CASE STUDY

This short case study focuses on decision-making regarding appropriate level of engagement on a fire in Colorado. This case study analysis can be run as a classroom Q&A with individual responses or as a small group exercise.

- Handout the Case Study Analysis Worksheet and read the following situation overview to the students

Incident: High Meadows Fire
Location: Bailey, Colorado (65 miles west of Denver)
Date: June 13, 2000
Crew: Kern Valley IHC (personnel involved listed below)
  Supt 1 Anthony Escobar
  Captain 1A Ron Napoles (cameraman)
  Captain 1B Leif Mathiesen
  Squad Leader 1C Heath Cota
  Squad Leader 1D Trenton Burnett
  Firefighter Gabe Sarzotti

This is the crew’s first shift on the fire. Their assignment is to construct direct handline in order to prevent fire spread and protect structures. They are transported to the fire by school bus and begin their work on the fireline at about 1000. The weather forecast calls for a dry cold front passage in the morning bringing northwest winds 15-20 m.p.h. behind the front; minimum RH 15-20%; maximum temps 70-72 degrees; Haines Index of 5.

- Show the 11 minute video sequence
Using Windows Explorer, select the CD drive on your computer, then click on the “Scenario-Case Study” folder, and then double click the “Case Study Video” file to begin. To enlarge the viewing size you can click on “View” and select “Full Screen.” This will slightly degrade the video quality.

Most computer systems have pre-installed multi-media software such as Microsoft Media Player or Apple QuickTime that will enable you to play this file. If yours does not, Microsoft Media Player has been included on this CD.

- Facilitate the analysis of the event
After showing the case study video, use small group or individual question and answer techniques to address the following questions on the Case Study Analysis Worksheet handout.
1. What information did the Superintendent communicate to his Captains based on his initial scouting actions? 
   Description of terrain features near the crew, location of the fire edge, and the location of a good clean burned area.

2. What was the Superintendent going to do after briefing his Captains? 
   Work his way to a location where he could look back and see the fire activity.

3. What fire behavior threshold/trigger point was discussed? 
   Individual trees torching, with potential for fire to pickup and runs to occur.

4. What relative humidity did Captain 1B get when he took weather? 
   RH of 20%

5. Describe the fire behavior at the beginning of the scenario? 
   Running ground fire with individual tree torching.

6. Describe the fire behavior at the end of the scenario? 
   Active crown fire.

7. What was Firefighter Sarzotti doing during the shift? 
   Working as another lookout, in addition to the Superintendent.

8. How did the crew react to the increasing fire behavior? 
   Incrementally reduced the aggressiveness of their tactics by changing their location relative to the direction of fire spread and giving up sections of line.

9. When the crew changed their level of engagement or location what key task did they perform? 
   Accounted for all crewmembers.