

THE “BIG ONE”—ARE WE REALLY PREPARED?

Dan Packer, President, WFC

The Washington Fire Service can be proud of what we've accomplished in recent decades in emergency preparedness and sharing of resources, but we've still got a long way to go. Much has been said about the mistakes in the Gulf during Hurricane Katrina, but if we had an event of national significance today in Washington, many of those mistakes would be repeated. Our challenge is not to learn from other's mistakes (learning is easy), but to do the hard thing, which is to take action on what we've learned, and apply the lessons now, so that we're more adequately prepared. So what's the answer? In short, get engaged with the full spectrum use of the Incident Command System (not just Operations), and get involved with and properly utilize the Incident Management Teams that we have available.

The Katrina lessons include that local resources were not familiar or skilled with the entirety of the Incident Command System. Coordination and cooperation (two very different things) between public agencies such as Emergency Management, Fire, Law Enforcement, and Public Works was poor to non-existent. The use of qualified Incident Management Teams was tragically delayed, misapplied, and misunderstood. These facts have been thoroughly chronicled elsewhere, so with no further ado, what would prevent these same mistakes from happening during a large-scale event in Washington?

SILVER BULLET

There is no silver bullet, but there is something that comes very close. **Total embracement, and proper and early use of Incident Management Teams.** When deployed early in an incident, and properly missioned, an IMT can handle and mitigate the vast majority of the problems discussed here. Of course an IMT cannot prevent every logistical problem, nor prevent pain and suffering in a large event. There will be shortages, people will die, and there will be chaos. But our job is to bring order out of chaos, and an IMT is designed to do that. An IMT has subject matter experts within it to take care of the ordering process, the planning process, the financial issues, and of course the field operations.

As local chief officers, we must embrace the value and use of these teams, and if we have not already, begin getting involved ourselves. There now is a federal requirement to stand up regional Type 3 teams in every region. While many of our regions already have this resource in place, many others do not. This is a tremendous opportunity to get engaged, take the training necessary, get involved with the start-up effort, and begin to use this tool. A Type 3 regional team would be a

great resource for event planning as well as incident management. If your area has a large event that requires significant planning and coordination, use the team to practice all the section functions, in making the event happen.

PINK ELEPHANT

The great elephant in the room on this topic is that IMTs are being used regularly, every year, for hundreds of incidents, primarily in the mitigation of wildfire. They handle all the problems discussed here, with regularity and with professionalism and yet are often thought of as 'wildland teams'. Not so. They also respond to hurricanes, floods, windstorms, and shuttle recoveries. However, the fact remains that there is one frequently recurring event in America (and in Washington) that requires large scale incident management, and that is wildfire. So it's virtually the only place to practice. This represents another great opportunity for the structural (especially west side) fire service in Washington who is typically handling every emergency with a few hours work and a stack of pizzas (no disrespect-me too). There are five Type 2 IMTs in Washington, and two Type 1 teams, who are very busy every season combating wildfire, yet are trained and equipped to handle the all-hazard environment as well. Getting involved with these teams, as I and many of our fire service members already have, is a great way to learn the entirety of ICS, and to practice the skills that will be necessary when we get our 'Katrina'.

As we get involved, and as we build our Type 3 teams, there still is the question of what if it happens tomorrow?

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Have the conversation today with your local emergency management director, and with your neighboring agencies, on the value of ordering an IMT immediately to help you get set up and mitigate your large scale incident. You will not be giving up control, but you can delegate all the issues that your organization may not be equipped to handle, to a group that can handle them, and allow you to deal with the myriad complex issues affecting a 'host agency' in a large scale event.

USING ALL OF ICS

We often get strokes from the cops when the subject of ICS comes up. They say something like "you guys use that every day, but we're still learning how to spell it." And yet do we? We use the Operations section of ICS daily, with anything involving the "push to talk" functions on an incident. But are we regularly using, and familiar with the other sections? With the notable exception of wildfire, virtually every emergency we handle is solved with a few hours of work and some coffee and fast food. So how about the Planning section? In a large scale event, which may run for many days, even weeks, this section is critical to successful field operations. Planning looks 48-72 hours forward, and with Operations' assistance, determines what resources (type, size, number) will be needed. The Planning section can contain an entire group of people, systems, processes and forms that are designed to accomplish this, yet most of the public safety sector in Washington has very little experience or training in this portion of ICS.

