Stand #1-Organization: Tactical Decision Games (TDGS)

You have been tasked with mobilizing a crew in San Francisco, California, travelling to Nevada and working on a fire in Jiggs, Nevada. You're crew is comprised of regular employees with an eclectic set of backgrounds, some of whom have never fought a fire. You have been assigned a Crew Boss Trainee, and it has been requested that you leave as soon as possible.

As the Crew Boss for the GNP #3 crew, conduct a pre-mortem which addresses mobilization, travel, suppression, demobilization and return travel to San Francisco.

What tools are available to us to aid in a safe, timely and effective mobilization and departure?
As the Crew Boss what would be your priority with this new crew? How are you going to ensure that you focus on that priority?

Is two way communication flow necessary for a Crew Boss and Crew Boss Trainee to effectively interact with each other? How could you, as a Crew Boss Trainee, effectively communicate concerns/ issues to your Crew Boss without inviting conflict? What could Naar and Horton have done to ensure that they were on the same page concerning travel to the incident and all future engagements?

The Incident Response Pocket Guide was not a tool that was available to firefighters in 1999. What parts of the IRPG do we use on a day to day basis?

Stand #1-Organization: Strategic Discussion Points (SDPS)

It is 0600 on August 9th of 1999 in Jiggs, NV. You are the Crew Boss for GNP #3, who has driven all night to arrive at an incident and are without your entire crew due to a miscommunication or lack of communication. You have worked a shift of the fire and are eager to become more involved in suppressing the incident. While attending the morning briefing you did not receive an Incident Action Plan, but hear talk of Red Flag Warnings and extreme fire behavior.

Assuming that you want to work on the fire, what information needs to be clarified prior to engaging or even traveling to your division assignment?

Considering the Incident Command Structure and interface of elements within it, what areas of the ICS are failing at this point in the incident? How might a Branch Director, Division Supervisor, Operations Section Chief or even an Incident Commander mitigate and/or draw attention to these failures? What strong reaction would you take (as a fire line supervisor) to a seemingly weak signal that the organization is crumbling?

As the Crew Boss do you feel that you could safely engage a division of the fire at this time? Why? Why not?

Stand #1-Organization: High Reliability Organizing (HRO)

What other tool do we have to consider while trying to safely and reliably organize, manage and engage all aspects of wildland fire? Are there "small failures" which need to be addressed/ tracked, prior to arrival at the Incident Command Post which has already occurred?

Stand #2-Firing-Tactical Decision Games (TDGS)

The Lucky Nugget Subdivision is a resource of concern to the Team managing the Sadler Complex. There is a large portion of unsecured line between the "Big Black" and the "Big Safety Zone" which, if left unchecked could make a run towards the subdivision. The Incident Objectives for the Sadler Complex were: "1) Firefighter and public safety; 2) Protection of structures; 3) Suppression of the fire in the most cost-effective manner; 4) Protection of historic cultural sites; 5) Protect archeological sites in Aiken Canyon and Mineral Hill; 6) Protect livestock."

As the Crew Boss, do you think there is a feasible method for securing the line between the "Big Black" and the "Big Safety Zone"? Keep in mind the Incident Objectives and that conditions do not warrant a safe direct attack tactic at this time.

As a Crew Boss, what are your concerns with the proposed plans as they stand now?

Keeping in mind that the Incident Response Pocket Guide was not a tool available to firefighters in 1999; what "watch-outs" are you observing? How will you mitigate them?

Lookouts, Communications, Escape Routes and Safety Zones (LCES) are integral components in safely fighting fire. Are they in place? Can you put them in place to safely engage?

What other tool is available when considering risk in the fire environment?

Who has ever had a "hazardous attitude"? How have you been able to mitigate that attitude or how are you mitigating it now?

