



# NWCG Wildland Fire Staff Ride Guide

PMS 470

August 2023



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The *NWCG Wildland Fire Staff Ride Guide* establishes the standards for developing and carrying out staff rides.

The wildland fire community has over 20 years of experience in the planning and execution of leadership staff rides. *The Wildland Fire Staff Ride Guide* was originally published in 2010, following the first decade of staff ride implementation. This 2023 version of the guide has been updated to incorporate best practices learned through development of the Yarnell Hill Fire Staff Ride in Arizona, the Little Bighorn Staff Ride in Montana, the Donner Expedition Staff Ride in Nevada, and the annual National Staff Ride Workshop experiences at Shiloh National Military Park in Tennessee, and the Battle of San Pasqual Battlefield State Historic Park in California.

The intent of this publication is to provide information that will expand the use of staff rides within the wildland fire service. Staff rides are excellent learning events, with a focus on the professional development of leaders. This guide provides information about best practices for local design, development, and implementation of staff rides as a learning tool. It serves as a supporting reference to our doctrinal publications on leadership development: *Leading in the Wildland Fire Service*, PMS 494-2, and *Learning in the Wildland Fire Service*. It is supported by our publication on the *Design and Delivery of Tactical Decision Games*, PMS 468-1, which are easily transferrable from sand table to staff ride events.

## References:

- *Leading in the Wildland Fire Service*, PMS 494-2 National Wildfire Coordinating Group, Publication, January 2007. Order from: Great Basin Cache Supply Office, 3833 S. Development Ave. Boise, Idaho 83705, <https://www.nwcg.gov/publications/494-2>.
- *Learning in the Wildland Fire Service*, Wildland Fire Lessons Learned Center, December 2018. Order from: Director LLC, 3265 East Universal Way, Tucson, AZ 85756, <https://www.lessons.wildfire.gov>.
- *Design and Delivery of Tactical Decision Games*, PMS 468-1, National Wildfire Coordinating Group, Publication, August 2018. <https://www.nwcg.gov/publications/468-1>.

The Leadership Committee (LC) sponsored this project. It is our hope that firefighters will view staff rides as a common delivery mechanism for a multitude of training and education topics at all levels of their organization.

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The National Wildfire Coordinating Group (NWCG) provides national leadership to enable interoperable wildland fire operations among federal, state, Tribal, territorial, and local partners. NWCG operations standards are interagency by design; they are developed with the intent of universal adoption by the member agencies. However, the decision to adopt and utilize them is made independently by the individual member agencies and communicated through their respective directives systems.

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# Staff Ride Basics

*Learning in the Wildland Fire Service* emphasizes three pillars for enabling learning: inquiry, opportunity, and dialog. When firefighter attitudes value and act on these three pillars, the groundwork is laid for a lifetime of learning that produces leaders who are better prepared in body, mind, and spirit for the rigors of firefighting and all-hazards incident response.

A staff ride is an experiential learning opportunity that has been used effectively by military services since the early 1900s and by wildland firefighters since the early 2000s. A common purpose shared by all staff rides is to further the development of leaders. Military staff rides typically discuss leadership, decision-making, tactics, operations, and strategy. Staff rides for firefighters and incident management teams provide for discussion of the same issues in a similar context, focusing on the interaction of human factors in complex and rapidly changing environments. The systematic study of decision-making in any complex incident can help wildland firefighters and managers see how human behaviors influence tactical outcomes on fires, how terrain and weather influence both fire and human behavior, and how technology, tactics, and organizations interact in fluid environments.

Training, education, and experience are three interwoven elements of learning. We learn from all three, but learning is most effective when all three are artfully combined into a well-crafted opportunity that looks both backward into experiences of the past, and forward into possibilities for the future. The staff ride has proven to be an effective experiential leadership development tool that incorporates both training and education into the learning experience.

## Background: Training, Education, and Experience

**Training** is an aspect of learning that sharpens body and mind. It should be designed as an edifying, confidence-building aspect of both individual (personal) and collective (organizational) development. In training, the answer is more important than the question. Often the answer takes the form of action in response to a known condition. Meeting and exceeding established tasks, conditions, and standards continually “raises the bar” in training. Accuracy (deviation from perfection) and precision (repeatability of effects) are both sharpened through training. Individual and collective safety is a product of demanding training that always raises the bar in both accuracy and precision.

**Education** is a mind and spirit broadening aspect of learning. It should be designed as a humbling aspect of development in which both teacher and student explore the vastness of knowledge and possibility – that which is known and that which is yet to be discovered. In education, the question is more important than the answer. The whole idea is to get learners – both teachers and students – to consider all the many possibilities of a problem, then apply judgment based on experience to discuss and implement creative solutions. We educate to prepare firefighters for the uncertainties of future operating environments, by allowing them to explore creative solutions in safe environments. This is where the possibility of empowering subordinate leaders and clear leader’s intent is often realized.

**Experience** is the most memorable aspect of learning in body, mind, and spirit. It should be designed to incorporate elements of both education and training. In our experiences – both crafted learning experiences and actual operational experiences – the interplay of questions and answers, problems and solutions, produces tangible results. Results must be sensed, evaluated, and used to continually improve personal and organizational character.

## Definition: What Is a Staff Ride?

The intent of a staff ride is to put participants in the shoes of the decision-makers on a historical incident to learn for the future. Staff rides are conducted on the actual ground where an incident or event happened. A staff ride is more education than training, but normally combines both aspects as an exceptionally effective experiential learning event. Staff rides are designed to provide memorable shared experiences that can be referenced to help in future decision-making. A staff ride consists of three distinct phases:

- A systematic **Preliminary Study Phase** on a selected fire, battlefield, or other high-risk incident.
- An extensive **Field Study Phase** to the actual locations associated with the incident, where participants organized into small conference groups move to designated “stands” to discuss the decisions, communications, and actions at each location.
- An intentional opportunity for **Integration Phase** to reflect on and share lessons derived from the experience.

Staff rides provide opportunity to inquire and discuss both the art and science of firefighting and incident management. To be most effective, this requires maximum participant involvement before arrival and at the site to enable thoughtful analysis and discussion. Participants should have enough operational experience to have a context for understanding questions regarding leadership and decision-making. The study of leadership aspects in a staff ride transcends time and place.

## Purpose: What Can a Staff Ride Accomplish?

The staff ride is a unique technique for conveying the lessons of the past to present day leaders. While the sole purpose of a staff ride is to further the professional development of leaders, it may be designed to achieve several goals. Depending on the incident selected, the staff ride can illuminate any principles or lessons at many chosen levels. Staff rides are a mixture of preliminary study, field study, and on-site integration which facilitates memorable participant involvement. It ensures that learning is more likely to be retained by participants. Staff rides should be viewed more as education and less as training, though having certain training components can make for a more memorable experience.

Example: As part of their pre-season work, during the South Canyon Staff Ride the Redding Interagency Hotshot Crew is broken up into various conference groups along with other invited hotshots and firefighters from various organizations. Tactical Decision Games form the basis for educational discussion as facilitated by experienced firefighter leaders assigned to each conference group. This provides for diversity of thought through an intentional opportunity for educational inquisitiveness and dialog between the various participants at five different stands. After the lunch spot stand at South Canyon, the crew is reformed, and wearing full equipment, hikes down to the 1680 mark on the west flank fireline. From there, the fire conditions on the afternoon of 6 July 1994 are described to them, and they run the west flank escape route to zero point under an 8-minute time constraint as a most memorable training exercise.

The goals of staff rides have varied from the specific testing of operational concepts to the general enhancement of professional and analytical skills. All staff rides, however, have one idea in common: to place participants on an actual piece of terrain, confront them with an operational situation, and stimulate them to learn from the experience.

The professional development of wildland fire leaders can be accomplished in many ways using the staff ride. Teaching points from small unit tactics to fire behavior and the art of leadership can be addressed

through staff rides. Because staff rides involve a high level of personal commitment and involvement for all participants, the learning that occurs on staff rides can be deeper and more meaningful for adult learners than classroom lectures.

