



LEAD Time

Leading Up
Leadership Category

Looking out for our people includes not only those who work for us but also our leaders and peers. Leadership is about influencing others to accomplish tasks that are in the best interest of our organization which often means influencing those above us and leading up. Similarly, we are open to upward leadership – and, in fact, encourage and reward it.

- Fire leaders are expected to lead in many directions, an expectation that increases complexity and risk.
- Summoning the courage needed to intervene and influence peers or leaders above can be difficult, especially if providing unwelcome feedback about behavior or pointing out an alternative to a potentially bad decision.
- In high-risk environments, no one can afford to assume that anyone has all the answers.

To build the kind of healthy and resilient culture required in the wildland fire service, we lead up – holding our leaders accountable, providing unvarnished situational awareness in challenging situations, and offering unbiased and viable alternatives.

Discussion Points

- How can we practice leading up?
- Describe a situation where leading up took place. How was the situation affected?
- Describe a situation where there was opportunity for leading up but it was not done. How was the situation affected?
- Discuss leading “laterally”: influencing peers or those with similar responsibilities.

References:

[Wildland Fire Leadership Development Program](#)
[Leading In the Wildland Fire Service](#)

Have an idea? Have feedback? Share it.

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