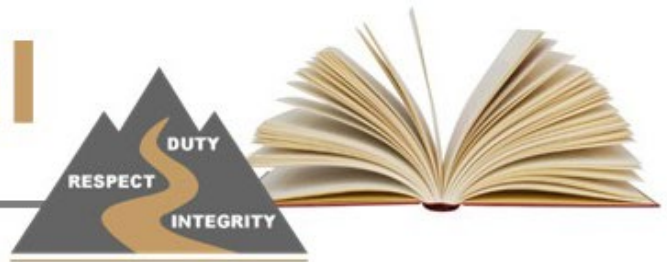


# Professional Reading Program

Wildland Fire Leadership Development Program



## *The Supe's Handbook: Leadership Lessons From America's Hotshot Crews* by Angie Tom

**Best Wildland Fire Leadership Level to read this book:**

- Level 2, New Leader
- Level 3, Leader of People
- Also a good read for other levels

### Why Read *The Supe's Handbook*?

*"Experience cannot be taught in the classroom, and leadership cannot be learned without leading. More than a how-to book, this is a collection of how-I-did-its from 35 IHC superintendents. It is up to you to extract the lessons you want and/or need from the multitude of wisdom-filled responses. There is much to be learned from these highly observant critical thinkers."* – Anthony "Crobar" Escobar (from the forward to the book)

*The Supe's Handbook* is a rare book, one that has brought together many voices in the wildland fire community to share the things that they feel are important in the role of crew superintendent and wildland fire in general. The lessons the Supes share can be applied in just about every fire leadership setting, and certainly isn't limited to those who aspire to be (or already are) crew supervisors. The question and answer format allows each Supe to share their experience and stories in a way that's easy to read and relatable.

An excellent video tie-in to this book is the "greybeard" panel discussion held by the NWCG Wildland Fire Leadership Development Program. Several of the panel members are Supes who were interviewed for *The Supe's Handbook* and also played instrumental roles in creating the leadership development program and tools we have in the wildland fire service today.

- **NWCG Panel Discussion – OCFA 2019 (2-hour video):**  
<https://vimeo.com/377668246>

For more leadership ideas and to dig deeper, check out the Wildland Fire Leadership Development Program (WFLDP) blog, Facebook page, Professional Reading Program, and more at the links below:

**Blog:** <http://wildlandfireleadership.blogspot.com/>

**Facebook:** <https://www.facebook.com/WFLDP>

**Professional Reading Program:** <https://www.nwcg.gov/wfldp/toolbox/prp>

**Main WFLDP page:** <https://www.fireleadership.gov>

## *The Supe's Handbook Discussion Questions*

### **Part One: Meet the Supes**

Did any of the backgrounds of the Supes interviewed surprise you? Are there any differences between their experiences (and experience levels) and what you see in yourself and leaders around you today? Have there been changes in our fire environment and culture since these Supes started? How about since you've started working in fire?

### **Part Two: So You Want to be a Supe**

After reading this section, what do you think about the stories and opinions of the various Supe's? Did any of them hit home with you? Did any surprise you? Why or why not?

### **Part Three: Once You're There**

What did you think about the Supe's approaches to training, best practices, decision making, and fatigue? How do they compare to your own approaches? The way your Supe (or other supervisor/leader) runs things? Are any of them applicable in your leadership situation?

### **Part Four: Lessons Learned**

What are some lessons you've learned in your career from close calls or other humbling situations ("getting religion")? What kinds of mistakes have YOU made, and how did you learn from them? What kinds of hazardous attitudes do you see, and how do your methods of dealing with or mitigating them compare to the examples in the book? Have you been close to or experienced a fatality on a crew or fire? How did you react to reading the experience shared by Brit Rosso?

### **Part Five: Moving On**

In your experience, when is the right time to move on the "next" thing in your career? Is there a right time? Have you kept up with former employees? If you have, where have they ended up in their careers and lives? What are your thoughts on moving up to "management," and moving up only to move back down? Have you ever done it, or seen it done? When might it be worth it to "self-demote?"

### **Part Six: How It Was, Is, and Should Be**

What did you learn from the thoughts shared by the Supes in this section? What changes have you seen, and how do they compare to the changes seen by the Supes? How can be the best leader you can knowing that there isn't a "perfect" fire service? What are some things that you think are important for firefighters to be taught? Have you made any changes in how you lead/supervise based on what your supervisors have done?

### **Part Seven: Unusual Interviews and Parting Thoughts**

Did any of the Supe's closing thoughts resonate with you? What do you think of the examples shown by Paul Gleason, Jim Cook, and Anthony Escobar in this section?