

NWCG Fire Shelter and PPE Subcommittee

Meeting Notes

0900-1100 Mountain, March 16, 2023 on Teams

Welcome and Introductions

- Member vacancies, need note taker for today.

Any additional agenda items or new business?

-none

- NWCG News (Tim Blake)
 - Fire Shelter safety warning was a balance between speed and vetting with EB- thank you Bill Yohn and DMS for all your on it.
 - Chair rotation – volunteers or establish rotation?- can pick someone or do a rotation
- Fire Shelters
 - Equipment Safety Warning – **AAR** – Frustration about slow speed at which it was issued (2+ weeks) and the layers it had to go through for “approval” even though the process as it was defined should’ve been smoother. Some of the comments were very “weedy” and sort of irrelevant to the message. We could’ve “said less” and still made the point. Bill- it is NWCG’s job to ensure accurate messages go out and they get shared widely. **Eric will discuss scheduling a higher-level AAR with Tim.**
 - Mystery Ranch Alternative Folding Project – **DECISION** – Continuation of 2/28 meeting/demo. Mystery Ranch is seeking our blessing for field testing in '24 of 25-30 packs, IHCs across agencies (5 per crew, plus a few to misc. overhead.) Requires folding the existing shelter differently but should provide better weight distribution, ergonomics, and protection (for the shelter). DMS asked about trying alternate location designs for evaluation of wear/lifespan considerations (does one protect it best?). They will evaluate top and bottom release. Godot asked about a questionnaire on the wear test- should we (gov) develop? MR willing but we (gov) should be cautious what we ask them to do on their own project. To be clear, MR is not asking for gov funds to R&D this product. Bill Yohn asked about refolding approved shelters, and is it a big deal to that? DMS said we’ve done similar things before. Cnudde talked about having additional folding lines if you simply refold an existing shelter. MR will be working with Anchor to fold new shelters from the factory, so no re-folding. Is this in our scope to “approve” and do we need to get higher level approval? MR wants our decision by end of April. Darin asked about downstream effects of needing alternate training, practice shelters, etc. DMS addressed and mentioned that

other vendors may want to do the same. Cnudde talked about demo and testing phases vs. implementation. It's complex, expensive to transition from one shelter to another. The spec is NTDP's/USFS's so whose project is this? Do we need a specialized task team to work on this? Eric agreed actually implementing this would be a big deal. Clint sees a lot of pros to this- we're not one size fits all. This can really help people. Heath mentioned the heat shield concept- could this benefit that type of use? Supports. Some talk about current training of dropping pack and running vs. keeping the pack on. Godot asked about reconfiguring a pack around the current shelter design. DMS- just because they design this doesn't mean the shelter refold design will ultimately be approved. We've experimented with this before. Bill- what we need to focus on is whether we can commit federal firefighters to wear test this design. Need to define that part of the ask offline. Barry asked about needing 2 NSNs/NFDS/specs on the procurement. DMS clarified proprietary aspect of the shelter design and that the gov would still "own" that. **Decision is to support the concept and Eric will work with Bill to brief up/seek approval on future aspects this will lead to.**

- Web portal status – **DEMO?** – DMS demo'ed it, here is the draft site: <https://www.nwcg.gov/publications/pms411/> Very all-encompassing to include entrapments, selecting a deployment site, inspection and care, a new flow chart for inspections. etc. Even has links to employee assistance following a deployment. Should go live this month. Excellent work!

- Respirator

Update from Clint/CAL OSHA: At our meeting next week, we'll discuss two items: (1) the note below that we sent last week to manufacturers regarding W/WUI cartridge specifications, and (2) recent discussions with NIOSH regarding problems with certifying a wildland/WUI respirator.

Given the uncertainties regarding the identity of combustion products and exposure conditions at a WUI fire, NIOSH has said it is unlikely they will certify a respirator for use during WUI operations. Their position at this point seems to be that WUI operations could be "immediately dangerous to life and health" (IDLH), so an SCBA is the only form of protection that is appropriate. We'll discuss how best to respond to this development.