Stand #2-Firing-Strategic Talking Points (STPS)

According to local notes and observations by the Air Tactical Group Supervisors and Elko Management there was a priority to protect ranches and structures near the southern end of the Sulfur Springs mountain range (the southernmost part of the Sadler fire). Visibility of divisions O, N and Q from the air was null. The fire's airspace was being shared by two Air Tactical Group Supervisors due to the size and complexity of the fire, but they were having issues communicating with the provided frequencies[1]. Burning the northernmost part of the Sadler fire (the dozer line) was proposed as a long term strategy only when there was a break in visibility (on the 8th of August). The dozer line was put in the night prior to being burned and there was a forecasted cold front predicted for the 10th of August.

As an outgoing member of the Type 2 organization either demobilizing from the fire or transitioning into another role, how critical is disseminating strategic information from shifts prior? Some people tend to believe that they can start with a fresh slate when organizing an ongoing incident, is there value in re-organizing and omitting previous strategic plans? Was there an imminent need to conduct a burn-out at the northernmost division of the Sadler Fire on this division on August 9th?

[1] Air Attack information and northern Nevada situation information provided by Steve Dondero (Elko Air Attack during the Sadler Complex) and Jeff Gardetto (Air Support Group Supervisor on Ed Storey's Type 1 Team); northern Nevada situation information provided by Jeff Arnberger (Fire Operations Specialist during the Sadler Complex)

The Incident Action Plan for the 8.9.99 day shift shows Dalton IHC, Smokey Bear IHC and GNP #3 assigned to Division "N" (Chuck Frank). Due to a vehicle failure en route to the "Big Safety Zone" Horton (GNP #3) was unaware of the plan which was established by Frank, Shepard, Smokey Bear IHC and Dalton IHC. GNP #3 was assigned an operation on an adjoining Division Q (Shepard). Resources continued to arrive and Shepard was "swamped at this time by radio traffic, the number of resources reporting, the number of resources just turning up . . ."

How could the team have mitigated potential span of control issues?

Contrasting our knowledge of fire operations today what large scale strategic steps could have been taken to effectively manage the influx of resources relative to the fire's growth?

Stand #2-Firing-High Reliability Organizing

As the Crew Boss originally assigned to a division with 2 IHC's, how might you "develop skills . . . that will allow for improvisation and action when a failure occurs" (Commitment to Resilience)?

If you knew that there were other crews on this division with you what questions would you ask the Hotshot Superintendents and others on the division to broaden your understanding of what is happening and "defer to expertise"?

It has been noted that there ". . . was a combination of safety and sound tactics that required the decision to anchor and secure the east side first." As a Division Supervisor, what signal (weak or strong) might prompt you adjust interim tactics and strategy? What other information would you need and what questions would you ask of your resources to develop a plan?

Stand #3-Firing from the Y-Tactical Decision Games (TDGS)

While conducting this burning operation, it was noted in the Investigation that there was heavy radio traffic on Command and the Tactical Frequency. Horton's crew was utilizing their own crew net to communicate between each other and those participating in the burning operation couldn't or didn't hear any critical radio traffic regarding an increase in fire activity.

As a lookout, field observer or unassigned division supervisor asked to keep "an eye on the burn" what information do you need to convey to Horton? What should Shepard have clarified to his division resources regarding the request for Joe Reyes and Bob Hawkins to be his informal lookouts? What should Shepard have made clear to Joe Reyes and Bob Hawkins?

If you were an assigned lookout in this situation, how would you have mitigated the need to communicate critical information to the resources conducting the burnout? Keep in mind that the radio traffic is heavily clogged.

As the Crew Boss and primary contact for the burning operation what is your task, purpose and end state for this particular project. Assuming you have an adequate anchor point to burn off of, how will you convey your leader's intent to those who will be burning for you?

As a Crew Boss, identify “trigger points” for stopping your operation.

Stand #3-Firing from the Y-Strategic Discussion Points (SDPS)

Referencing the Incident Response Pocket Guide, re-evaluate the:

- Risk Assessment Process
- The 10 and 18
- LCES
- Operational Leadership
- Communication Responsibilities
- Leader’s Intent
- Human Factor Barriers to Situation Awareness

What’s missing? What’s present?