Teaching points for a wildland fire staff ride might include:

- Develop improved understanding of human factors, including leadership, cohesion, trust relationships, and artful communications (both as a receiver and as a transmitter).
- Provide decision-forcing case studies in the successful application of fire management principles associated with logistics, administration, public information, finance, technical communications, medical response, planning, and operations.
- Develop a bias for action and a relentless quest to exploit windows of opportunities in time to preserve margins of safety.
- Support an organizational learning environment for incidents where factors interact to produce unexpected fatal accidents and catastrophic disasters.
- Understand high risk, low frequency situations, and think through options for response.
- Review key decision gates associated with fire management actions.
- Demonstrate the effects of weather, slope, topography, and fuels upon fire management actions and their implementation.
- Develop a bias for creating margins of safety and tactical options, avoiding operations with no margin for providing options in face of unexpected crisis.
- Create conditions for healing of individuals, organizations, and communities following catastrophic incidents.
- Encourage fire management personnel to study their profession and their areas of responsibility through the use of history with a view toward deliberate planning for future operations.

A well planned and executed staff ride can address several teaching points at the same time. If you are the person in charge of organizing and conducting a staff ride, you will need to decide upon specific teaching points for your staff ride.

Aside from the teaching points for the participants of a staff ride, if you are the leader of a staff ride you should have some objectives of your own. The most important of those objectives is the need to stimulate active discussion among participants. The development of group awareness and knowledge cannot occur without discussion. Your role will be that of facilitator – getting the discussion going, keeping it on track, asking provocative questions, and opening up new subjects for consideration when appropriate. You'll need to make sure that all the participants on a staff ride are involved in the discussions, not just a few extroverts.

# Staff Ride Execution

## Keys to Successful Staff Rides

Before you decide what you want to do, decide who you want to do it with. Form a staff ride planning team of three to five people. Plan who you want to invite to serve on the cadre of the staff ride, typically with one overall facilitator, one logistician, a conference group leader, and perhaps an invited expert for every small group of 6 to 12 participants. Any less than six participants in a conference group provides inadequate diversity of thought for discussion. More than 12 participants provide inadequate opportunity for all to participate. Organize no more than six conference groups at a time, or the competition for vantage points at each stand will be a distraction to learning and managing transitions will be overly burdensome. Three key elements to designing and developing a successful staff ride:

- First, the staff ride must be designed to ensure participants become active participants in the educational process: in the exchange of information, in the formulation of thought, and in the collective analysis of the operation. Carefully select the participants assigned to each conference group. Set expectations for preliminary study. Set a schedule of stands at key decision points on the ground, with learning themes to guide discussion at each stand. Establish learning outcomes.
- Second, the staff ride must be well planned, with lodging, transportation, dining, and safety considerations taken into account (to include access to stands and emergency extraction of participants in case of injury). Group leaders must be carefully selected and prepared to facilitate learning and respond to unexpected conditions (medical emergencies, weather, flooding, traffic, etc.).
- Third, intentionally select venues for transition between preliminary study, field study, and integration phases of the staff ride. Well planned transitions include an informal icebreaker session where participants gather in a social setting (usually with food and drink), and a more formal integration dinner where each participant is provided an opportunity to share with the entire group one lesson that they will share with others when they return to home station.

In planning, develop an integrated master schedule for the staff ride, identifying who is responsible for what portions of the staff ride. Use collaboratively edited documents whenever practical in planning (such as Google G-Suite or Office 365 applications).

## Planning Schedules

Table 1: Simple planning schedule used for development of the Yarnell Hill Fire Staff Ride.

Event	Time	Planning Lead	Operations (Execution)	Logistics Lead	Log/Admin/Finance Considerations
<b>Tuesday, February 16, 2016</b>					
Travel	0500-1800	Don Boursier	Planning Team	Stu Rodeffer	Hotel rooms blocked at Spring Hill Suites for Cadre
Chalk Talk	1900-2100	Jim Cook	Planning Team	Stu Rodeffer	Room for planning; select support cadre as designated by Jim Cook
<b>Wednesday, February 17, 2016</b>					
Walk-through	0700-1700	Don Boursier	Support Cadre	Stu Rodeffer/Ben Palm	Transport for 12 plus land access to stands
Travel	0001-1800	Participants	Participants	Participants	Check-in Spring Hill Suites on individual credit cards
Icebreaker	1900-2100	Eric Carlson	Jeff Whitney/Eric Carlson/Brit Rosso	Stu Rodeffer	Room with projector/screen/power/speaker for video; snacks and drinks for 25
<b>Thursday, February 18, 2016</b>					
Movement	0700-0815	Jim Cook	Conference Group Leaders	Stu Rodeffer	Prescott Hotel to Yarnell via Iron Springs Road – 2 15-pax vans + chase
Stand 1	0815-0900	Curtis Heaton	Todd Abel/Paul Musser/ Roy Hall	Stu Rodeffer/Ben Palm	Weather backup in bays; restrooms; ops map for briefing; iPad; YouTube ops brief
Stand 2	0900-1130	Brit Rosso	Conference Group Leaders	Stu Rodeffer/Ben Palm	Access through Boulder Springs; parking at pistol range; A-frame ladder for fence climb
Stand 3	1130-1230	Travis Dotson	Todd Abel/Paul Musser/ Roy Hall	Stu Rodeffer/Ben Palm	All participants bring their own lunch and water—note in prework; remind at icebreaker
Stand 4	1230-1430	Pete Gordon	Conference Group Leaders	Stu Rodeffer/Ben Palm	Jim to herd the flock to prevent backflow to grader site
Stand 5	1430-1530	Darrell Willis	Darrell Willis/John Burfine	Stu Rodeffer/Ben Palm	Bluetooth speaker and recorded radio communications (Darrell lead)
Movement	1530-1700	Jim Cook	Jim Cook	Stu Rodeffer	2 15-pax vans + chase
Stand 6	1700-1730	Ralph Lucas	Ralph Lucas	Stu Rodeffer	Stage presenter (Ralph) materials (presentation boards, parking guide).
Integration	1900-2100	Eric Carlson	Eric Carlson	Stu Rodeffer	Gurly Street Grill upper room with definitive individual payment of cash collection up-front
<b>Friday, February 19, 2016</b>					
Return Travel	0001-1800	Participants	Participants	Participants	Safe travels!



Table 2: More extensive planning schedule used for development of the Blue Ribbon Fire Staff Ride.

1	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
	Percent Complete	Activity	Start	Finish	Lead	Cost	Total Project Cost
2	90%	National Staff Ride Workshop E1	23 Jan 17	26 Jan 17	Sam		
3	100%	Travel and Icebreaker	23 Jan 17	24 Jan 17		\$481.00	
4	100%	Battle of Shiloh	24 Jan 17	25 Jan 17		\$481.00	
5	100%	Planning Day 1	25 Jan 17	26 Jan 17		\$481.00	
6	100%	Planning Day 2	26 Jan 17	27 Jan 17		\$481.00	
7	50%	Return Travel	27 Jan 17	28 Jan 17		\$240.00	
8	0%	<b>Brief and Approve Project</b>			Sam		<b>\$2,164.00</b>
9	0%	Initial Brief	30 Jan 17	30 Jan 17			
10	0%	In-progress Review	15 Feb 17	15 Feb 17			
11	0%	Programming and Budgeting	1 Feb 17	15 May 17			
12	0%	Final Program Approval	28 Jun 17	16 May 17			
13	0%	<b>ALPHA TEST – Blue Ribbon Staff Ride</b>	<b>23 Oct 17</b>	<b>27 Oct 17</b>	Sam		
14	0%	Initial Planning Teleconference	13 Feb 17	13 Feb 17		\$0.00	
15	0%	Preliminary Study Email 1	27 Mar 17	27 Mar 17		\$0.00	
16	0%	Preliminary Study Email 2	3 Apr 17	3 Apr 17		\$0.00	
17	0%	Preliminary Study Email 3	10 Apr 17	10 Apr 17		\$0.00	
18	0%	Final Planning Teleconference	12 Apr 17	12 Feb 17		\$0.00	
19	0%	Cadre Travel Day	17 Apr 17	17 Apr 17		\$484.00	
20	0%	Day 0 Dry Run	18 Apr 17	18 Apr 17		\$1,694.00	
21	0%	Day 0 Icebreaker	18 Apr 17	18 Apr 17		\$0.00	
22	0%	Day 1 Staff Ride	19 Apr 17	19 Apr 17		\$1,694.00	
23	0%	Day 2 Staff Ride	20 Apr 17	20 Apr 17		\$1,694.00	
24	0%	Day 2 Training Objective Workshop	20 Apr 17	20 Apr 17		\$0.00	
25	0%	Day 2 Integration Dinner	20 Apr 17	20 Apr 17		\$0.00	
26	0%	Return Travel	21 Apr 17	21 Apr 17		\$840.00	
27	0%	<b>BETA TEST – Blue Ribbon Staff Ride</b>	<b>19 Jun 17</b>	<b>23 Jun 17</b>	Sam		<b>\$6,406.00</b>
28	0%	Initial Planning Teleconference					
29	0%	Preliminary Study Email 1					
30	0%	Ay					
31	0%	Preliminary Study Email 3					
32	0%	Final Planning Teleconference					
33	0%	Cadre Travel Day					
34	0%	Day 0 Dry Run					
35	0%	Day 0 Icebreaker					
36	0%	Day 1 Staff Ride					
37	0%	Day 2 Staff Ride					
38	0%	Day 2 Training Objective Workshop					
39	0%	Day 2 Integration Dinner					
40	0%	Return Travel					
41	0%	<b>OPERATIONAL TEST – Blue Ribbon Staff Ride</b>	<b>23 Oct 17</b>	<b>27 Oct 17</b>	Sam		<b>\$15, 471.00</b>
<b>Project Schedule</b>	<b>Cadre</b>	<b>Maps</b>	<b>Initiating Documents</b>	<b>SR Schedule</b>	<b>TDGs</b>	<b>To-Do List</b>	<b>Cost Breakdowns</b>

