading to incident.
Used when signal received is unclear or not understood.
Don’t pay attention to the last radio traffic
Message is too long for one transmission.
More to follow.

PHONETIC ALPHABET		
<i>Character</i>	<i>Word</i>	<i>Pronunciation</i>
0	Zero	ZE-RO
1	One	WUN
2	Two	TOO
3	Three	TREE
4	Four	FOW-ER
5	Five	FIFE
6	Six	SIX
7	Seven	SEV-EN
8	Eight	AIT
9	Nine	NIN-ER
A	Alpha	ALFAH
B	Bravo	BRAHVOH
C	Charlie	CHARLEE
D	Delta	DELLTAH
E	Echo	ECKOH
F	Foxtrot	FOKSTROT
G	Golf	GOLF
H	Hotel	HOHTELL
I	India	INDEE AH
J	Juliet	JEWLEE ETT
K	Kilo	KEYLOH
L	Lima	LEEMAH
M	Mike	MIKE
N	November	NOVEMBER
O	Oscar	OSSCAH
P	Papa	PAHPAH
Q	Quebec	KEHBECK
R	Romeo	ROWME OH
S	Sierra	SEEAIRAH
T	Tango	TANGGO
U	Uniform	YOUNEE FORM
V	Victor	VIKTAH
W	Whiskey	WISSKEY
X	X-ray	ECKSRAY
Y	Yankee	YANGKEY
Z	Zulu	ZOOLOO

Radio Discipline on the Fireline

TRANSMITTING YOUR MESSAGE

1. Answer all calls without delay.
2. Listen before you transmit to make sure no one else is transmitting.
3. When ready to transmit, push the transmission key and wait a couple seconds before speaking. When finishing transmitting, wait before releasing the key.
4. Keep a distance of about 5 cm between the microphone and your lips, and shield your microphone from background noises.
5. Use good speech technique. Think R.S.V.P.
 - ◆ **R**hythm - Speak in short sentences with a natural rhythm.
 - ◆ **S**peed - Speak slightly slower than normal conversation.
 - ~ Speak at a rate of 150 words/minute.
 - ~ Speak even slower when someone needs to write down information.
 - ◆ **V**olume - Use normal speaking volume.
 - ~ Shouting causes distortion and makes you hard to understand.
 - ◆ **P**itch - Speak in a pitch slightly higher than normal conversation.
 - ~ Remain calm. People respond to the intensity of your voice.
 - ~ People don't always remember what you said, but they always remember HOW you said it.
6. Divide long messages into sensible phrases, pausing every now and then.
 - ◆ Ensure that the person on the other end is copying your transmission.
 - ◆ Allow others to break in with more important information.
7. Do **not** read everything back.
 - ◆ Use "Say again" for the transmission you did **not** copy.
 - ◆ Use "Copy, over" and stand by for the next transmission if you understand the transmission.



BUILDING OUR FUTURE THROUGH INNOVATION

As budgets get tighter, the BLM Fire Training Unit is looking at ways to more efficiently and effectively train its workforce. Part of this effort includes the collection of innovative training ideas and practices from the field that can be used across the nation.

This newsletter focused on radio discipline. Are you doing something on your unit to develop efficient and effective radio operators?

- Do you record radio conversations and analyze them with a technical proficiency checklist that you've developed?
- Have you developed standard operating radio phraseology that you use during wildland fire operations?
- How do you train your crew members about radio discipline?
- Do you have an idea for a BLM radio communication training tool that could be developed and would like to be a part of bringing the concept to fruition?

We'd like to hear from you and see your products regarding radio communication as well as other areas of BLM fire training. For more information about *Building Our Future Through Innovation* or to submit your ideas and sample products, contact Pam McDonald at Pam_McDonald@nifc.blm.gov or 208-387-5318.

Effective and Efficient Communication with Aerial Resources

Aerial supervision, airtankers, and helicopters are all exceptional tools used to support incident goals and objectives. Effective communication between air resources and ground crews is essential to maximize the efficiency of these resources.

Here are some tips to get the most out of air resources.

