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Subject: Experiential Refresher Training

To: Regional Foresters, Station Directors, Area Director, IITF Director, Job Corps,
and WO Staff

I encourage you to examine the Annual Refresher Training efforts in your Region and take an approach that enhances the learning process of our fire management workforce, one that provides the opportunity to improve skills and increase firefighting safety. In addition to the minimums required by policy, an effective Refresher Training course will include:

- Challenges participants at all levels through application of experiential training methods
- Is focused on monitoring and improving firefighter competencies
- Relies on inter-unit cooperation, improving the capability to share instructors and provide different tools and approaches to training at different levels
- Is applicable not only at the individual and small unit level (crew, engine company) but to fire staff organizations and organized IMTs as well.

A variety of effective tools are available to use toward this end:

- San Dimas Technology Development Center (SDTDC) has released the “SDTDC Fire Simulator” to accompany S-200 and -300 level training. This hands-on, interactive, computer-based program tests user competencies in managing initial attack, through fire transition, to extended attack... historically, times of vital safety concern. Copies of the CD can be obtained free of charge by e-mailing Carl Bambarger (Carl D Bambarger/WO/USDAFS). Additional information on the simulator can be found at <http://fsweb.sdtc.wo.fs.fed.us/programs/aviation/firesim/index.html>
- For further assistance Carl can be reached at (909) 599-1267 x253, or Ralph Taylor at x234.
- Practice fires or *Flag fires* can be used as drills to establish or reinforce SOPs, to evaluate leader reactions to fireline situations, and bring improved meaning to Standard Firefighting Orders and Watchout Situations.
- Tactical decision games, played on a sand table, can exercise problem recognition skills, decision-making skills, and communication skills at the crew level... all of which are essential to firefighter safety. A field reference guide is available at <http://www.fireleadership.gov/toolbox/toolbox.html>
- Role-play simulations, which can be developed by “localizing” the S-420 exercise, can be used during pre-season meetings to assess and improve IMT competencies, to establish and reinforce functional SOPs, and to evaluate individual team member behaviors under stress.



- Staff Rides are effective tools that can be used at Forest and Regional fire staff levels to explore strategic and operational lessons learned. This tool can be adapted to provide local units the opportunity for a multi-echelon field refresher session. A field reference guide will be available by March 1 at <http://www.fireleadership.gov/toolbox/toolbox.html>

Beyond refresher training, hands-on competency training should be established as an ongoing activity for dedicated fire resources, such as the one day per week recommendation established by the R-4 Regional Forester.

A Chinese proverb states, *“Tell me and I will forget. Show me and I may remember. Involve me and I will understand.”* Effective training is **experiential training** for adult learners. The best way to do that is to utilize training approaches that provide “hands on” activities and place the participants in the role they are expected to perform.

/s/ Jerry T. Williams
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cc: Wildland Fire Safety Council