Another aspect that should be taken into account when planning and executing staff rides is that of local sensitivities, especially in the case of recent fatality fires. The staff ride facilitator and all participants must understand that local communities and veterans of fatality fires will most likely be in various stages of healing after the event. Studying the actions that led to the fatalities may still be very sensitive to local agency employees, the media, and local communities. Many wildland fire fatalities occurred under circumstances that remain controversial to this day. It is highly recommended that advance notice be given to local jurisdictional agencies when staff rides are being scheduled to occur on their land. In some cases, they may want to have a local representative on hand for the staff ride, which in turn can enhance the success of the staff ride by adding a participant with in-depth local knowledge. In all cases, be sensitive to local attitudes especially in relation to federal or tribal lands.

## Preliminary Study Phase

The purpose of this phase is to prepare the participant for the visit to the site of the selected incident and is critical to the success of the field study. Preliminary study is most often completed as an individual assignment. No written product is required, but the more detailed the study, the greater the benefit for the individual and for the group as a whole. At a minimum, during the preliminary study phase the participant must acquire the basic knowledge necessary for a general understanding of the selected incident. Generally, this basic knowledge should consist of:

- General outline or chronology of significant events.
- Organization of the incident and resources involved.
- Topography of the area.
- Other key environmental factors such as weather.
- Local, regional, and national situation at the time of the incident.
- Biographical and personality data on significant leaders.
- An analysis of the incident to determine, to the degree possible, significant factors in the historical outcome.

The planning team should select recommended resources for preliminary study and share those with all participants at least one month prior to the field study phase. Weekly e-mails can be very helpful in reminding participants to prepare for the staff ride. If participants want to take it a step further, they can advance beyond a general knowledge in their analysis and understanding by focusing additional study on particular leaders, units, functional areas, events, decisions, or phases of the incident.

If the cadre wants to ensure that all aspects of an incident are covered both during preliminary study and during the field study, they can make specific assignments to individual participants. A very useful approach to get participants actively involved here is to assign each participant a specific subject to research more intensively than the general background material. Participants are then required to brief the group on that subject, either in a formal classroom setting or during the field study. Useful subjects in this regard are specific leaders, specific units, critical events, or specific functional areas such as logistics, equipment, or communications.

Creating such expertise on particular subtopics virtually guarantees lively discussion and divergent viewpoints among participants. Once created in preliminary study, this involvement carries over into field study with decidedly positive results. For example, one person might be assigned the area of personal protective equipment, another might be assigned to study fuels, while yet another could be assigned to analyze the actions of a particular crew. Such assignments need to be coordinated so that all aspects of the incident are covered by the group as a whole. Even when specific assignments are made, all participants still need to arrive at the field site with a general understanding of the entire event and its components.

## Sources of Information for Preliminary Study

During the preliminary study phase, participants must be given access to the best sources that can be provided for them. At a minimum, an account and a map of the selected fire should be made available to all participants. Beyond these general materials, other relevant sources, such as incident reports, investigative reports, radio transcripts, personal accounts, media accounts, spot weather information, burn plans, Incident Action Plans (IAP), and other decision support documents may be provided if available.

Sources are often referred to as “primary” or “secondary.” Primary sources are documents or video/film clips produced by first-hand witnesses. Included among primary sources are official documents such the ones mentioned above. Primary sources are the raw material from which historical events are reconstructed. Primary sources are important because they deliver the details that may have been omitted by writers of secondary source material. They may also provide a “view” without the bias of the writer of a secondary source.

Secondary sources are accounts of events produced by non-participants who received their information secondhand from primary sources or other secondary accounts. They are often in narrative format, and many are analytical in nature. They not only present the historical facts, but they also consider why events may have unfolded in a certain way.

Wikipedia articles are a great resource for most preliminary study efforts, especially for topics that are well developed. Firefighters should be encouraged to contribute to Wikipedia articles to share their perspectives on incidents they have participated in. For wildland fire incidents, the Wildland Fire Lessons Learned Center (<https://www.wildfirelessons.net>) provides an extensive repository of resources for preliminary study.

Do not rely on participants to pull the information they need. Intentionally push the resources to them by email with sufficient time for them to explore and prepare themselves for the staff ride.

## Examples of Information for Preliminary Study

Examples of some resource materials follow. Use your imagination to develop products like these to share in advance and provide in the form of a participant guide to all involved.

Figure 1: Reference photo of the South Canyon fire site, with points of interest added. 1



Figure 2: Google Earth fly-through of South Canyon available for download from the Wildland Fire Lessons Learned



<sup>1</sup> Source: “Fire Behavior Associated with the 1994 South Canyon Fire on Storm King Mountain, Colorado”, September 1998, USDA Forest Service, Rocky Mountain Research Station Center

Figure 3: The first of four preliminary study e-mails sent to all participants of the annual USFS Roundtable Staff Ride. This experience provides an opportunity for mid-level leaders from across the USFS to gather for a week of leadership dialog in small group with senior leaders of the agency. Two days of the week are invested in walking nearly 30 miles in the conduct of two leadership staff rides.



Greetings!

Welcome to the Harpers Ferry and Battle of Sharpsburg (Antietam Creek) Staff Ride as part of the United States Forest Service (USFS) Roundtable. We are looking forward to hiking and learning with you 17-19 April. Each week between now and then you'll receive another of these e-mails to help you in your preliminary study for this event. Please click on the links and read through the material to help prepare yourself to discuss leadership in the U.S. Forest Service. We also recommend reading *Landscape Turned Red* by Stephen Sears. Can you identify the leaders in the header image at the top of this email? What key leaders are missing?

- The Staff Ride portion of the program begins at 1500 on 17 April with a presentation at Clarion Inn and Conference Center in Shepherdstown (where you'll already be), followed by an icebreaker at 1800 with chow provided by Mission BBQ at: Morgans Grove Park, 4198 Kearneysville Pike, Shepherdstown, WV 25443.
- On 18 April, we'll leave the Quality Inn in Shepherdstown (where we're all staying) at 0700 by van and move to The Point at Harpers Ferry. We'll spend the morning at Harpers Ferry, then hike back to the Quality Inn that afternoon along the historic C&O Canal (about 15 miles). Bring your own lunch, good footwear, and be prepared for any weather.
- On 19 April, we'll leave the Quality Inn by van at 0700 and go to the Antietam National Battlefield, and continue the staff ride by walking to various stands in the park all day (about 12 miles). Then we'll return by van to the Quality Inn at 1700, and have an integration dinner at 1800.
- If you're really interested in leadership through history, other recommended titles can be found on our Reading Page (<https://www.theomna.com/reading.html>).