The Logistics section is another critical component to a large scale event that may run for multiple operational periods (shifts). How many of us have training or experience in finding and ordering food, water, shelter, sanitation, and communication systems for hundreds of responders, along with an area to house all the above, on just a few hours notice? This is the job of the Logistics section, and yet on even a multiple alarm fire, this section is rarely used. Some would say that this is what a county or regional Emergency Operations Center (EOC) is for, and yet a major lesson from Katrina suggests something quite different. EOC's can be a tremendous resource to the Incident Commander, or the Incident Management Team (IMT), but should never serve in the capacity of command for an incident.

WHO'S ON FIRST - WHO'S ON SECOND?

The challenges with coordination and cooperation during Katrina are numerous, and in some cases understandable. However, some are not understandable, and dare not be repeated. Local agencies ordering resources independently, outside agencies self-dispatching into the area, and Emergency Management orders being placed without coordination with local commanders are important examples. These actions created terrible confusion, waste of resources, and were entirely preventable. The concept of 'single-point' ordering is a tried and true one, yet was not utilized in most cases in the Gulf. Very simply, one ordering point is established for a given area or problem, and then all orders go through that point. Yet in the chaos of a large scale event, and without proper pre-loaded systems in place, the concept falls apart. The Emergency Management Assistance Compact (EMAC) process was utilized, but not as effectively as it should have been. EMAC is essentially an interstate mutual aid system for emergency management organizations. This system can bring to bear a tremendous amount of resources. The challenge is for the resources to be ordered in a coordinated fashion (single-point), and for them to be the correct type and number of resources. There are countless examples of large orders just showing up, that were of no practical use to local commanders, because they had been ordered willy-nilly by someone that thought they might be useful. There are an equal number of examples of shortages and inability to get the correct supplies or resources in a timely fashion, all of which is created and exacerbated by a lack of coordination and by not using the tools that are available.

NOW IS THE TIME

Our world is rapidly changing, as is our role as fire chiefs. We can no longer focus entirely within our own communities or departments, but must be thinking on a regional and state-wide basis, as we face the prospect of large all-hazard events occurring in Washington. If we aggressively engage with our public safety partners, train on the full use of ICS, and join and utilize Incident Management Teams, we will be much better prepared to deal with "the big one." We've had our chance to watch and learn. When its our turn we'll have no excuse - we'd better be prepared!

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5 MINUTES FOR SAFETY

TEAMWORK

In today's demanding fire service, promoting positive attitudes and quality public service is very difficult. It is well documented that fire departments with good morale have fewer injuries.

B. F. Skinner proved it in 1953. If you want positive behavior, then positive reinforcement is your best tool to encourage desired behavior. Unfortunately, some accident investigations and firefighter injuries tend to create an environment that appears to be negative reinforcement. Typical organization structures identify "ERRORS" that need correction. The question we always ask after an injury is "How can we prevent this from happening again?" Loosely translated by some safety committees as "Who messed up?" That approach makes it harder to raise the safety bar and take a positive attitude about reporting "near misses". Skinner's lifetime work validated this concept in his early writings, "The Science of Human Behavior". Safety committees need to review accidents and near misses, and find ways to frequently recognize firefighters that are "doing it right". One of the most effective forms of recognition is a kind word from another firefighter. Positive reinforcement is the right thing to do, and it is effective.

NEAR MISS REPORT

Engine crew arrived on the scene of a working structure fire in a single-story wood frame residence. Upon arrival, heavy smoke was visible on Side A. The crew pursued an offensive interior attack with a 1-3/4" line, entering the residence through the front door. The crew was met with heavy, dark smoke to floor level, combined with high heat conditions. The firefighter involved entered the residence as part of the initial interior attack and within two minutes of entering the building, inhaled two (2) breaths of heated smoke and gas. The firefighter immediately exited the building and notified command. He was immediately evaluated by on-scene paramedics and transported to the hospital for evaluation and follow-up care. The firefighter was cleared at the hospital with no long term residual consideration. Blood gases were normal for CO and other fire-related gases.

The command structure worked well during this incident. All personnel were aware of the event, resources responded appropriately and the injured firefighter received immediate care. This event underscores the need for a command system which offers a high degree of accountability and that the potential need for RIT is always there, even on seemingly simple events. Following the incident, a full investigation was conducted on the chain of events. The firefighter indicated that he had followed SOGS by checking his equipment at the beginning of his shift and that all equipment was working properly. The department also requires that any SCBA failure result in a full assessment of the device.



