



United States Department of the Interior

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

1849 C Street, N.W.

Washington, D.C. 20240

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Y14 (9560)

June 12, 2010

Memorandum

To: Regional Directors
Attn: Superintendents

From: Associate Director, Visitor and Resource Protection /s/ **Stephen J. Shackelton**

Subject: National Park Service Direction on NWCG #025--2010 Memorandum

On November 3, 2009, the National Park Service (NPS) released the Factual Report and Safety Action Plan from the Dutch Creek Incident where NPS employee Andrew “Andy” Palmer was fatally injured by a falling tree. At the time of the accident, Andy was employed as a firefighter at Olympic National Park in Port Angeles, Washington and was assigned to the Eagle Fire, part of the Iron Complex on the Shasta Trinity National Forest in Northern California. This was a tragic loss to Andy’s family, the National Park Service, and the wildland fire community.

The purpose of the Factual Report and Safety Action Plan were to identify key areas where we could improve in order to reduce the possibility of a similar incident in the future. The full text of the report along with accompanying documents can be found at:
http://www.nps.gov/fire/fire/fir_wil_fatality_investigation_dc.cfm.

The Fire Executive Council (FEC) tasked the National Wildfire Coordinating Group (NWCG) to address six of the eight recommendations found in the Safety Action Plan. The NWCG Executive Board assembled the Dutch Creek Serious Accident Task Team to provide input on the best methods, practices, or procedures to address five of the assigned recommendations found within the Dutch Creek Safety Action Plan. The NWCG memo and associated documents announcing the response to their assigned portions of the Safety Action Plan can be found at:
<http://www.nwcg.gov/general/memos.htm>.

The documents from the NWCG focus primarily on actions to be taken by Incident Management Teams (IMT) during incident operations. Additionally, there is some discussion of actions that local units (in our case parks) can and should take to prepare information in advance of an IMT’s arrival in order to deliver this information during the initial briefing.

Our primary goal is to enhance our ability to safely evacuate an injured firefighter in a timely manner. Preparation for a serious medical incident during wildland fire operations does not start with an IMT’s arrival. Fortunately, for the NPS, much of the infrastructure for medical evacuation is already in place on park lands. If it is not already occurring, park units need to ensure there is integration between the wildland fire program and the park’s Search and Rescue (SAR) program for appropriate medical response. Advance planning, ensuring that a plan is in

place, effectively communicated and practiced, along with incorporation of the local medical response and SAR function at an appropriate level during wildland fire activity are keys to a successful outcome in the unfortunate event of an employee injury.

To enhance the safety of NPS employees on incidents, NPS firefighters should expect an Incident Emergency Medical plan to be in place when they are on fires within NPS jurisdictions as well as non NPS fire assignments. If this information isn't relayed to our employees during their initial briefing, they should ask for it and receive any updates throughout their assignment.

I remind you that the **safety of our firefighters is our highest priority**. The western fire season is upon us. The actions outlined in this memo and those found in the attached documents from NWCG may be unfamiliar to some employees. Take the time to read the enclosed information and share it with your staff. Take the time to evaluate if your park is ready to respond to a medical evacuation if a fire occurs within your park. Most importantly, take the time to make sure that NPS employees know that they should expect an Incident Emergency Medical plan to be in place when they are on fires.

Work remains with our NWCG interagency partners on additional steps forthcoming from their review of wildland fire response and associated emergency medical response above and beyond that required via the aforementioned FEC tasking.

Any questions related to this information may be directed to your Regional Fire Management Officer, or to William "Bill" Kaage, Wildland Fire Branch Chief, or Tom Nichols, Chief of Fire and Aviation Management, who are located at the Fire Management Program Center in Boise, Idaho. The Fire Management Program Center staff will continue to work with Law Enforcement, Search and Rescue, Safety, and other staff within the National Park Service to develop methods and training to ensure that injured employees receive the best possible care.

cc: Associate Regional Directors, Operations
Regional Fire Management Officers
Tom Nichols, Division Chief, Fire and Aviation, FMPC
William Kaage, Branch Chief, Wildland Fire, FMPC
Dan Buckley, National Program Lead, Wildland Fire Operations, FMPC
Chad Fisher, Wildland Fire Safety and Prevention Specialist, FMPC
Roberta D'Amico, Fire and Aviation Communication Director, FMPC
Patricia Reinsch, Fire Management Program Assistant, FMPC