Figure 4: A page from the participant guide provided to participants on the Yarnell Hill Fire Staff Ride. The entire guide, or extracts from the participant guide, can be sent out for preliminary study.

## ***Yarnell Hill Fire Staff Ride Goals***

- **Goal 1** - Create a memorable learning experience that helps participants make better decisions supported by the application of recent and relevant history.
- **Goal 2** - Discover and reveal trends in operational decision-making, in order to reinforce positive trends and reduce negative outcomes within the wildland fire service..
- **Goal 3** - Broaden the expectations of participants as to: (1) the increasing complexity of evolving environmental conditions; and (2) the possibilities for making positive changes in the context of organizational and community culture.
- **Goal 4** - Provide for opportunity recognition within the realm of interface-driven chaos – that condition between the states of order and disorder where the right action taken in time can have the most profound effect – applying intuitive judgment to better evaluate the ever-increasing amount of analytical data available to firefighters.
- **Goal 5** - Help heal communities affected by past and future fatalities in the course of wildland and structural fire operations.

## ***Synopsis of Yarnell Hill Fire Staff Ride Learning Themes***

- **Stand 1 – Defining Success and Understanding Mission.** Framing the window of intent and success – who decides and how do you communicate intent?
- **Stand 2 – Toggle-On – Defining Engagement.** Opening the window through mission clarity. The criticality of active listening, peer leadership, and active followership.
- **Stand 3 – Sensemaking and Communication.** Sensing different windows in time and space – changing conditions of environment and operational complexity. Choosing the right windows of opportunity and implementing action through communication styles and crisis communications.
- **Stand 4 – The Closing Window.** Why margin matters as windows close in time and space.
- **Stand 5 – Realized Ultimate Reality.** Brotherhood – “who are we?” As windows close we remember and reflect on our calling as firefighters.
- **Stand 6 – The Courage to Be.** Opening new windows for healing and rebirth.

***Questions for Students of Fire:*** Throughout this guide you will find call-out boxes like this with questions to ponder and discuss.

***Note on Windows.*** Throughout the stands, we refer to an opening and closing “window” as a metaphor representing opportunities in time and space. The changing window image is provided at the beginning of each stand.



It is worth noting that complex events are very difficult to reconstruct after the fact. Trained investigators often state that their reconstruction of events is at best a close approximation of what really happened. Eyewitness accounts frequently vary from one person to another on the same event, especially when the people involved are under a great deal of stress or in life-threatening situations. For this reason, all sources must be analyzed critically, and care should be taken not to jump to the “easy conclusions” and point the hasty finger. Staff ride facilitators are encouraged to emphasize to participants that analysis is important but a rush to judgment is almost always inappropriate.

In addition to the learning resources, also share logistics information regarding travel, lodging, meals, transportation, costs, etc. A schedule of stands with times, locations, and learning themes is also a helpful thing to share in advance.

Table 3: Example staff ride schedule from the Yarnell Hill Staff Ride.

**DAY 1 – Large-group introduction in hotel conference room in Prescott**

Time	Stand and Location	Theme
1900-2100	Intro at hotel or Gurly St. Grill	Learning from staff rides

**DAY 2 – Hard times for large-group session highlighted in yellow**

Time	Stand and Location	Theme
0700-0815	Movement to Yarnell	Orientation and Fire History
0815-0900	1. Yarnell Fire Station	Defining Success – Understanding Mission
0900-1130	2. Movement to Ridgetop	Toggle On – Defining Engagement
1130-1230	3. Top of the Ridge	Sensemaking and Communication
1230-1430	4. Descending to Saddle	The Closing Window
1430-1530	5. Fatality Site	Realized Ultimate Reality
1530-1700	Movement to Prescott	Personal Reflection
1700-1730	6. Arizona Pioneer Cemetery	The Courage to Be

**Field Study Phase**

If the preliminary study phase has been systematic and thorough, the field study phase will reinforce or modify intellectual perceptions of the incident and surrounding events. The field study culminates all previous efforts by participants to understand selected historical events, to analyze the significance of those events, and to derive relevant lessons for professional development. The importance of the field study is that it is the most effective way to stimulate the participant’s intellectual involvement and to ensure that any analytical conclusions reached at any point in the staff ride process are retained. The field study phase is a memorable learning experience because walking on the actual ground of the incident allows for immersion of all senses in the leadership challenges of the past. While reflecting on the past, participants should be thrust into planning for the future should they encounter similar circumstances.

Specific Items to Consider for the Field Study

**Icebreaker.** It is likely that all participants in a given staff ride will not know each other; many of them are probably meeting for the first time. Even if they know each other, they may not know the conference group leaders or the experts you’ve selected for your teaching cadre. A pre-event meeting the day or evening before a staff ride can serve to set the stage for participants. The facilitators can introduce participants to each other, outline teaching points, and describe the schedule and logistics for field study phase. This sort of “ice-breaking” event is highly recommended.



*Icebreaker session for the Thirtymile Staff Ride. Don't feel constrained to icebreakers in a hotel conference room. Spokane Fire District 4 cadre and participants camped out on the banks of the Chewuch River the night before the staff ride, saving cost, and creating enhanced opportunities for dialog between participants and Thirtymile Fire veterans.*



Be sure that the plans, communications, decisions, and outcomes that occurred on the incident are well understood by the participants. Training aids may include after-action reports, investigation reports, excerpts from incident plans, media reports, terrain and situation maps or sketches, and first-hand accounts. If not provided during preliminary study, these can be provided to the participants during the icebreaker, giving them at least one night to “cram” should they have neglected their preliminary studies.

**Logistics and Safety.** The staff ride planning team should include one logistician, responsible for arranging all necessary logistics. Logistics includes getting people to and from the location, lodging them, feeding them, and moving them from stand to stand during the field study phase. It includes setting up venues for the icebreaker and the integration dinner. Once the field study phase begins, the logistician coordinates execution of logistics, and reacts to unplanned events. A good practice is for the logistician to have a dedicated support vehicle.



*South Canyon Staff Ride cadre supporting Redding Interagency Hotshot Crew in May 2018. Protective headgear and footwear, along with an extensive IAP with fully developed transportation, communications, and medical evacuation plans provide for logistics and safety during this annual training and education event.*



Physical fitness and hydration of participants is an important consideration. If the group is to remain together as a group, it can only move as fast as the least fit participant. Be realistic in the time you estimate will be needed at the site; it's better to plan too much time than too little. If the group is large and will be split into smaller independent groups, these groups can be assembled according to fitness levels, although that should not be the only consideration.

The experience and knowledge level of each group member should be taken into account when splitting into smaller groups. It is good to have a mix of more- and less-experienced people in each group, as well as a mix of people with different backgrounds or from different levels of the organization. This may help to ensure a multi-faceted discussion.

In terms of safety, wildland fire sites usually involve some or all the following potential hazards, many of which were also present during the incident being studied: steep terrain, rolling rocks, exposure to the elements (such as lightning, flooding, hot weather), dehydration, flora and fauna (such as poison oak, bees, snakes and ticks), remote sites involving lengthy extraction times for injured personnel, and poor communications. Many of these risks can be mitigated by briefing involved personnel on the local hazards in advance of the site visit and by setting expectations for the level of physical fitness required. A job hazards analysis and an IAP are good tools to help think through contingencies for "incident within an incident" actions. Depending on your risk analysis, you can reduce or increase the resources available to mitigate risk.

Example: Conducting a staff ride of the Battle of Fredericksburg in Virginia has all stands accessible by vehicle and less than a 10-minute drive from a level II trauma center and only a 20 minute flight to Level I care. That is a different level of risk than the South Canyon or Yarnell Hill staff rides where stands are accessible only on foot in rugged terrain with much slower medical response.

In lower risk staff rides, the logistician might also serve as safety officer and medical response director. In higher risk staff rides, you might want to dedicate a resource as the safety officer and make advance planning coordination with local emergency response agencies. Identify any licensed medical responders from among the cadre and participants and establish protocols and advanced coordination between medical responders as appropriate. Don't wait until you have a medical emergency to think out your response. Identify any personnel on the staff ride with special medical needs (allergies, injuries, illnesses, etc.) and "what-if" your worst-case scenarios.

