FIREFIGHTING RESOURCES OF CALIFORNIA ORGANIZED FOR POTENTIAL EMERGENCIES

PAST, CURRENT AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS A PROGRESS REPORT

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The FIRESCOPE project was developed as the result of the tragic 1970 wildland fire season in Southern California in which over 500,000 acres burned, over 700 homes were destroyed and 16 lives lost in a 13 day period. This fire siege surfaced major problems relating to mutual aid, incident management, communications, and multi-agency coordination.

The United States Congress chartered the FIRESCOPE project in 1972 and directed the Forest Service to assist the Southern California fire agencies in a program to review research, development and applications. The original acronym stood for FIrefighting Resources of Southern California Organized for Potential Emergencies. The initial focus was directed toward the annual wildland fire problem.

The program's foundation revolved around (1) improving fireground operations, (2) increasing the effectiveness of fire protection agencies, and (3) improving multi-agency coordination. The original partner agencies with the Forest Service were the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection, California Office of Emergency Services, Los Angeles City Fire Department Los Angeles County Fire Department Ventura County Fire Department and Santa Barbara County Fire Department. In September 1984, Orange County Fire Department was added to the partner agencies after several years of active participation on the task force and specialists groups.

The original partner agencies developed five initial program components, they were:

- Coordinate multi-agency resources during major incidents.
- Develop improved methods for forecasting fire behavior.
- Develop standard terminology.
- Provide multi-agency communications.
- Provide multi-agency training.

These five basic statements were consolidated into two components which would make up the FIRESCOPE system, namely:

- **INCIDENT COMMAND SYSTEM (ICS)** for improving incident management.
- **MULTI-AGENCY COORDINATION SYSTEM (MACS)** for improving multi-agency coordination for major or multiple incidents. Day to day program management.

Initial funding (1972-1977) came from the Forest Service research Funds and 5 million dollars was spent on system design. The partner agencies provided experienced personnel to staff committees to provide for lesson plan development, decision making, and inter-agency training. Initially; on February 10, 1977 the governing body called the Board of Directors established broad policy statements to support the initial mission statement. The Operations Team took the policies and set priorities for the Task Force which oversaw working committees which were called Specialist Groups.

Development groups developed the initial lesson plans and training packages.

The first system wide implementation years were 1977-1979. During these years, the Forest Service with the partner

agencies would distribute and train Southern California Fire Agencies on FIRESCOPE. The federal government would allocate 2.4 million dollars to assist in this initial implementation. In 1979, an additional 10 to 12 million dollars would be spent on full implementation. The partner agencies assumed costs for operation and maintenance of the system. In 1976, the operations coordination center was established in Riverside for Multi-Agency Coordination (MACS) of the FIRESCOPE region.

In 1982, the partner agencies had fully implemented FIRESCOPE Incident Command System and were using the standardized lesson plans and training materials. By the start of the 1982 fire season, three (3) command teams had received ICS command training.

The end of funding for FIRESCOPE came in 1982 with approximately 60 percent of the system completed. The major achievements the incident command system included are:

- Automated weather stations (RAWS) A system of remote weather stations for electronically transmitted received weather data.

- Common mapping system A common mapping systems, orthophoto maps, urban-interface use.

- Communication systems management Incident communication plan system management and Fire Information Management System.

- Fire behavior modeling. Development of computer models for forecasting fire behavior.

- Infrared monitoring Monitoring fire perimeters for accurate mapping, intelli-gence by aircraft.

- Inter-agency communications, Better multi-channel communications radio caches and communications vehicles Inter-agency agreement on radio frequency use.

- Operations Coordination Center (OCC). For regional multi-agency coordination for major emergencies.

The partner agencies spent 1982-1985 concentrating on finalizing lesson plans for the Incident Command System and developing the Multi-Agency Coordination System.

The year 1982 was an important year for OCC Riverside as the first system-wide test was held under the name 'Top Hat." This exercise simulated multiple major wildland fires in Southern California burning under peak fire season conditions. The exercise proved that the MACS element of FIRESCOPE was indeed a vital part of mutual aid coordination and situation, resources status.

In 1984, the partner agencies also realized that if this system was ever to be completed and fully operational it would have to be a statewide effort with more emphasis on all risk application.

Under the coordination of the Office of Emergency Services Fire and Rescue Division (O.E.S.), a major effort was started to spread FIRESCOPE technology and products to all of California. As a result a group of Northern California fire chiefs met with officials of OES, Forest Service and California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection and formed a working team with the acronym of **CALFIRMS**, the **Cal**ifornia **F**ire **I**nformation **R**esources **M**anagement **S**ystem. The **CALFIRMS** working team established two basic goals:

