

Minutes

FIREScope OPERATIONS TEAM

Riverside Fire Laboratory

August 30, 31, 1977

Members Present:

Bob Irwin (USFS)
Mike Schori (CDF)
Dick Millar (USFS)
Richard Barrows (OES)
Dick Chase (USFS, Laboratory)

Stan Barlow (LACO)
Robert Haliburton (Santa Barbara Co.)
Richard Wilson (Ventura Co.)
Joe Springer (CDF)

Task Force:

George Demos (LACO)
Orville C. Dame (LACO)
Keith Metcalfe (CDF)
Chuck Mills (USFS)
Mike Scheer (OES)

Review of proposed agenda for the meeting

The group reviewed the agenda and set priorities for covering topics for the 2-day session.

Discussion of Program Manager's staff

Irwin presented his staffing proposed starting October 1, 1977.

The Assistant Program Manager's position has been classified by the Forest Service Regional Office. However, at this time, there is no available employment ceilings, and it is not known when a ceiling can be obtained. The position graded out as a GS-12 Systems Analyst. The inability to fill the position has far-reaching impacts such as:

1. Contracting deadlines may not be met.
2. Task Force work may be impaired.
3. Subcommittees' work will have to be postponed.

The Administrative support position has been authorized and is presently being filled by Gail Knott from the Fire Laboratory. This position was transferred from Research to the Regional Office in State & Private Forestry.

Research will maintain a Program support position and a person should be selected within 30 days.

(NOTE: 9/5, Regional Office approved and allocated a ceiling for the Assistant Program Manager position. Target date for filling position is November 1, 1977.)

Implementation Budget

The 1978 1.2 million implementation budget was addressed by the group. Expenditures will start October 1, 1977.

The proposed 1979 budget changes were discussed by the group and a review was made of the Task Force's recommendations.

The Operations Team would like to continue to obtain the 3.7 million originally requested in the implementation plan. However, if there is no alternative but to reduce the budget to 1.2 million as recommended by the Washington Office, the Task Force proposal is an acceptable way to go.

Several suggestions were made pertaining to the Task Force recommendations.

1. Item No. 5, IR Transporter

The replacement and upgrading of the present IR-1 (chassis) should occur with 1978 dollars instead of FY 79. There is a possibility of equipment damage to the ground link if the present chassis is used.

2. If dollar adjustments are needed, CDF recommended the OCC site selection money could be reprogrammed to support a higher priority item.
3. Strong emphasis should be placed on spending implementation dollars to support systems being tested in the CORE area.

Campbell Bill

A problem was addressed with the wording in the Campbell Bill (SB #398). Dick Barrows was going to follow up with the Legislators to amend the wording in an attempt to make it acceptable to the affected agencies. Forest Service will NOT provide "matching funds."

(Note: 9/1 -- Barrows reported that wording was not changed, but legislative opinion indicates that the specific wording is not critical.)

Future Task Force Support

Irwin indicated a \$60,000 commitment of FY 78 implementation dollars to support agency Task Force participation in the first year implementation phase.

Cooperative Agreements will have to be set up as the present Research agreements will terminate September 30, 1977.

The group supported the continuation of the Task Force. However, concern was expressed as to the amount of time each agency's personnel could devote to the Task Force. Irwin to follow up with the partner agencies.

Communication Meeting Discussion

Irwin presented the recommendations from the committee group meeting pertaining to partner agencies using the State microwave intercom system to intertie all partner agencies with the OCC. The group authorized the expenditure of \$15,000 of FY 78 implementation dollars to purchase needed equipment and labor to make the system operational.

The group agreed to evaluate the system in 1 year and if continued use is recommended, the agencies would be required to pay the annual user rates.

Los Angeles County expressed concern with any additional communication system which would create a financial burden to them. At this time, the County is trying to replace the two helicopters that were destroyed.

The group recommended a quick call tone be installed with the intercom system.

Research Update

1. Communication plan completion on schedule.
2. OCC configuration being completed by SDC. This document may be controversial to some agencies.
3. Final design for communication vehicles
 - a. Incident Command System
 - b. I.R. recommendations

Group discussion pertaining to present communication vehicle. OES and Research state the vehicle is for evaluation and not the recommended operational design.

Discussion of OCC Operations during the period July 28 - August 15, 1977

Are procedures adequate?

Generally, yes--the procedures covered all of the activities necessary to provide good information for the F.S.C.P.E. Region. No breakdowns were noticed in the areas of "what to do" or "how to do it."