**Communications.** Having a communications plan is good low-cost risk mitigation. At a minimum, cell phone numbers for all cadre members should be shared within the cadre. As you assess cell phone coverage in the area of your staff ride, or if you assess a higher risk of physical injury during the staff ride, establishing single-channel radio communications between cadre members may be prudent. Having local dispatchers briefed on the staff ride and arranging communications with emergency responders is worth the effort.

**Teaching and Learning.** The operating environment of the firefighter makes the best learning environment. If possible, get firefighters out in the woods, in the grasslands, in the neighborhoods. Hike the hills, keep them moving and exposed to changing environments to stimulate thought and learning. When possible, let the outdoors be your primary "classroom." Put the participants "in the shoes" of the individuals involved on the incident. This should go beyond a recitation of a short biography. Relate the individuals and their backgrounds pertinent to the specific situation, event, or decision. Be sure to discuss the role that the firefighting culture played in the event. For example, what assumptions might have been made by or about a person simply because they were a hotshot, smokejumper, helitack crew member, or manager? The reading of brief and colorful vignettes drawn from primary sources is a good

technique. If possible, have one or more first-hand witnesses from the incident do presentations or a question-and-answer sessions as part of the field study.

Techniques used to promote participant interaction such as individual research presentations, first-hand witness presentations, tactical decision games, or open discussion points should attempt to draw on some common threads from the learning themes of the staff ride. Typically, these include topics such as:

- Leader’s intent and incident objectives – how well were they articulated and communicated to all levels?
- Human behavior at all levels of the organization and the influences upon it.
- Leadership and decision-making at the tactical, operational, and strategic levels.
- Command, control, and communications between leaders, subordinates, and peers.

*Engaged conference group at a stand on the Yarnell Hill Fire Staff Ride.*



In staff rides, the best learning occurs at the conference group level. Large-group sessions (often called “plenary” sessions) are good to keep everyone on schedule while making best use of expert presentations, but the best learning happens with the small groups. Conference group leaders, as teaching cadre, must shape their thinking about how they interact with their assigned participants as adult learners, then consider the envisioned overall learning outcomes, not just content or objective specific learning. Conference group leaders are preparing firefighters for future crises and are always under observation as exemplars of instructional morals, ethics, and professionalism. Certain best practices enable conference group leaders to tend to all participants in the learning climate they create, in order to keep learners engaged and focused

on learning. When adult learners are engaged and focused, they are less likely to be distracted or interrupt the learning of others.

Here is a checklist of best practices:

- **Serve as a Good Role Model.** A leader has considerable influence on the student’s motivation, through the example given. PRACTICE WHAT YOU PREACH.
- **First Impressions and Command Presence.** As a leader you have one opportunity to give a first impression to the learner. This can be completed by being early, organized, prepared, focused, presentable, and engaging to the learners as they arrive. The leader’s command presence sets the tone for the learning environment and demonstrates leading from the front. As a leader, it is okay to not know an answer to a learner’s question and needs to be properly addressed and followed up on. For example: “That is a great question, I don’t know the answer and I will find out and get back to you.” It is imperative that this is followed up on. Demonstrate confidence without arrogance and remember, when in charge, be in charge.
- **Time Management.** Manage the time available against the time needed for various learning tasks. Mismanagement of time is critical for the impact it leaves on the learners. Start on time and end a few minutes early. Do not be the last conference group to arrive for a scheduled large-group session.
- **Smoothness.** Keep discussion moving smoothly and seamlessly through well-orchestrated transitions so that learners are not abruptly directed from one element or activity to the next. Focus on the learning themes for each stand. This minimizes distracting or disturbing incidents and keeps learners engaged and focused. Smooth the transitions between stands by giving the learners something to think about or do during movement. For example, describe a scenario, and tell the group: “Now we’re going to move to the next stand which will take about 10 minutes; when we stop, I’ll ask one of you to communicate to dispatch your size-up of this situation by radio.”
- **Satiation Avoidance.** See to it that learners are not overexposed to a particular subject as they will eventually become “full” and need to move onto another topic or activity. A good rule of thumb is about 10-15 minutes to a topic after which a break is in order or a smooth transition to a new topic. Telling a story of your personal experience is a good way to “shift gears.”
- **Audience Awareness.** Leaders of learning need to know what is going on in all parts of the learning environment at all times. This situational awareness is essential to detecting learners with questions, unmet needs, or those slipping from engagement in the task or slipping in focus on the learning. Reading the audience helps feed this awareness, knowing which learners are engaged or when the group is approaching satiation. Eye contact, body language, and tone of voice from learner responses all provide input beyond just what teachers see across the whole of the classroom. For example: An “aware” conference group leader notices that several learners are puzzled by the last example used; or some learners in the back have tuned out and are staring into space; or one is always on their cell phone. The leader then takes action to get learners back on track, such as changing location or position of the group in order to focus on a map or a terrain model or a particular view of terrain.
- **Adaptive Execution.** Effective leaders are adaptive in their ability to adjust instruction to best support the learners. If learners are approaching satiation on a topic the leader adapts the plan to transition to a new topic while being sure to follow up on the part missed later in the lesson. Adaptive execution is not about changing the curriculum for the needs of the learner, it is about

changing the instruction to meet the needs of the learner. Such changes are departures from the norm and may take the form of additional questions to the learners, analogies, examples, in the moment sequencing changes, etc.

- **Positive Reinforcement.** When learners perform or behave as we expect or desire, provide positive reinforcement such as incentives or appreciative praise. This makes learners more interested in doing the right thing. In essence, we need to “catch” adult learners “being good.” When students do something worthy of recognition, leaders need to give positive feedback to the student. Such recognition makes the student feel alive, important, and significant.
- **Provide Examples and Analogies.** Providing a variety of examples and analogies when teaching concepts or skills will help solidify the key elements of the material and can further motivate students to learn. “The strength of the pack is the wolf, and the strength of the wolf is the pack.” Metaphors matter because they are memorable. Alliteration helps too. Poetry helps concentrate and purify language. Learn a few favorite lines and use them when the opportunity presents itself.
- **Recognize Individual Differences.** Some people learn at a slower pace than others, and some require different stimuli to become motivated to learn. The leader must establish an effective student-teacher trust relationship. It is important that the teacher does not create barriers, but builds a rapport with the students, and shows empathy and genuine concern for their learning.
- **Provide Feedback through Active Listening.** Learner performance improves when the leader provides meaningful feedback on performance. Timely and constructive comments about performance provide recognition of their efforts and help to correct errors. Used appropriately, feedback should specify clearly the action being reinforced and should be believable.

Examples of active listening responses from a conference group leader:

“Good point!” “Outstanding!”

“So based on that direction from you Mary, this is what I would do... What would you do Joe?”

“Bill, that’s a good idea! Let’s discuss what might happen if you implemented that concept. Ann, what do you think could go wrong?”

“Thanks Jim, that reminds me that we should always think about second and third order effects. Can anyone think of any unintended consequences that might occur after that decision?”

“Tell me more about that.”

“I like that, thank you! What are the risks?”



*Conference group engaged with veterans of the Esperanza Fire looking back toward the ignition point from the burnover site at the Octagon House.*



**Transition to integration.** Transitioning from field study to integration is best done as a large group with all participants gathered together at a place of reflection. The location should have deep meaning for participants and cadre. Cemeteries are good, as are places of decisive or final action such as fatality sites on wildland fires. Absent such locations, a place with a breathtaking view will do nicely. Before having a concluding speaker speak, announce any logistics details about the integration dinner (time, location, payment, etc.) and issue a call for after-action comments to be collected by conference group leaders. Give participants 5 minutes to write down recommendations for improvement before the speaker begins. Select one of the teaching cadre to give some inspiring and reflective remarks to the whole group, and then give participants time to think about what they've just experienced and come up with a lesson to share with the group after the integration dinner. Keep the final presentation to 30 minutes or less.