1. Evaluate and recommend technology transfer to Northern California.

2. Educate all agencies and areas on available FIRESCOPE products.

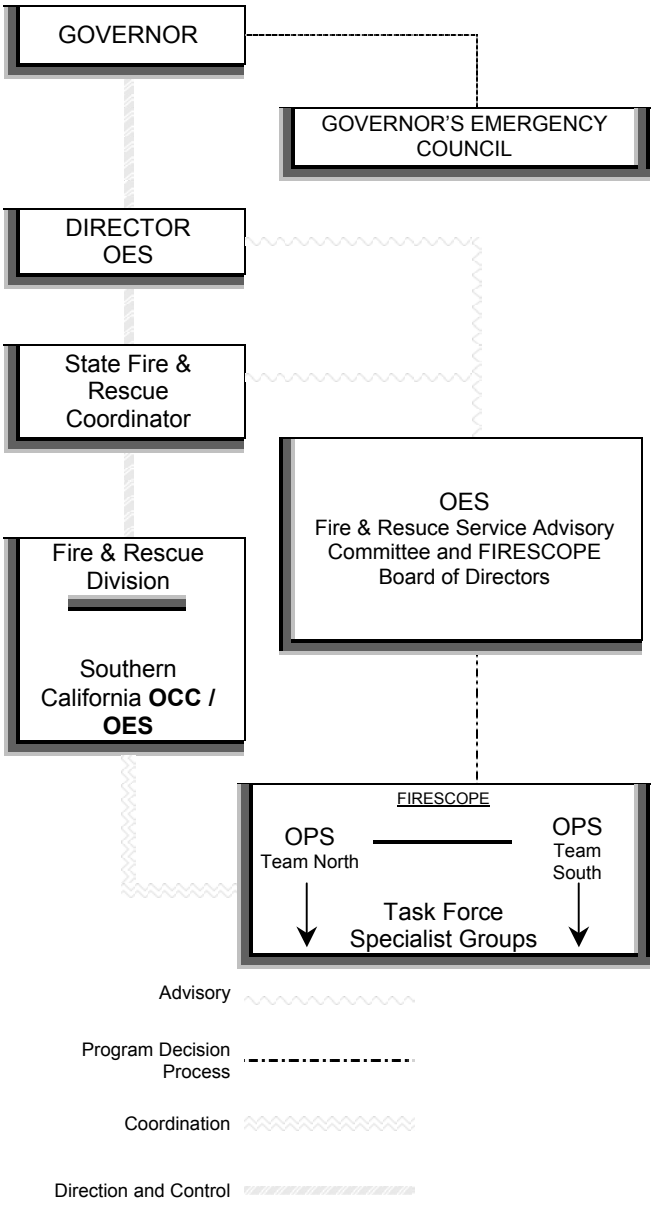
In July 1986, the FIRESCOPE program was awarded an exemplary practices honor in emergency management The award called the monograph series was awarded by Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) at the Emergency Management Institute.

In September 1986, the FIRESCOPE board of directors expanded the decision making process to reflect the CALFIRMS group. The combined efforts of FIRESCOPE and CALFIRMS would establish representation from California fire agencies including:

- Bureau of Land Management (Calfornia region).
- California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection.
- California Office of the State Fire Division Marshal.
- City fire departments (,Northern).
- City fire departments (Southern).
- County fire departments (Northern).
- County fire departments (Southern).
- Fire Districts (Northern).
- Fire Districts (Southern).
- National Park Service. (Western Region).
- United States Forest Service (Pacific Southwestern Region).
- Volunteer fire departments (statewide).

The FIRESCOPE Decision Making Process insures Statewide Coordination and uniformity between the Board of Directors, Operations Teams and Task Force members. In 1986, the integration of the Board of Directors into the Office of Emergency Services Fire and Rescue Advisory Committee broadened coordination with the Directors Office at the Office of Emergency Services and the State Fire and Rescue Coordinator.

FIRESCOPE DECISION PROCESS
ORGANIZATION CHART



In June of 1986, the FIRESCOPE board of directors commissioned Ryland Research Corporation of Santa Barbara, California to develop a needs assessment for FIRESCOPE. The report was intended to recommend direction as FIRESCOPE moves toward the year 2000. The report outlined past accomplishments, current efforts and future needs as the system focuses on all risk applications. The project name FIRESCOPE is more than an acronym. It is an important cornerstone in the nations development of an all risk incident command system. Because of this name recognition the majority wanted to retain the name FIRESCOPE.

Another major plateau for **FIRESCOPE** came in November 1987 at a joint **CALFIRMS - FIRESCOPE** meeting in San Luis Obispo, California. The operations teams met for the first time under the "new" acronym **FI**RESCOPE namely **FI**refighting **RES**ources of **C**alifornia **O**rganized for **P**otential **E**mergencies.

The record setting 1987 fire season gave the California fire service an excellent opportunity to utilize and evaluate both the ICS and MACS elements simult-aneously over several weeks. Utilizing lessons learned during the Fire Sieges of 1985, 1987 the California Fire Service met the 1988 Fire Season challenge posed by the drought winds and dry fuels. FIRESCOPE Technology assisted Fire Fighters battling Wildland Urban Interface fires in Northern California and many fire complexes in the Western United States. During peak mobilization periods of the 1988 Fire Season, over 25,000 personnel and specialized resources were mobilized and coordinated with FIRESCOPE technologies. Ibis included Emergency Training for several elements of the United States Military activated for Firefighting duties. The ICS element helped to standardize operations, minimize costs, reduce injuries. The MACS element helped coordinate situation status on multiple simultaneous fire complexes and resource tracking. It also provides incidents with qualified personnel and resources.

The operations teams cooperating under the new FIRESCOPE name developed the following priorities as FIRESCOPE transitions to all-risk and the year 2000:

1. Complete and maintain two (2) mapping repositories.

2. Continue to work on a common mapping system.

3. Continue development of the MACS system.

4. Create a new program charter.

5. Develop and formally adopt program goals and objectives through the decision process.

6. Evaluate the need for additional regional all risk OCC facilities.

7. Establish through State of California administration or legislative process official adoption and sponsorship for FIRESCOPE.

8. Participate in designing a statewide all risk interagency communication system.

9. Prepare and adopt a new 5 year budget.

10. Provide real-time access to computer generated maps.

11. Review and revise ICS classes as needed for all risk applications.