- ◆ Utilize aerial supervision (ATGS or ASM) to reduce your span of control when using multiple air resources. This will drastically reduce chatter on the assigned air-to-ground frequency.
- ◆ Ensure incoming resources have correct radio frequencies before they launch. Out of area resources may not be familiar with local frequency plans.
- ◆ Designate a crewmember as the primary contact for air resources. This person should monitor the designated air to ground frequency only. **No scanning!!**
- ◆ Be patient with aircraft when calling them. They talk to each other on a discreet AM frequency, so they might not hear your initial call.
- ◆ Describe targets using fire anatomy (head, heal, flank, shoulder, spot, island). Avoid compass (cardinal) references.
- ◆ Use the clock method to guide resources. Be sure you and the aerial resource can see each other.
- ◆ Be definitive; avoid terms such as should, maybe, and probably. When asked if the line is clear for a drop, it either is or it isn't.
- ◆ Anticipate water and retardant drops and clear the line ahead of time. Useless radio chatter is created when aircraft have to go around.
- ◆ Use objective terms as descriptors. Avoid subjective terms like windy, hot, dry, etc. Be specific.
 - ~ Example: The wind is 15-20 out of the north.
- ◆ Practice delivering common operational messages in the same sequence with standard verbiage each time you transmit.
- ◆ Remember the button is a push to talk, not push to think.

Contributed by Gil Dustin, Air Tactical Program Manager, BLM NAO

BLM Fire Training Unit Welcomes New Staff Member

The BLM Fire Training Unit is proud to welcome Mike Ellsworth as a new staff member. Mike is no stranger to NIFC Fire Training, having been a detailer at the Great Basin Training Center and contributor on various projects developed by the unit. Prior to taking the position of Training Specialist with BLM Fire Training, Mike worked as a Training Specialist at the Pacific Northwest Training Center.

As a former wildland firefighter with the Boise BLM District, Mike possesses the knowledge, skills, and abilities to take the BLM Training Unit into the next generation of wildland firefighting. Drawing from his experiences and vision for the future, Mike is already formulating new and innovative ways to training BLM fire personnel. Presently Mike's main focuses include IQCS, NIFC Red Card Committee, and visioning and development of mentoring and on-the-job training programs.

If you have questions or concerns, feel free to contact Mike at Michael_Ellsworth@nifc.blm.gov or 208-387-5985.





***Paul Gleason
Lead by Example Award***



The Paul Gleason Lead by Example Award is presented by the NWCG Leadership Committee to remember Paul Gleason's many contributions to

the wildland fire community and recognize individuals or groups that exhibit the same spirit and dedication to leadership—those who lead by example. This national recognition will acknowledge those in the wildland fire service who exemplify the wildland fire leadership values and principles.

The Paul Gleason Lead by Example Award program:

- ◆ Recognizes actions associated with wildland fire;
- ◆ Recognizes actions within the last two years;
- ◆ Recognizes individuals or groups at all levels;
- ◆ Promotes the wildland fire leadership values and principles.

To learn more about the award and to nominate deserving wildland fire personnel, visit the Wildland Fire Leadership Development Program website at

http://www.fireleadership.gov/toolbox/documents/gleason_award_info.html

***Where Do I Go to Find
Answers Regarding Training?***

Many questions a BLM Fire Training Officer has regarding training and qualifications can be found on the BLM Fire Training Unit's website located at http://www.blm.gov/nifc/st/en/prog/fire/training/fire_training.html.

Topics addressed on the site include IFPM, Technical Fire Management, UNLV GS-0401 Education Program, Prescribed Fire On-the-Job Training Program, engine training, links to agency position taskbooks, and most importantly the BLM Fire and Aviation Training Information Job Aid (currently under revision).

Take the "Links Galore!" hyperlink into a world of directives, references and publications and much more!

If you have ideas for information that should be included or is in error on the site, please contact any BLM Fire Training Unit staff member.



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If you would like to receive this and other training information, send an e-mail to Pam McDonald with "Add to Training Distribution List" as the subject.