*Final plenary session of the field study phase of the Donner-Reed Expedition Staff Ride (at Donner Pass overlooking back over Donner Lake).*



## After Action Review

Gather the cadre for an After Action Review (AAR) right after the concluding remarks and before the integration dinner. On multi-day staff rides, the cadre should gather every afternoon at the end of each day to gather ideas for improving the staff ride. Conference group leaders should gather written recommendations from their small groups at the end of each day for consideration by the cadre.

AARs are foundational to improving the learning experience of your staff ride. They provide an opportunity for dialog and inquiry following every event. Firefighting leaders walk the talk of being a learning organization by scheduling routine debriefings to evaluate performance and apply the lessons learned. AARs maximize learning from every operation, training event, or task; they represent a powerful tool for team and organizational learning.

Set the example on staff rides by emphasizing the AAR for the cadre and encourage input from participants in the form of written comments.

AARs allow people to share honest opinions and learn from each other. Fire leaders make sure that debriefings focus on what instead of who; we use them to improve weaknesses and to sustain strengths.

Facilitating an AAR requires patience. Initially it is necessary for the leader to set the tempo. The leader must be a part of the AAR and will have to occasionally accept criticism. This is important because the team will be looking for affirmation of the AAR process. Some tips:

- Hold an AAR as immediately after an event as possible by the personnel involved.
- Make sure everyone participates.
- Pay attention to time; set a start and ending time.
- Establish clear ground rules: encourage candor and openness, all participants have equal ownership, focus on improving performance, and keep all discussions confidential.
- End on a positive note.

## Integration Phase

The third and final phase is a formal opportunity for integration that allows participants and cadre to “bring all the parts together” in order to reflect on the impressions and lessons learned. Start the integration phase as close to the end of the field study phase as possible so that impressions are still fresh in participants’ minds.

One approach that has been used very successfully for staff rides has been a post-event integration dinner. It may make for a long day, by the time participants have returned from the field and re-assembled for dinner, however the format is very engaging. Participants can mingle and discuss the field study informally over dinner, and then after dinner, a more formal discussion may be held. Have a “round-robin” of all participants, providing each the opportunity to stand up and share one lesson they have learned with the whole group. Limit them to 1 minute or less to keep this part under 2 hours. Before starting, give them a 10-minute warning to use restrooms and refresh their glasses. If a post-event dinner is not possible, identify a field location to conduct the integration and allow some time for individual reflection between the final stand and the integration location. As each participant shares their lesson, the facilitator should respond briefly as an example of active listening and to help focus comments on the learning themes.

No matter what format is used for the integration, questions should be asked that encourage shared learning such as, “what is the single most important thing you concluded from today’s study” or “how

will you use what you have learned here to improve the way you or your organization conducts its operations?” In this way, participants can continue to learn from each other; the integration phase does not end...it just transitions back to their home stations and continues on as participants teach others the things they’ve learned.

*Integration dinner for annual USFS Roundtable following hiking staff rides of Harpers Ferry and the Battle of Sharpsburg. This national-level event starts with all participants in USFS uniform for introductory discussions, transitions to casual hiking attire for the staff rides, and ends with the integration dinner in coat and tie. Most staff rides are casual events throughout. If you have specific dress requirements for your staff ride, plan for and announce that in advance.*



## Concluding Thoughts

A constant dilemma for staff ride organizers is the use of first-hand witnesses, especially for incidents that involved injuries or fatalities. Unlike military battles within the confines of the United States that were exclusively fought in the 1700s and 1800s, survivors and eyewitnesses are available for many wildland fires. Firefighters who served at South Canyon, Thirtymile, Butte, Yarnell Hill, Twisp, Thomas, Camp, or any number of other fires are still employed by a variety of wildland fire agencies. Further, people who were involved in management or investigation roles are also available for those fires.

Providing personal accounts from first-hand witnesses in the delivery of a staff ride is a very effective technique. However, some cautions need to be addressed. First and foremost, these individuals have often experienced a great deal of trauma associated with the event and revisiting it may be emotionally difficult. Second, as with anyone involved in a fast-moving event, each individual was only afforded a small window into of the overall picture of the event. They will have some very accurate information, some other information that may be less accurate, and will probably have some very strong bias and judgments that they will want to communicate. Facilitators need to be prepared to handle all of those aspects of a first-hand presenter as an information source. Lastly, if a staff ride is designed to depend primarily on first-hand presenters, it will become more and more difficult to conduct with each passing year as the first-hand presenters lose interest in participating in the event.

The design aspect of a staff ride requires subject matter expertise, applied in a systemic way to guide participants in a challenging learning environment. The design of a staff ride should be given the same level of attention given to any other educational or training effort. Carefully designed and resourcefully executed, a staff ride is one of the most powerful instruments available for the professional development of wildland fire service leaders.

# Appendix A

## Staff Ride Planning Documents

This annex provides examples of best practices for staff ride planning documents. This is a product of the National Staff Ride Workshop. All documents are tabs in one single spreadsheet, providing one authoritative file for staff ride development.

## Integrated Master Schedule

Work packages assign schedule, lead, and cost for Alpha, Beta, and Operational test running of the staff ride. Alpha test should be for staff ride planning cadre only. Bravo test for selected cadre (conference group leaders). Operational test for invited guests. Capture AAR comments and build on each running.

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	
1	Percent Complete	Activity	Start	Finish	Lead	Cost	Total Project Cost	\$47,972.00
2	90%	National Staff Ride Workshop E1	23 Jan 17	26 Jan 17	Sam			
3	100%	Travel and Icebreaker	23 Jan 17	24 Jan 17		\$481.00		
4	100%	Battle of Shiloh	24 Jan 17	25 Jan 17		\$481.00		
5	100%	Planning Day 1	25 Jan 17	26 Jan 17		\$481.00		
6	100%	Planning Day 2	26 Jan 17	27 Jan 17		\$481.00		
7	50%	Return Travel	27 Jan 17	28 Jan 17		\$240.00		
8	0%	<b>Brief and Approve Project</b>			Sam		<b>\$2,164.00</b>	
9	0%	Initial Brief	30 Jan 17	30 Jan 17				
10	0%	In-progress Review	15 Feb 17	15 Feb 17				
11	0%	Programming and Budgeting	1 Feb 17	15 May 17				
12	0%	Final Program Approval	28 Jun 17	16 May 17				
13	0%	<b>ALPHA TEST – Blue Ribbon Staff Ride</b>	<b>23 Oct 17</b>	<b>27 Oct 17</b>	Sam			
14	0%	Initial Planning Teleconference	13 Feb 17	13 Feb 17		\$0.00		
15	0%	Preliminary Study Email 1	27 Mar 17	27 Mar 17		\$0.00		
16	0%	Preliminary Study Email 2	3 Apr 17	3 Apr 17		\$0.00		
17	0%	Preliminary Study Email 3	10 Apr 17	10 Apr 17		\$0.00		
18	0%	Final Planning Teleconference	12 Apr 17	12 Feb 17		\$0.00		
19	0%	Cadre Travel Day	17 Apr 17	17 Apr 17		\$484.00		
20	0%	Day 0 Dry Run	18 Apr 17	18 Apr 17		\$1,694.00		
21	0%	Day 0 Icebreaker	18 Apr 17	18 Apr 17		\$0.00		
22	0%	Day 1 Staff Ride	19 Apr 17	19 Apr 17		\$1,694.00		
23	0%	Day 2 Staff Ride	20 Apr 17	20 Apr 17		\$1,694.00		
24	0%	Day 2 Training Objective Workshop	20 Apr 17	20 Apr 17		\$0.00		
25	0%	Day 2 Integration Dinner	20 Apr 17	20 Apr 17		\$0.00		
26	0%	Return Travel	21 Apr 17	21 Apr 17		\$840.00		
27	0%	<b>BETA TEST – Blue Ribbon Staff Ride</b>	<b>19 Jun 17</b>	<b>23 Jun 17</b>	Sam		<b>\$6,406.00</b>	
28	0%	Initial Planning Teleconference						
29	0%	Preliminary Study Email 1						
30	0%	Ay						
31	0%	Preliminary Study Email 3						
32	0%	Final Planning Teleconference						
33	0%	Cadre Travel Day						
34	0%	Day 0 Dry Run						
35	0%	Day 0 Icebreaker						
36	0%	Day 1 Staff Ride						
37	0%	Day 2 Staff Ride						
38	0%	Day 2 Training Objective Workshop						
39	0%	Day 2 Integration Dinner						
40	0%	Return Travel						
41	0%	<b>OPERATIONAL TEST – Blue Ribbon Staff Ride</b>	<b>23 Oct 17</b>	<b>27 Oct 17</b>	Sam		<b>\$15, 471.00</b>	



