LESSONS LEARNED

• Are you physically ready for this assignment?
  – Extreme hiking
    • When on the line expect to hike in steep, rocky terrain
  – Extreme weather
    • Both hot and cold weather possible during the same incident
  – Lack of rest
LESSONS LEARNED

• Are you mentally prepared for this assignment?
  – Long hours of work
  – Lack of rest
  – Unpleasant work conditions
  – Away from family for extended time
LESSONS LEARNED

• Do you have the proper equipment?
  – Good hiking boots
  – Comfortable Pack
  – Cold weather gear
  – Good sleeping gear
  – Long handle tool
  – Brush helmet
  – Medicines and toiletries
  – GPS and Compass
    • All noted in Section 3
LESSONS LEARNED

• Is your family prepared?
  – Make sure your family knows and supports what you are doing
    • You will be away from home for an extended time
  – Ensure that you have proper child care in your absence
  – Ensure that household chores will be completed in your absence
    • Hire a gardener, pool guy, housekeeper for the summer
LESSONS LEARNED

• “Ooops! I forgot to pay my bills...”
  – The bill collector doesn’t care that you were out saving the world
  – Set up automatic bill pay
  – Ensure that your financial obligations are met in your absence
LESSONS LEARNED

• Make sure that you are taking care of yourself while on assignment
  – Use a good quality sunscreen everyday
    • SPF 45
  – Wear a hat to add protection to your head when not on the fire line
LESSONS LEARNED

• “I treated injuries that I had never treated before”
  – Review “Basic” EMT skills
    • Bandaging
    • Splinting
    • Foot care
    • Wound care
    • Gastrointestinal emergencies
    • Environmental emergencies
  – Study Wilderness Medicine or Military Field Medicine
LESSONS LEARNED

• “I had to pay for the rental car at the airport on an out of state assignment even though it was supposed to be arranged for by the incident.”
  – Be prepared to handle situations such as this
    • Carry a credit card
    • Carry at least $100 cash
  – Resolve as soon as possible
    • Check with Finance and get the car out of your name
  – Be professional
LESSONS LEARNED

• “Don’t whine and try to get your assignment changed.”
  – Take what you get every time
  – You may be sent home if you complain
    • Or worse, keep getting the less desirable assignments
  – Volunteer for the “less desirable” assignments
    • Take any job that is asked of you and do it well
    • Medical Unit Leaders appreciate your cooperation
LESSONS LEARNED

• “They told me I was going to be “Spiking Out…” It would have been nice to know what that meant prior to getting on the helicopter.”
  – Be prepared to “Spike Out”
    • Take food and water for at least 24 hours if possible
    • Take cold weather gear
  – Know what the MEDL expectations are while you are out
    • Medical Plan
    • Evacuation Plan
LESSONS LEARNED

• “Nobody wants to hear about the money you are making for carrying the first aid kit.”
  – NEVER discuss money on an incident
  – If asked about how much money you are making be vague but not rude
LESSONS LEARNED

• “I thought I was going to die after that hike.”
  – Pack light
  – Know who you are hiking with
    • Hot Shot Crew versus Blue Card Crew
  – Hydrate
  – Know your limitations
MISCONCEPTIONS

• “There will be a vehicle at the incident for me to use.”
  – Expect NOT to have a vehicle waiting for you
  – You may be required to ride with someone who has an agency vehicle
  – Do not use your personal vehicle unless it is approved by the Ground Support Unit Leader
MISCONCEPTIONS

• “I can pick up supplies at the incident when I get there.”
  – It may take days for the incident to get and issue supplies
  – Bring everything with you every time
MISCONCEPTIONS

• “I will always be out on the line.”
  – You will most likely be rotating between the line and the Medical Unit
  – The MEDL determines your assignment
  – Be honest about your capabilities.
MISCONCEPTIONS

• “I can drive the fire line, therefore I won’t be required to do much hiking.”
  – Even when you can drive around a fire line you will probably be expected to be out on the line monitoring the crews
  – In an emergency, you may be required to hike a considerable distance to assist in the rescue
MISCONCEPTIONS

• “I’ll take the night shift because it is easier”
  – It is easier to hike in cooler weather however this means that you will be “trying” to sleep during the heat of the day
  – Nighttime operations present new challenges that you must be prepared for prior to going out
  – Daytime operations can be very noisy and hard to get proper rest during – look for sleeper units or a quiet place to get rest
MISCONCEPTIONS