Stand #3-Firing from the Y-High Reliability Organizing (HRO)

Considering the full spectrum of information and guidance an HRO template provides what is destroying the safety culture, pillars or foundation of an HRO?

Is everybody on this division operating under a “reporting culture?” What barriers are preventing this from occurring?

Stand #4-Firing until Entrapment-Tactical Decision Games (TDGS)

Within this Division or in cooperation with other Divisions, what are some other tactical changes that could have taken place to address this part of the fire?

Would changing the lighting technique or pattern have made any difference in the success or failure of this burning operation? How?

What of the 10 Standard Firefighting Order and 18 Watch Out Situations should be mitigated by the time Horton yells, “Go, go, go, run!”

Stand #4-Firing until Entrapment-Strategic Decision Points (SDPS)

It is good practice to find alternative options to plans in the Risk Management Process. Taking into account your knowledge of the Division, how could the general strategy have been adjusted in the IAP to safely address the values at risk?

By adjusting strategy, how could Division resources have been organized to address the values at risk without compromising firefighter and public safety?

Stand #4-Firing until Entrapment-High Reliability Organizing (HRO)

Included in the Principles of High Reliability Organizations is (1) preoccupation with failure (2) reluctance to oversimplify and (3) sensitivity to operations.

What failures could have been corrected during the firing operation?

Was there an attempt to simplify this operation? What were the errors in oversimplifying?

What "strong response" could have been made to the increased fire behavior, lack of communication, negligence of LCES?

Stand #5- The Safety Zone -Tactical Decision Games (TDGS)

You are the Task Force Leader for a Division conducting a burnout operation. You are notified that burn injuries have been incurred by members of a squad from a Type 2 crew, including the crew boss.

What needs to be done to begin patient treatment and what protocol do you need to follow?

As an incoming Task Force Leader arriving on this division of the Sadler Fire, what questions would you be asking of the division supervisor? Of the resources assigned to you? How would effectively integrate yourself into the existing organization and what issues would you address?

Shortly following the burnover (20 minutes later) and subsequent burn injuries, a branch director (Huter) and dozer boss (Allen) completed the burnout which had ended a very short distance from the "Big Black".

As a task force leader assigned to this division and responsible for initial evaluation and treatment of the burned individuals, do you feel that completing the burnout is mission critical?

Would it be appropriate to interface with the Branch Director at this time and how would you go about it?

Stand #5-The Safety Zone-High Reliability Organizing (HRO)/ Strategic Decision Points (SDPS)

HRO's depend on a "reporting culture"; they depend on timely, transparent and accurate information to be conveyed. Sometimes we might wonder if we need to relay certain information and often times we decide that what we've observed or noted isn't worthy of being passed along. In the case of the burn injuries which were incurred during the entrapment, Ed Storey notified Elko BLM Agency Administrator of the hospitalizations at 2000.

When talking about the "Pillars" which support the "Safety Culture", was the delay in notification due to communication failures? Was the notification made in a timely fashion?

Considering that “just cultures . . . should be accountable for implementing a reliable operating system and managing the workforce,” what needed to occur long before the incident in order to ensure that a “reliable operating system” was in place?

Stand #6-The Safety Zone-Integration

As the Division Supervisor conduct an After Action Review with the resources on your Division:

- What was planned?
- What actually happened?
- Why did it happen?
- What can we do next time?

Would there be any value in submitting a SAFENET after being a part of this incident? If you had to choose one piece of the puzzle which contributed the most to this entrapment, what would it be and why?

How will we apply the knowledge from today’s staff ride into our continued learning in the fire environment?

What can we do during the pre-season to prepare ourselves, our co-workers and our subordinates for a safe fire season?

What actions can we take to reinforce positive action and correct weaknesses?