The device was immediately removed from service. Certified technicians evaluated the mask and unit. The unit was in proper working order and there was no indication/reason for failure to have occurred. It was determined that the firefighter had been improperly storing the face piece and that his seal was potentially impaired as a result of the storage practice. Prior annual fit testing had not indicated a problem with the seal. The problem was most likely caused by the firefighter not completely opening the valve on the bottle prior to entering the fire. All other causes were eliminated. All personnel received follow-up direction of proper storage of face pieces and a reminder was sent out to all personnel, reminding them to make sure bottle valves are fully open before entry into a hazardous environment.



TIPS FOR A FIRE-SAFE HOLIDAY SEASON

We all know that fires increase during the holiday season. Please share this information with citizens, family members and friends to help lower the number this year. Even we seasoned veterans of the fire service should take a few moments to review these simple safety tips.

TREES

Choose a fresh tree. If you are not cutting the tree yourself, purchase one that is not shedding needles.

Re-cut the base of your tree and place it securely in a large, deep, non-tip stand.

Place your tree away from exits, fireplaces and heat sources.

Be sure your tree always has water. Your tree stand should be able to hold one gallon of water at all times.

If you have an artificial tree, make sure it is labeled flame-retardant.

If your tree is losing excessive needles, remove it from your home.

DECORATIONS

If you hang ornaments from your fireplace, do not start a fire in it.

Avoid burning wrapping paper in fireplaces or wood stoves. The burning of these materials is a common cause of chimney fires.

CANDLES

Always put candles in non-tip candleholders before you light them. Do not burn candles near combustible decorations or displays.

Never place candles on or near your holiday tree.

Keep candles well away from curtains and other combustible articles. Never put candles in windows or near exits.

Never leave candles burning unattended or within reach of small children.

Remember to extinguish candles before you leave a room or go to bed.

LIGHTING

Be sure all decorative lights (both indoor and outdoor) bear the label of an independent testing laboratory.

Replace any light sets with cracked or frayed cords or sets with loose connections.

Do not overload outlets.

Do not run extension cords under carpets, across doorways, on or under heaters or pinched behind furniture.

Unplug all decorative lights before leaving home or going to bed.

Never use electric lights on a metal tree.

On behalf of the Washington Public Fire Educators, have a SAFE and JOYOUS HOLIDAY SEASON!

WASHINGTON FIRE ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT

...together we serve

It's budget time and year end is just around the corner. We'll all be pretty busy these next several months getting ready for the new and closing out the old—your taking time to attend or work on Section events or projects is much appreciated! Thank you to the 2006-07 Board for all their hard work this year. There's been a great deal of change and it sure feels like we've been busy! Special thank yous to Christy Boisselle (Protocols), Carol Kibler (East Rep), and Kathy Amaral (Conference), who are active IMT participants through their individual departments. They were somehow able to continue work on their Section projects this summer while dealing with the busiest Wildland season we've seen in a long time. Thank YOU, ladies! I would also like to thank all of the members who have contacted us with great suggestions and words of support – it's much appreciated!

Projects for you, the members: Please take the time to send Michele DeLeon your completed "hot topic" survey for next year's Conference Round Table. We need your ideas and input to make this another successful event. Also, be sure to forward any education ideas you may come across to one of the Representatives or Arlene Larson, Education Committee Coordinator. We are keeping our eyes peeled for topics that would peak your interest and are always on the look out for quality instructors.

Not every member in the Section has the time to be an active Board or Committee member, but every one of you can be an active member by sharing your thoughts and ideas. Your Board looks forward to hearing from you!



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Myths vs. Realities

...regarding Fire-Safe Cigarettes

Following are some common myths—and the real truth—about the fire-safe cigarette issue. Some of the arguments below have been used by the tobacco industry as a “smokescreen” to divert attention away from the fact that fire-safe cigarettes can be a highly effective tool in our fight to save lives and prevent injuries and devastation from cigarette-ignited fires. (Courtesy of the National Association of State Fire Marshals).

MYTH: The push for fire-safe (lower ignition strength) cigarettes is just an anti-smoking campaign.

FACT: The Coalition for Fire-Safe Cigarettes is concerned about fire safety, and preventing deaths and injuries from cigarette-ignited fires. This is not about getting people to stop smoking or to smoke less. This is about making sure that the cigarettes that are smoked are less likely to cause fires.

