

Staff Ride

Resources



Wildland Fire Leadership Development Program

South Canyon Fire – Tactical Decision Games (TDGS)

Tactical Decision Game # 1

Location: Trailhead

Leadership Elements: Situational Awareness, Preparedness

Date: July 4

You have arrived on this district as a Type 3 Incident Commander ordered in from another unit, here is your morning report:

- 38 fires on the district
- 23 carry-over fires from previous days
- 15 new fires reported today
- 2 fires larger than 5 acres
- 3 fires smaller than 5 acres – including the South Canyon Fire.
- 10 are unverified smoke sightings and minor fires monitored from a distance.
- Of the carry-over fires, they are actively fighting two (the rest are in monitor status):
 - 1) 1600 acre fire is under control and in the demobilization phase with crews being reassigned elsewhere,
 - 2) 50 acre fire has 4 engines and 23 firefighters assigned; may be under control in 24 hours.
- The South Canyon Fire was called in to the BLM District office at 11:00. At 14:00 the local sheriff's office reported the fire at ½ acre and very active. At 14:16 BLM dispatch requested a load of jumpers, and air tanker, and a lead plane for initial attack on the South Canyon Fire. At 15:08 dispatch cancelled the initial attack and diverted them to the Sagebrush fire. A local engine crew arrives at the South Canyon Fire which is reported to be on inaccessible terrain, right on the boundary of the fire exclusion zone. Thunderstorms seem to dampen the flames, and fire is put into monitor status. The engine crew departs the area.

There have been 5 new fires in the district today (July 4th) – one which threatens three ranch houses. The neighboring Montrose District is the main effort of state resources in fighting the Wake fire 50 miles to the southwest, (12 homes threatened). All tankers are being diverted to the Wake fire.

At 14:50 a local resident reports increased fire activity on the South Canyon Fire – now about 3 acres. By 16:30 a USFS engine foreman and a BLM engine foreman have radioed BLM Grand Junction dispatch requesting air tanker support for the South Canyon Fire – none available. By 18:30 the two engine foreman and a local handcrew supervisor have decided to wait until morning to attack the fire, they left the fire scene and drove to BLM office in West Glenwood to plan their attack. The South Canyon Fire has grown to about 11 acres throughout the day. Dispatch log reports the following at 21:09:

“Aerial Observer for Glenwood Springs flew the fire. Steep inaccessible terrain, burning to NE of ridge, too steep for crew – suggest bucket drops, little or few escape routes – currently spreading in all directions.”

You have been assigned to take over as IC for the South Canyon Fire at 0600 tomorrow.

What preparations do you make tonight?

What is your plan of action for tomorrow?

Tactical Decision Game # 2

Location: Overlook Ridge

Leadership Elements: Leader's Intent, Command and Control

Date: July 5

Time: 2300

You are the Type 3 Incident Commander. You and your IA crew of 8 firefighters hiked up the East Drainage early in the morning. You arrived on the main ridge north of the apparent ignition point. After briefing your crew, they went to work as you directed.

An air tanker made a drop at 1500 on the freeway side of the fire. The pilot reported the fire was still up on the ridge, not yet in the West Drainage. By this time the IA crew assigned to your fire had cleared a helispot (H-1) and had cut about 200 yards of downhill line. At 1800 a load of smokejumpers arrived on your fire. You also made the decision to have the resources currently on the fire hike out the West Drainage that evening.

By 2100 you had 8 smokejumpers staffing the fire; while you and the local IA resources were headed to the district office. Around 2300 the Jumper-in-Charge calls to tell you fire has overrun the line and is now about 50 acres. He thinks two Type 1 crews would help. You place the order and receive confirmation that one crew will arrive in the morning.

What plan do you communicate to the Jumper-in-Charge?

Tactical Decision Game # 3

Location: Overlook

Leadership Element: Command Presence, Developing a Plan of Action

Date: July 6

Time: 1030 Hours

You are the Type 3 Incident Commander and have just completed a helicopter reconnaissance of the fire. It looks to be about 100 acres. The fire is spreading by backing and rollouts. People are scanning the NOAA channel for weather updates.

Your fire is now the district main effort. You have a helicopter and tanker support – with the Hotshots expected at noon.

You are located at Helispot 2 and discussing strategy with the Jumper-in-Charge, and the Helitack Foreman. The smokejumpers and local IA crew are constructing line between H-1 and H-2. You can see smoke low in the West Drainage. Eight more smokejumpers have just landed in the drop zone north of H-2.

What plan do you propose?

What are your concerns?

Where will you position yourself?

Tactical Decision Game # 4

Location: West Flank Line (the Stump)

Leadership Element: Rules of Engagement, Legitimate Dissent

Date: July 6

Time: 1400

You are a hotshot crewmember constructing line on the west flank. Fire behavior is minimal, creeping and backing. Line production is difficult because of the large growth gamble oak. The ability to see ahead from the line construction point of view is limited due to tall Gamble Oak brush.

The Incident Commander, the Jumper-in-Charge, and your crew Superintendent are located above you near one of the helispots on the ridge.

You overhear on the radio that the line scout below you would like the helicopter for bucket drops. The helicopter is currently tasked with shuttling remainder of your hotshot crew to the fire.

Your Squad Leader just walked by saying a few words of encouragement. What concerns do you have and what do you say to your Squad Leader?

Tactical Decision Game # 5

Location: Lunch Spot

Leadership Element: Effective Communications, Contingency Planning

Date: July 6

Time: 1606

You are a smokejumper located at the Lunch Spot with other smokejumpers and hotshots. The fireline has been extended to the Lunch Spot. You have been assigned to patrol the west flank. You can see fire to the south across the double draws making short uphill runs. You visit with the Line Scout. Fire behavior is picking up all over the fire. The helicopter is making bucket drops. Skies are clear.

At 15:45 you noticed a small (5 foot diameter) spot fire about 100 feet downhill below the west flank fireline. You and another firefighter descend to take care of the spot fire, but lose all radio communication. As you come back up to the fireline 20 minutes later, you hear other firefighters running back up the west flank fireline.

You overhear spotty radio traffic with the IC saying "Get out now!"

You sense the following conditions: Gray-black smoke column in southern portion of West Drainage. Fire running up the east facing slope across the drainage from you. A strong wind blowing up the drainage. You can see fire immediately down slope of your position about 200 feet distant. There is a yellow-orange glow in the smoky sky all around you.

What is your plan of action?

Tactical Decision Game # 6

Location: Zero Point or Helispot 1

Leadership Element: Integration

In your groups perform an integration of the South Canyon Staff Ride.

Consider elements of leadership, supervision, management, tactical SOPs, situational awareness and communication.

Describe one lesson learned from this event that you will share with those you work with.