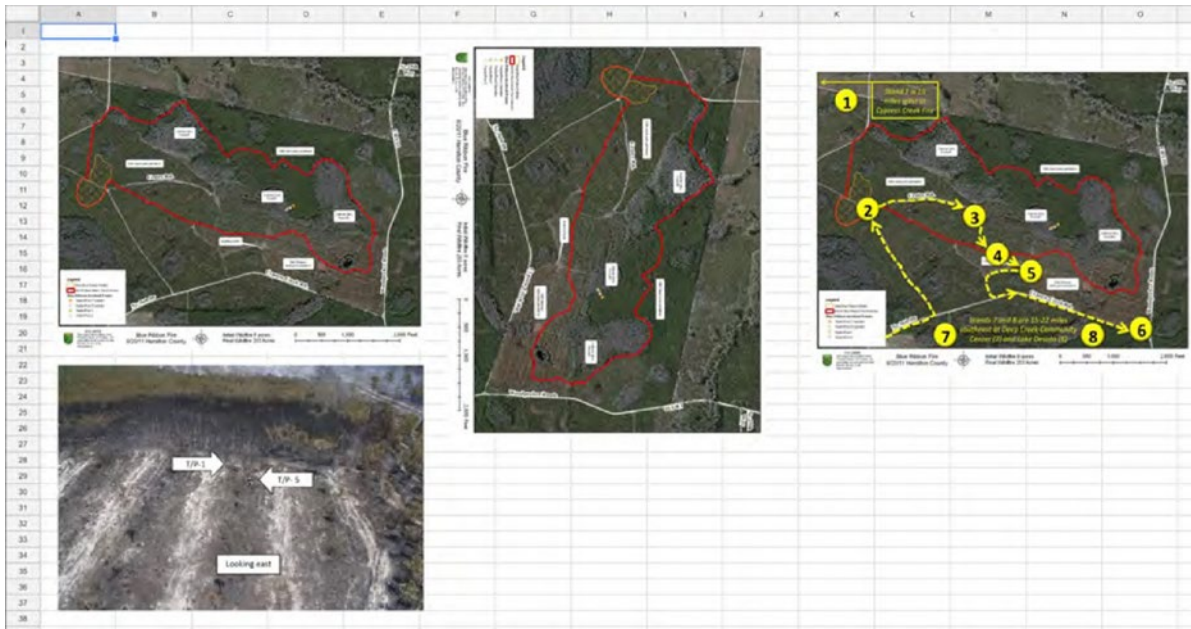
## Cadre Assignment Table

Shown here are staff ride planning team members, subject matter experts, and potential conference group leaders. Expertise is identified for each person, along with projected costs for travel and labor if these people are not within your agency and locally available at no cost. Also include a column that identifies which test running of the staff ride you plan to invite them to.

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
1	Role	Name	Blue Ribbon Expertise	Additional Cost/Day (Total)	Labor	Travel	Materials	Test
2	Incident (Staff Ride) Commander	Sam LeNeave	Incident Commander	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	A, B, Ops
3	Planning Section Chief	Kasie Crowe	Incident Investigative Report	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	A, B, Ops
4	Operations Section Chief	George Risko	Honor Guard Liaison	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	A, B, Ops
5	Logistics Section Chief	John Raulerson	Honor Guard Member	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	A, B, Ops
6	Subject Matter Expert	Adam Patnum/Mike Joyner	Department Perspective	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	B, Ops
7	Subject Matter Expert	Jim Karels/John Fish	Agency Perspective	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	B, Ops
8	Subject Matter Expert	Glen David/Andy Ross/Steve Carpenter		\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	B, Ops
9	Subject Matter Expert	John Kern	Asset Tracking, Fire Behavior, Family Liaison	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	B, Ops
10	Subject Matter Expert	Molly Gaylard/Margaret Fulton/Danielle Mark Crow	Family	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	B, Ops
11	Subject Matter Expert	Mark Crow	TBD	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	B, Ops
12	Subject Matter Expert	Ralph Crawford	TBD	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	B, Ops
13	Subject Matter Expert	Brian Prill	TBD	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	B, Ops
14	Subject Matter Expert	Todd Shewey	TBD	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	B, Ops
15	Subject Matter Expert	TBD	TBD	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	B, Ops
16	Subject Matter Expert	Fred Boehm	TBD	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	B, Ops
17	Subject Matter Expert	Jeff Plotto	TBD	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	B, Ops
18	Conference Group Leader*	Mike Roberts	TBD	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	Ops
19	Conference Group Leader*	Keith Mousel	TBD	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	Ops
20	Conference Group Leader*	Shawn Duggar	TBD	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	Ops
21	Conference Group Leader	Mike Work	TBD	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	Ops
22	Conference Group Leader	Butch	TBD	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	Ops
23	Conference Group Leader	Will Raulerson	TBD	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	Ops
24	Conference Group Leader	Kawika Bailey	TBD	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	Ops
25	Conference Group Leader*	Pat Keogh	TBD	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	Ops
26	Conference Group Leader*	Eric Black	TBD	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	Ops
27	Conference Group Leader*	Pat Deron	TBD	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	Ops
28	Conference Group Leader*	Abe Philipson	TBD	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	Ops
29	Conference Group Leader*	Andy Lamborn	TBD	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	Ops
30				\$0.00	Total Daily Cost			
31	*Primary CGL							

## Maps

A tab for maps is a handy place to keep all the maps you plan to use for handouts or for the participant guide. Manipulate these in PowerPoint, but then keep the final ones here in the spreadsheet as backup. Keep the PowerPoint too of course in case you want to make changes.



## Initiating Document

Identifies vision, learning objectives, and initial event schedule with learning themes.

	A	B	C	D
1	<b>Blue Ribbon Fire</b>			
2	<b>Staff Ride Development Plan</b>			
3	<b>January 25, 2017</b>			
4				
5	<b>Vision</b>			
6	Develop a staff ride for the Blue Ribbon Fire that is adaptable to the needs of all audiences; that provokes thought of roles and responsibilities; that creates a climate that is conducive to learning.			
7	<b>Learning Objectives</b>			
8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Understand strategy and tactics used as fire danger increases. (Recognition/Situational Awareness) Tactics/Procedures in this fuel type/environment.</li> </ul>			
9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Learn to anticipate change and develop habits of thinking/preparing for future operations.</li> </ul>			
10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Employing resources within their capabilities.</li> </ul>			
11	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Understand the importance of equipment maintenance as it pertains to fire readiness and tactical implications.</li> </ul>			
12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Learn the need to anticipate changes and develop alternate plans.</li> </ul>			
13	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Understand the importance of leader's intent, clearly defined objectives, and communication responsibilities.</li> </ul>			
14	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Understand the impact a significant event has on the unit, agency, community. How do we create an environment of learning?</li> </ul>			
15				
16	<b>Day 1</b>			
17	<b>Stand</b>	<b>Time</b>	<b>Theme</b>	<b>Location</b>
18	Travel	0700 – 0800		
19	Stand 1	0800 – 0900	Preparedness and Initial Attack (TDG)	
20	Stand 2	0900 – 1000	Triage and Assignment Priorities (TDG)	
21	Stand 3	1000 – 1045	Re-evaluate Tactics	
22	Stand 4	1045 – 1130	Contingency Planning (TDG)	
23	Lunch	1130 – 1300	Facilitative Discussion (Leadership)	
24	Stand 5	1300 – 1400	Transition (TDG)/Reflection	
25	Stand 6	1400 – 1500	Incident within the Incident (TDG)	
26	Stand 7	1500 – 1630	Human Factors (Homework)	
27	Travel	1630 – 1700		
28				
29	<b>Day 2</b>			
30	<b>Stand</b>	<b>Time</b>	<b>Theme</b>	<b>Location</b>
31	Travel	0700 – 0800		
32	Brief Homework Assignment	0800 – 0900	Information Flow Dynamics	
33	Stand 8	0900 – 1130	Resiliency	
34	Lunch	1130 – 1300	Facilitative Discussion	
35	Workshop	1300 – 1700	Training Development	
36	Integration Dinner	1800 – 2100	Looking Forward	

## Staff Ride Schedule

This is the working copy of the initial schedule and stands. Change this to make it better as you continue planning. Keep the original in a separate tab, to see how much you've changed the schedule and themes since when you started planning. This is a good way to not forget what you started to create once you are downstream in planning.