MYTH: There is no such thing as a cigarette that reduces the risk of fire.

FACT: Research by the Harvard School of Public Health (HSPH), funded by the American Legacy Foundation, indicates several benefits of implementing the New York regulation. *“Fire Safer” Cigarettes: The Effect of the New York State Cigarette Fire Safety Standard on Ignition Propensity, Smoke Toxicity and the Consumer Market*” compared the physical properties of cigarettes sold in New York with cigarettes of the same brands sold in Massachusetts and California. The report found that New York cigarettes were far less likely to exhibit full length burns (only 10 percent) than those of the other states (99.8 percent). The HSPH researchers found no valid reason why cigarette manufacturers should not sell lower ignition-strength cigarettes nationwide. The Harvard study confirmed the 20-year-old conclusion of the Federal Technical Study Group on Cigarette and Little Cigar Fire Safety. This group, created by the Cigarette Fire Safety Act of 1984 (Public Law 98-567), concluded that it was technically feasible to develop cigarettes with a reduced propensity to ignite upholstered furniture and mattresses. As the Harvard study makes clear, the federal study was correct, and the tobacco industry can make reduced ignition-strength cigarettes if it chooses to do so or is required to do so.

WSFTSO FALL SEMINAR

Date: November 27 and 28, 2006
Time: 9:30 AM to 4:30 PM - Daily
Cost: \$150.00
On-Line Registration: www.wsftso.org



LOCATION:

Skagit Valley Casino Resort
5984 North Dark Lane
Bow, WA 98232
Phone: 360-724-7777

Chief John Salka

New York Fire Department

Chief Salka has been an officer for over 20 years and a chief for 10 of those years. He will share with you the lessons he has learned from both his successes and failures while commanding fire operation in the Bronx.

Join FDNY Battalion Chief John Salka as he talks about the many experiences he has had in the biggest and busiest fire department in America. Whether Firefighter, Officer, or Chief you are sure to gain a multitude of principles, practices and exercises that you can take back to your department or district.

After receiving this training you will be able to make a positive impact in the performance and safety of your department or district's operations.

The Two-Day Program Includes: *Fire Officer Leadership Skills* - This program is a look at the eight important leadership skills that firefighters and officers need to have to be effective and successful. Both fireground operations and fire station life depend on the ability of the fire departments leaders to inspire and empower the people around them to perform the duties and face the challenges presented to the each day. No fire department or company can be successful without effective leaders and eager followers.

Fire Officer Academy - This is a program for every company officer or firefighter working towards being a company officer. It is a review of the many skills, abilities and responsibilities that every company officer has for the people that work for him and the department that he works for. Every activity that every fire company gets involved in is guided and molded by the company officer. Fire chiefs depend on company officers to handle fireground tasks and fire station organization, and there are effective and successful ways of handling every situation. Every company officer should find this program interesting and helpful to their duties and responsibilities.

The FDNY Firefighter Survival Program - This is a program that was designed to highlight the dangers that firefighters face at every alarm they respond to. Some of the most frequent causes of firefighter injury and death are basic hazards that we face frequently. Chief Salka reviews some of the most dangerous situations that firefighters face and several of the actions that we can take to get ourselves out of trouble. He will discuss the proper use of personal protective equipment, transmitting a MAY-DAY, fireground size-up, risk vs. reward decision making and fireground emergencies. This is a fast-paced lifesaving program for all firefighters, officers and chiefs.

Fire Scene Size-Up - This program is an examination of the size-up process we practice at structural fires. It includes the many familiar factors we are taught to look at when devising our operational plan as well as some new concepts that will help you organize and implement an effective and safe fire scene size-up. Chief and safety officers should find this program particularly interesting and informative.

Firehouse Training Program - Of the many ways we try to improve safety and increase the effectiveness of our fire departments, training is the key to success. Join Chief Salka as he reviews and examines some of the most effective and productive training you can conduct right in your own firehouse. Attending conferences and trade show is always interesting and helpful, but every member of every fire department cannot take part in these large conferences. Taking the time and energy to put together several training programs in your own fire station will make them available to every member and increase your level of safety and effectiveness. Training and company officers should find this program helpful in enhancing their training efforts.

Battle Ready Firefighters - There are many functions and tactics that fire departments are responsible for in their communities, and we spend lots of time preparing and training for these situations. But if you look at the basic skills needed to be a successful firefighter, you will find a fairly short but important list. Chief Salka will list and review the set of skills that each of us needs to master in order to be considered battle ready. We will take a look at both engine and ladder company skills and how both officers and firefighters can increase their effectiveness and fireground success.