The procedures also proved adequate to serve information needs for others, and performed function well beyond the F.S.C.P.E. design load (BIFC, North Zone, SAC MAC, etc.).

This is the wrong question. What we learned was that the procedures inside the OCC are dependent upon several factors that are outside of procedural control. These are:

1. Manning

OCC manning levels were low when Middle Fire broke. It was 2-3 hours before Sitstat was adequately staffed. With low staffing, dispatching took priority.

2. FIREMOD use

The mechanical procedures to run FIREMOD are okay, the problems are in establishing positive communications, feedback and field use.

Actual fire information (location, slope, fuels) is not getting back to Sitstat from the fire in a timely manner.

Effective models cannot be run without this information.

FIREMOD is being given to agency dispatchers, but it may not be getting to Incident Commanders.

Fire Managers do not realize that they can (and should) ask for follow up FIREMODS at any time.

3. Communications

Receiving and sending information by telephone and telecopier slows down efficient operations for both OCC and agencies. Radios are not the answer. Present (existing) hardware is not sufficient.

4. Reporting

Procedures are not clearly understood or agreed to within agencies when reporting is incomplete or not timely, it causes "blanks" in information available to OCC and other agencies.

Under critical conditions when information was not getting to OCC, the procedures were reversed, and OCC contacted the agencies and also went directly to the incidents.

Recommendations for Improvement

1. This fire experience demonstrated the need for prompt and adequate manning for status and dispatching. Agencies should reevaluate (reemphasize) the timely and adequate staffing of necessary positions.

Written guides on FIREMOD and status reporting should be developed for field distribution. They should cover both ICS and "Traditional" fires, and describe:

- a. How to get (and use) FIREMOD information when desired.
- b. When and how to provide update fire information for FIREMOD.

2. Reporting: There are still unsettled differences in needs, philosophies, and agency procedures in regards to status reporting. This is a complicated subject and has many elements. The Task Force should try again, using this fire experience, to develop guides for improving and standardizing reporting procedures.

3. Communications

A. Priorities

There needs to be a determination made by OCC coordinators concerning what type of information falls into "must know" and "nice to know" categories. OCC status unit leader should set priorities for telephone and telecopier use during busy periods according to these categories.

B. Intercom System

Current proposal for a 1-year trial of the CDF intercom system should help to alleviate some communication problems.

C. Automated Systems

It is possible now for agencies to interact with the OCC by using G.E. Timeshare terminals. This would speed up information and relieve telephonic and intercom loads. It would make it possible to "store" or selectively recover certain information if and when desired by individual agencies. Examples are:

Resource status

- FIRECAST
- Weather
- Situation status reports

NOTE: Operations Group follow up.

ICS Evaluation

Operations Team discussed Middle fire and ICS evaluation. Feeling is that test went generally well, but that the evaluation team did not have adequate guidelines for making an indepth evaluation. CDF is hosting an ICS evaluation meeting in Sacramento on September 7. Objectives of that session will be to develop more thorough evaluation guides for multiagency use. Results of this work should go to Task Force for review and submission to Operations Team.

The team recognized the Evaluators' recommendations made on the Middle fire. Each involved Operations Team member said his agency would take internal action (their Task Force members) to correct problems and improve performance as noted by the evaluation team.

As of now, all systems are ready to test another ICS Incident in the CORE area.

Task Force Future

Who, how work?

Pay?

Time involved?

Program Manager and T.F. to address this problem on September 13 and 14 and to establish workload and plan future actions.

Program Manager's Workload

Unsettled issues (25%)

1. Reimbursement and reciprocity
2. OE funding
3. Cooperative agreements
4. OES roles/procedures

Contracting (50%)

Prepare and issue PI&E contracts

1. I.C.S. Option levels
2. OCC Hardware (Eao evaluation)
3. MACS Planning

Implementation (60%)

Planning and doing

- a. Task Force
- b. Operations Team
- c. Communications, FS budget process

Equipment Coop agreements

- Communications
- Vehicles
- Weather stations
- Task Force
- Terminals, etc.

Training Coordination

Other (20%)

Political and information task

R.O. and W.O.

Forest

Other partners

Briefings

PIO

Other publics

Coordination with Research

Follow on support and demonstrations

"Catch up" efforts (on activity effort).

Next separate Operations meeting will be at 0900 October 12-13 at the Riverside Fire Laboratory.

Minutes submitted by Chuck Mills, Task Force Chairman