

Origin and Development of FDNY Incident Management Teams--Part II

Shadow Training

by Deputy Assistant Chief Ronald R. Spadafora



all photos courtesy of Deputy Assistant Chief Ronald R. Spadafora

Seventy FDNY Fire Chiefs and EMS Officers completed two weeks of training from February through April 2003, which included disaster simulation mitigation scenarios in a classroom curriculum, covered in Part I of this two-part article. (See reference box.) This article focuses on FDNY Incident Management Team (IMT) Phase II developmental “shadow” training, which was conducted during the summer of 2003.

The training lasted for five days, excluding travel. Tours of duty each day ranged from 12-14 hours. The objective of the shadowing assignment was to expose FDNY personnel to an IMT in action to gain knowledge of incident command techniques and team structure to better manage complex and long-duration events within the City of New York.

Shadowing is the culmination of the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), signed by the Secretary of Agriculture, Ann M. Veneman, and Fire Commissioner Nicholas Scoppetta, securing IMT training for FDNY personnel through the USDA’s Forestry Service branch. It was carried out with the Forest Service through the coordinated efforts of Deputy Commissioner for Intergovernmental Affairs Daniel Shacknai and Assistant Chiefs Thomas Galvin and Michael Weinlein. Shadow training provided FDNY members with an understanding of how an Incident Management Team operates at a large-scale event. It also allowed FDNY members to visit a “project” fire and shadow ICS command and general staff positions.

I was selected, along with Deputy Chief Richard Fuerch (Logistics), Battalion Chief George Belnavis (Planning), Battalion Chief George Maier (Planning) and EMSC Chief Mark Stone (Medical), to the first of six Shadow Teams assigned to travel to the Northwest. The training detail started on Saturday,

August 2, 2003, with an early-morning flight out of LaGuardia Airport en route to Missoula, Montana, and concluded on Friday, August 8. On arrival, we were greeted by an appointed liaison, Eric Kurtz, a Fire Training Specialist with the Department of Natural Resources and Conservation (DNRC). He provided FDNY members with their itinerary while transporting them to the nearby Northern Rockies Multi-Agency Command Center (NRMAC).

At the Command Center, we were met by Chief Tim Murphy of the DNRC. He gave us a general overview of the fire problem in the tri-state area (Montana, Idaho and North Dakota) that is under the jurisdiction of the NRMAC. All Shadow Team members attended the NRMAC conference call meeting that afternoon, with Incident Commanders phoning information from more than a dozen forest/wilderness fires that were in progress at the time of the FDNY members’ arrival. Critical IMT needs were evaluated and the threatened resources were identified. The NRMAC establishes priorities (firefighter and public safety, community protection, threats to other structures, natural resource protection, etc.) when allocating personnel and equipment.

Shadow Team members were given a tour of NRMAC facilities. The Information Center was first on the agenda. Communications with all affected federal, state and local governmental and civil agencies are handled at this location. Logistical concerns are addressed for all tri-state firefighting crews and the weather is monitored continually for transmittal to the working IMTs.

The regional tool and equipment warehouse also was examined. Woodland firefighting tools and equipment were displayed and questions readily answered regarding their use.

The Smokejumper Training School was visited.