WHAT IS THAT BUZZING SOUND??!

Larry Mummey, Spokane Fire Department

What is that buzzing sound? I was recently in the interior of Alaska where every time the wind stopped I was swarmed with legions of a small insect.

There are certain concepts in the fire service flying around our heads, too, and just like the insects, we need to deal with those concepts. I don't mean to say that these are negative concepts; indeed, when we take care of them we all will be better off.

As Billy Goldfeder puts it, "The problem with getting injured or killed is that we will no longer be able to go to fires".



The first concept that I am speaking of is *Seat Belt Usage*. I am amazed at how easily we are lulled into complacency because WE haven't had any close calls. When I was in Alaska, I drove on the 22 miles of road that they had, and as is my habit, I buckled up every time I went anywhere. When I rode with someone else I noticed that they never buckled up. They would just ignore the periodic seat belt tone. I asked them why they didn't buckle. The response was "because we go slow and no one ever wrecks." Slow...hah...50 mph. Never wreck, hah! I saw several vehicles which showed rollover or collision damage. Gradually I was more and more complacent, and by the time I left, I, too, was not wearing my seat belt. In the fire service we certainly have the statistics to support seat belt usage. The second leading cause of line of duty death occurs responding to or returning from an incident.

Many injuries and deaths could be prevented by making a simple clicking sound. So take a stand and set an example by requiring that click.

The second "buzzing" is *Air Management*. Spokane City and The City of Spokane Valley fire departments just co-hosted a regional Air Management Train the Trainer class. Those excellent guys from Seattle (Effective Fire Service Training) delivered an insightful and well-delivered program. It is their position that, of the five ways firefighters die in a fire, there are four that are not always easy to deal with. They are Smoke, Thermal Insult, Structural Collapse, and Getting Lost/Separated. The fifth way, **Running out of air**, is easy to mitigate if we change our mindset. For years, we have been taught to exit the structure when our low air alarms sound. You know how it works—you are inside working and hear bells go off. You say to your self, "I wonder if that is my bell" and "It is my bell and I should start getting out—right after I finish pulling this section of ceiling." We ignore all of the other bells ringing (after all, they are false alarms) and start to leave. We don't really know if anyone else is having an emergency (after all, they are false alarms). We were taught in this class to monitor our air on a regular basis so that we could be outside the structure before our low air alarm activates (no more false alarms inside the structure!). Now when a low alarm activates inside the building, we know that there is some kind of problem and we take "immediate action" to mitigate the problem. We are still able to work at top efficiency and more importantly, we are not going to pass "The Point of No Return" where we become part of the problem instead of part of the solution.

The key element in stopping those "buzzing" sounds is to change our mindset so that we are less likely to be part of the problem and we can go home to our families at the end of each shift.

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Lot 1 (Self-Contained Breathing Apparatus):

- (17) MSA 2216 psi MMR Self Contained Breathing Apparatus w/ ICM 2000 integrated PASS devices
- (30) MSA 2216 psi Fiberglass composite wound SCBA cylinders, and an assortment of associated parts
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Lot 2 (77 sections of 3-inch Supply Line):

3850 feet of 3" Supply Line with 2.5" NH couplings (50' sections)
 46 sections were purchased in 1996 and 31 sections were purchased in 1981. All hose is believed to be serviceable, last tested in 2004.

Lot 3 (1967 American LaFrance 85' Aerial Ladder):

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Bid Instructions:

Interested parties are invited to bid on any or all of the items. Bid submittals should be clearly marked to indicate which Lot or Lots you are bidding on. Sealed Bids will be accepted until 16:30 hours on Thursday, November 30, 2006 at 102 East 5th Street, Port Angeles, WA 98362. Bids will be opened at 09:00 hours on Friday, December 1, 2006. Technical questions regarding this bid should be addressed to Keith Bogues at (360) 417-4652, or to kbogues@cityofpa.us. Bids must be sealed with the outside of the envelope marked BID OPENING DATE: December 1, 2006, Surplus Equipment. The name and address of the bidder shall also appear on the outside of the envelope.

Bids shall be addressed to:

**Port Angeles Fire Department
 Attn: Keith Bogues
 102 East Fifth Street
 Port Angeles, Washington 98362.**

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