• “I’ll just grab a hotel and get some rest.”
  – Many times you are very isolated from anything
  – Other agencies may have contracts for hotels leaving no vacancies
  – Most likely your agency does not pay for hotels and you will be responsible for payment if you’re allowed to leave camp to find one
MISCONCEPTIONS

• “If another incident breaks out, I will be able to go to that one if I want.”
  – Once you are assigned to an incident, you belong to that incident regardless of what is happening around you
  – Do not leave the incident you are assigned to without approval
  – Completely DEMOB prior to leaving the incident
  – Must have approval to respond to a new incident
MISCONCEPTIONS

• “As soon as the fire is contained, I will be sent home.”
  – As long as there are crews out on the line working, expect to be held on the incident
  – You may be one of the last resources released
SUGGESTIONS

• Start getting in shape now!
  – USFS Arduous Pack Test Standard
    • 3 miles over flat terrain
    • 45 pound pack
    • 45 minutes or less
    • Walking only. No jogging or running
  – Can you make the grade?
    • Don’t wait to find out
SUGGESTIONS

• Have your equipment ready prior to going available
  – Don’t cause a delay in reporting to an incident because you weren’t prepared
  – Create inventory sheets for your equipment
    • Web Gear
    • Red Bag
    • Medical Bag
    • Paperwork
    • Household Check-off
SUGGESTIONS

• Take care of your family
  – Make life easy for your spouse
    • Hire a gardener, pool guy or housekeeper to take care of your home while you are gone
    • Arrange for the bills to be paid in your absence
    • Arrange for child care before you go out
  – Ask your station to check on your family every couple of days
    • A simple phone call makes a big difference
  – Reward your family for supporting you
    • Something sparkly for the spouse always works
    • Something special for the kids
    • Somewhere nice is good for all
SUGGESTIONS

• Take a map and compass class
  – It is imperative that you know exactly where you are on an incident at all times
  – It is equally imperative that you know how to get to an injured firefighter using a map and compass
  – Do not take these skills lightly
    • The safety of many individuals is dependant on you
SUGGESTIONS

• Purchase and know how to use a GPS
  – As with the map and compass, a GPS will aid you in doing your job properly
  – Take a GPS course if needed
  – Just having one isn’t good enough
SUGGESTIONS

• Show up to the incident ready to work
  – Always assume that there will be no equipment or supplies at the incident when you arrive
    • Bring everything, every time
      – Tools and Equipment
      – Medial Supplies
      – Personal Gear
      – Paperwork including valid EMT cards
  – You will not go on the line if you are not properly equipped
SUGGESTIONS

• Get familiar with radio operations
  – Know the organizational flow chart prior to accepting an assignment
  – Know who you are reporting to during an assignment
  – Know proper procedures for an emergency during an incident
    • Medical Plan
  – Ask Communications Unit if you have specific questions regarding the use of a radio
SUGGESTIONS

• Take care of yourself while on an incident
  – Eat properly
  – Use sunscreen
  – Hydrate, Hydrate, Hydrate
  – Rest when possible
  – Know your limitations
SUGGESTIONS

• Take care of your feet and your feet will take care of you
  – Invest in a good pair of hiking boots and break them in prior to going out on an assignment
  – Invest in good quality socks
  – Carry “mole skin” or other products to take care of blisters should they occur
SUGGESTIONS

• Pack a larger medical bag that can be kept in your vehicle
  – Make a bag up that holds medicines, bandages, personal hygiene items, blood pressure cuff and stethoscope, oxygen supplies, etc…
  – Keep extra supplies in your vehicle so you can restock if needed while on the line
SUGGESTIONS

• Be Nice and Work Hard
  – Remember that you will work with people from all walks of life
  – Be respectful of other agencies and their traditions
  – You are being invited to play in their game, do not ruin it for others
  – A good reputation will follow you everywhere... A bad reputation will beat you there every time!
SUGGESTIONS

• Keep your home agency advised of your status while on the incident
  – Ensure that your timecard is being completed properly
  – Ensure that they have the incident information
    • Phone numbers
    • Incident location
  – Notify dispatch when you are released from the incident
SUGGESTIONS

• Be Respectful
• Show gratitude
• Work hard
• Have fun