Incident: Robert Fire		LCES Incident Action Plan Safety Analysis							Operational Period Day and Night, Revised 7/31				
Hazards													
Divisions	Initial Attack, Anchor points	Indirect Fireline, Unburned Fuel, Reburn	Extreme Burning Conditions Hot, Dry, Low Rh	Burning Ops	Engine Ops, Dozer Ops, Heavy Equipment	Air Ops Retardant, Bucket Drops Multiple Aircraft	Structure Protection HAZMAT	Commo. Radios, Frequencies	Terrain, Topography Snags Rocks Weather	Traffic, Distance, Road Condition	Environ	Snags	Railroad
A	*	1					9			10	11	2	
E	*	1	1	1,7	12	4				10	11	2	
I	*	1	1		12	4				10	11	2	
S	*	1		1		4	9,13			8,10	11	2	
W	*	1	1				9,13			8,10	11	2	5
Struct	*						9,13			8,10	11	2	5
<p>1) 10 standard orders, 18 watch-out situations, LCES. DIV Sups verify LCES in place prior to engagement & throughout burning period as work locations & activity changes. Increase margins of safety (time your escape routes). Monitor fire behavior. Lookouts to provide constant update. Fireline supervisors to est. "set of conditions" – risk thresholds at which to go into safety zones. Transmit weather obs hourly over command channel. Staff ground & aerial lookouts. Establish secondary escape routes.</p> <p>2) Snags are an issue for direct line/ interior mopup/ travelways. Either flag & avoid or mitigate through falling. Scout interior roads.</p> <p>3)</p> <p>4) Practice good bucket drop situational awareness. Stress good commo and maintain adequate distance separation. Maintain positive airspace control via ATGS/HECO.</p> <p>5) High volume railroad traffic, poor sight distance and crossings near Mud Lake. Hazardous materials being transported. Burlington Northern Railroad (BNR) to issue slowing, fleeting or stopping orders. BNR to staff crossings during high traffic events. Clear 150 feet of centerline.</p> <p>6) "Post firing" snags on Camas Road could affect traffic. See # 2 above.</p> <p>7) Firing operations have resulted in numerous spot fires across the line. Staff ground and Aerial lookouts Safety Officer: Operations S C: Contingency Hazard and Risk Assessment Appendix to 215a</p> <p>Hazard/Risk Wildfire in camp. Repeater malfunction. Serious accident requiring air medevac, critical operations taking place</p> <p>8) Narrow Roads, dust & one-way roads in Lake Five and surrounding area. Critical transportation network. Evacuation traffic meeting fire traffic. Mitigation includes: watering roads, allowing plenty of time for orderly evacuation, having incident resources in place, no "code" traffic. Note- This was done on 7/28.</p> <p>9) Some residences are indefensible and completely unsafe to staff during full fire involvement. Mitigation includes: conducting structure triage, establishing protocols for non-emergency disengagement. Use structure protection checklist. Use structure assessment list.</p> <p>10) Dust, inversions, narrow, one-lane roads with turnouts. Mitigation includes: Posting more 25 mph signs on gravel roads. Post warning signs near roadblocks. Improve traffic control at roadblocks. Post drop points clearly. Drive with your lights on. Establish security on Canyon Creek (FS312) road. Improve traffic control and warning signs near roadblocks.</p> <p>11) Bears continue to be a problem throughout the incident. Mitigations include not allowing food/trash in or near sleeping areas. Clean up trash on the line and in camp. Fire is a real threat in camp. Mitigation includes: identification and establishment of safe smoking areas. Keep the camp watered down.</p> <p>12) locate/construct safety zones with dozers prior to line progressing.</p> <p>13) Haz Mat- Avoid N 48 28 41.9, W 114 06 25.0, Mitigations - Be aware of and avoid haz mat in and around structures. Do not work beyond your training and ability.</p>													
Contingency/Mitigation											Date/Time: Revised 7/31 1300 hrs.		
Staff dedicated camp engine, water down vegetation.													
Pre-locate secondary repeater, staff aerial communications platform													



Firefighters operate at the Robert Fire in Flathead National Forest, Montana. (Inset) Photo illustrates the snag dangers of fighting forest fires.



IMT Safety Officer Michael Spencer demonstrates portable fire shelter deployment. This is a protective tent--made of fireproof material--in which firefighters encapsulate themselves if the wildfire overruns them.

Smokejumper operational procedures, physical conditioning and training requirements were discussed with instructors. At the School, all members were able to view workers repairing and repacking the parachutes used by these brave firefighters.

The FDNY Shadow Team was dispatched by the NRMAC to the Robert Fire Incident managed by the Alaska IMT under the leadership of Incident Commander Joe Stam. This approximately 21,000-acre fire (which ultimately spread to 57,500 acres) was approximately 70 miles north of Missoula, inside Flathead National Forest and threatening Glacier National Park to the immediate east. The fire was only 10 percent contained.

On arrival that evening at the Robert Fire Incident Command Post in Columbia Falls, introductions were made and some old acquaintances (Stam, Bill Beebe--PIO, Lynn Wilcock--Deputy IC, Ken Coe--Operations, Chip Houde--Operations, Rod Mayte--Planning, Mike Stubbs--Dep. Planning and Tony Doty--Logistics) renewed. The Alaska IMT worked at the World Trade Center 9/11 operation and played a vital role in coordinating FDNY recovery efforts. Shadow Team members were given a Daily Action Plan (DAP), similar in format to the Incident Action Plans used by the FDNY at the WTC incident.

The Night Operations Briefing was attended and all members had the opportunity to see their mentors in action for the first time. The Alaska Team addressed the Forestry firefighters in all DAP areas dealing with Incident Command, operations, safety and health, inter-agency liaison issues, public information, planning, communications, logistics, transportation, medical resources, human creature comforts, weather and fire behavior forecast, finance and demobilization. The subsequent Command and General Staff meeting allowed all Shadow Team members to individually and collectively discuss with the Alaska IMT their goals and objectives for the shadow training exercise.