The note Cal/OSHA sent to manufacturers to clarify the target for W/WUI respirator specifications is as follows:

- *The Cal/OSHA standard that we will use in the 2023-24 rulemaking will be for Class 3 Wildland/WUI powered air purifying respirators (PAPRs) under NFPA 1984, 2022 version;*

- *This is the device LA County FD would like to subject to field trials in the Spring of 2023, as a prototype;*
- *Cal/OSHA, LA County FD and the IAFF would strongly prefer a device that provides protection against CO, but we recognize that this currently listed as an Optional Performance Requirement in NFPA 1984 (Table 7.2);*
- *Cal/OSHA, LACoFD and IAFF will request that the results of individual chemical challenge tests required under Table 8.11.4 in NFPA 1984 be made routinely available, including as a part of field trials, rather than simply listed as “pass.”*
- *Researchers at UCLA will conduct independent testing of W/WUI PAPRs using a smoke challenge, and they will include PAHs and BTX in those analyses. They will provide manufacturers with the results of those tests, and they will publish their findings in the peer review literature.*
- *Cal/OSHA, however, will not require filters to be tested against PAHs or BTX, or to be tested using a smoke challenge, during this rulemaking.*

Joe D/NFPA 1984 Update: looking at the standard. NIOSH concerned about the Tier 3 environment (WUI) and are not approving those at the moment. So task group is trying to decide what to do w/Tier 3- take it out of NFPA? No one has tried to certify these before and they're finding some holes in the standard. Not sure if there will be a wear trial but will make sure there is fed representation if they do.

- Boots
 - **Eric still needs to request website modifications to add PPE categories. Do we have anything to post?** Godot- questionnaire analysis summary complete and working on commo plan to get it out to the field (trends, etc.). Sorting thru agency injury data, still (difficult to correlate).
- Helmets
 - **ACTION ITEM:** Research Helmet electrical rules vs. heat related issues. Start a task group to look into this issue. Godot Apuzzo (lead), Adrian Grayshield, Heath Bell
 - **Need to sunset this due to OSHA electrical requirement?**
 - **Last time we tabled helmet work while we await NFPA 1977 progress, but Godot needs an SME/rep for ongoing work.** – Godot would like another member of this group to join NFPA 1977 Head Protection task group with him. Lateral protection focus, more like the Euro standard. **Heath will join Godot on the task group. Close action item on helmets for now.**
- Clothing
 - Womens' pants status – On schedule, should be avail in June thru Aug, but may not have the reflective stripes.
 - Wear trial of unisex pants this summer (80-100). Changes to gusseted crotch and pockets.
 - Probably add the stipes for both styles on Jan. 1 just to be sure.

- NIOSH toxins study update – no update, but did hear about potential PFAS on the Kevlar pants. A “FreeFAS” product is available but doesn’t meet oil resistance spec and may not meet wear resistance. Waiting.

Bin Items: Chair election/rotation: No volunteers so drew agencies at random. Here is new chair rotation order (every 2 years). New chair can decide on the need for a vice chair.

1. NPS
2. USFS
3. BLM
4. NASF
5. BIA
6. FWS

Round Robin: USFS- supply is still prepping for fire season, FS RMC- Julian Affuso is retiring, Dave Williams is acting, Erin Phelps soon, will be looking for new branch chief. Also updating RMC charter. Looking for ISAP train the trainers. UASF- hard to get info out fast in an official manner, same struggles. DMS and Godot were at the CalFire PPE working group, flooding in CA, multiple teams deployed. BIA- testing new helmets (~400 Pacific helmets) w/ IHC and Helitack crews. Cory Butler DOI OSH- CDC/White House does not appear to be changing mask stance so High COVID = Masks in Gov buildings/vehicles.

Next Call: No spring in-person meeting. Regular quarterly call is June 15th