Each day, Shadow Team members attended various planning

and strategy sessions, including day tour pre-strategy/operations meetings; day tour strategy/planning meetings; day tour operations briefings; night tour strategy/planning meetings; night tour DAP input meetings; night tour operations briefings; and Command/General Staff meetings. All members became fully indoctrinated with the ICS forms used by the IMT to organize and disseminate information.

Shadow members had ample time to focus on their designated areas of expertise established within the Incident Command System. Field observation, within the fire area, was also an important learning tool provided by the IMT. Shadow Team members entered the fire zone for reconnaissance via helicopter, fire apparatus, truck, four-wheel-drive vehicles and on foot. Firsthand knowledge gathered on these excursions was thoroughly discussed and evaluated with individual mentors and at meetings. Daily rounds with the Safety Officer involved on-site analysis of the health and safety measures instituted to control the firefighting hazards identified on ICS form 215A. (See sample on page 15 and box below.)

During the last two days of training, the Southern Area (Florida-based) Red Team--led by Incident Commander Joe Ferguson--replaced the Alaska Team. All Shadow Team members experienced the transition of command protocols established by the Alaska Team. Shadow Team members introduced themselves to their new Southern IMT mentors and the cycle of attending meetings, reconnaissance and surveillance and discussing ICS procedures continued until demobilized from the Robert Fire Incident Command Post. At the DNRC Northwest Area Command Center in nearby Kalispell, Montana, a debriefing meeting was held with the Alaska Team.

Shadowing is a vital segment of Incident Management Training. Besides learning more about the ICS, additional training opportunities were provided to all Shadow Team members in many unconventional firefighting areas. (See box above and at right.) These opportunities were an added bonus to the overall learning experience.

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Shadow Team members, shown left to right--EMS Chief Mark Stone (Medical), Battalion Chief George Belnavis, Battalion 1 (Planning), Alaska Team Incident Commander Joe Stam, Deputy Assistant Chief Ronald Spadafora, Operations (Safety), Battalion Chief George Maier, Battalion 9 (Planning) and Deputy Chief Richard Fuerch, Division 1 Commander (Logistics)--at the Command Center.

Unconventional Firefighting Areas

- Portable fire shelter deployment
- Use of forest fire firefighting tools and equipment
- Heavy construction machinery and vehicle operations
- Tree clearance (direct and indirect) strategy
- Foam reservoir hose-line (wet mop) extinguishment procedures
- Burned foliage clearance (dry mop) activities
- Fixed-wing aircraft and helicopter reconnaissance and extinguishment capabilities
- Fire behavior computer modeling analysis
- Urban-wilderness interface firefighting tactics
- Mutual-aid agreement protocols
- Compressed air foam systems (CAFS) to protect wooden structures
- Prescribed burn strategy
- Explosives utilization to provide firebreaks
- Special unit (smokejumpers and hotshots) assignment criteria

Plan. Working with seasoned IMT mentors at major, long-term incidents will greatly enhance the capabilities of all FDNY IMT members within the ICS. Ongoing Shadow Training will further strengthen FDNY's commitment to this important management tool and allow members to meet the objective of handling complex events of long duration in a safe and successful manner.



Members are urged to read "Origin and Development of FDNY Incident Management Teams--Part I," by Deputy Assistant Chief Ronald R. Spadafora, which appeared in the 4th/2003 issue of *WNYF*. Additionally, for more information on Incident Action Plans, see "Incident Management--A Key Component of the ICS," by Battalion Chief Andrew Richter, in the 3rd/2002 issue of *WNYF*.

IAP Safety Analysis Overview

Information recorded on the form allows the Safety Officer to fully comprehend his/her duties and responsibilities:

- Personal Protective Equipment (hard hats, safety goggles, fire shelters)
- Bear safety (bear bells)
- Personal hygiene (camp crud prevention)
- Rotted-out tree (snag) dangers
- Safe utilization of firefighting tools (Pulaski, McLeod) and equipment
- Roadway accident prevention
- Smokejumper/hotshot safety concerns
- Heavy equipment (bulldozer) precautions
- Prescribed burn hazards
- Hazardous materials
- Heliport protocols
- Daily safety messages
- Transitional safety strategy

These were just some of the issues addressed.

About the Author...

Deputy Assistant Chief Ronald R. Spadafora is a 26-year veteran of the FDNY. He is assigned to the Bureau of Operations. He holds a Masters degree in Criminal Justice from LIU-C.W. Post Center, a BS degree in Fire Science from CUNY-John Jay College and a BA degree in Health Education from CUNY-Queens College. He is an editorial advisor and frequent contributor to *WNYF*. He has taught Fire Science at John Jay College as an adjunct lecturer and fire promotion courses for Fire Tech Promotions Inc.