	A	B	C	D
1	Day 1			
2				
3	Stand	Time	Theme	Location
4	Travel	0700 – 0800		
5	Stand 1	0800 – 0900	Preparedness and Initial Attack (TDG)	Cypress Creek Fire
6	Stand 2	0900 – 1000	Triage and Assignment Priorities (TDG)	Initial Blue Ribbon Fire
7	Stand 3	1000 – 1045	Re-evaluate Tactics	
8	Stand 4	1045 – 1130	Contingency Planning (TDG)	
9	Lunch	1130 – 1300	Facilitative Discussion (Leadership)	
10	Stand 5	1300 – 1400	Transition (TDG)/Reflection	
11	Stand 6	1400 – 1500	Incident within the Incident (TDG)	
12	Stand 7	1500 – 1630	Human Factors (Homework)	
13	Travel	1630 – 1700		
14				
15	Stand	Time	Theme	Location
16	Travel	0700 – 0800		
17	Brief Homework Assignment	0800 – 0900	Information Flow Dynamics	
18	Stand 8	0900 – 1130	Resiliency	
19	Lunch	1130 – 1300	Facilitative Discussion	
20	Workshop	1300 – 1700	Training Development	
21	Integration Dinner	1800 – 2100	Looking Forward	

## Tactical Decision Games (TDG)

Start crafting TDGs here in the document for use later as you develop handouts for teaching cadre and participants.

A	
1	<b>TACTICAL DECISION GAMES (TDGs): By Stand</b>
2	
3	<b>STAND 1: (Preparedness &amp; Initial Attack)</b>
4	
5	<b>Front Line Firefighters:</b>
6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>It is June 16, 2011, at 0430. Current conditions: (###). You have been dispatched to the Cypress Creek Fire at (###). Upon your arrival, you observe the following: (###). What are your thoughts? What is your size-up report for dispatch?</li> </ul>
7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>It is now the end of the day, you have fought (###) fires and the field unit has chased 16 fires. What are your thoughts? What conversations are you and your fellow firefighters having?</li> </ul>
8	
9	<b>Fire Managers:</b>
10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>You have just heard the report over the radio. What are your thoughts?</li> </ul>
11	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>It is now the end of the day. The field unit has chased 16 fires. What are your thoughts? What preparations are you making?</li> </ul>
12	
13	<b>STAND 2 (Triage &amp; Assignment Priorities)</b>
14	
15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>June 20, 2011: 30 active fires, a significant increase from 16 fire four days prior, 2 of which are now being managed by a Federal Incident Management Team (IMT). There is one more large fire (Honey Prairie) in Georgia. The unit has 35 firefighter positions, 4 of which were dispatched out of district and 2 supervisors were unavailable. What directions do you provide your personnel?</li> </ul>
16	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Based on the current situation (contractor checking the Blue Ribbon Fire), how do you triage fires and assign resources? What are your priorities?</li> </ul>
17	
18	<b>STAND 4 (Contingency Planning)</b>
19	
20	<b>Front Line Firefighters:</b>
21	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>You are the operator of the unit that is overheating. What do you do?</li> </ul>
22	
23	<b>Initial Attack Incident Commander (IC):</b>
24	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>You are the IC of this fire, and one of your units is overheating. What are your instructions?</li> </ul>
25	
26	<b>STAND 5 (Transition)</b>
27	
28	Create the situation. Identify the two incident commanders and have them conduct a handoff. During this time, the issues (equipment overheating, tractor separation). This is the pressure cooker; the need to make sound and timely decisions.
29	
30	<b>STAND 6 (Incident within the Incident)</b>
31	
32	Provide a large-group presentation to allow participants to fully understand the situation. Then allow time to reflect and have small group discussions.
33	
34	<b>STAND 7 (Homework)</b>
35	
36	Discuss the issues associated with social media. Have participants work in their conference groups that evening to bring potential solutions to this problem. Brief the following morning.
37	
38	<b>TRAINING DEVELOPMENT</b>
39	
40	We know the lesson was learned when the behavior is changed. What behavior do we want to change? Develop solutions in the form of tasks/conditions/standards.

## Cost Breakdown Options

If costs are important to you in getting authorization for the staff ride, it is usually handy to have thought through estimated costs for various options in advance. Doing that in another spreadsheet tab provides a ready resource for you.

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O	P
1	<b>Option 1</b>															
2	<b>Alpha</b>															
3	<b>Participant</b>	<b>#</b>	<b>Hotel</b>	<b>Nights</b>		<b>Meals</b>	<b>Days</b>		<b>Per Diem</b>	<b>Total</b>		<b>Cost/Day</b>	<b>Days</b>		<b>Per Diem</b>	<b>Total</b>
4	Team	4	\$85.00	4	\$340.00	\$36.00	4	\$144.00	\$60.00	\$544.00	\$121.00	\$484.00	4	\$1,936.00	\$240.00	\$2,176.00
5	CGL	5	\$85.00	3	\$255.00	\$36.00	3	\$108.00	\$60.00	\$423.00	\$121.00	\$605.00	3	\$1,815.00	\$300.00	\$2,115.00
6	SME	3	\$85.00	3	\$255.00	\$36.00	3	\$108.00	\$60.00	\$423.00	\$121.00	\$363.00	3	\$1,089.00	\$180.00	\$1,269.00
7	CISM	2	\$85.00	3	\$255.00	\$36.00	3	\$108.00	\$60.00	\$423.00	\$121.00	\$242.00	3	\$726.00	\$120.00	\$846.00
8		14										\$1,694.00			\$840.00	\$6,406.00
9	<b>Beta</b>															
10	<b>Participant</b>	<b>#</b>	<b>Hotel</b>	<b>Nights</b>		<b>Meals</b>	<b>Days</b>		<b>Per Diem</b>	<b>Total</b>		<b>Cost/Day</b>	<b>Days</b>		<b>Per Diem</b>	<b>Total</b>
11	Team + CGL	9	\$85.00	4	\$340.00	\$36.00	4	\$144.00	\$60.00	\$544.00	\$121.00	\$1,089.00	4	\$4,356.00	\$540.00	\$4,896.00
12	Students	20	\$85.00	3	\$255.00	\$36.00	3	\$108.00	\$60.00	\$423.00	\$121.00	\$2,420.00	3	\$7,260.00	\$300.00	\$8,460.00
13	SME	3	\$85.00	3	\$255.00	\$36.00	3	\$108.00	\$60.00	\$423.00	\$121.00	\$363.00	3	\$1,089.00	\$180.00	\$1,269.00
14	CISM	2	\$85.00	3	\$255.00	\$36.00	3	\$108.00	\$60.00	\$423.00	\$121.00	\$242.00	3	\$726.00	\$120.00	\$846.00
15		34										\$4,114.00			\$2,040.00	\$15,471.00
16	<b>Operational</b>															
17	<b>Participant</b>	<b>#</b>	<b>Hotel</b>	<b>Nights</b>		<b>Meals</b>	<b>Days</b>		<b>Per Diem</b>	<b>Total</b>		<b>Cost/Day</b>	<b>Days</b>		<b>Per Diem</b>	<b>Total</b>
18	Team + CGL	9	\$85.00	4	\$340.00	\$36.00	4	\$144.00	\$60.00	\$544.00	\$121.00	\$1,089.00	4	\$4,356.00	\$540.00	\$4,896.00
19	Students	40	\$85.00	3	\$255.00	\$36.00	3	\$108.00	\$60.00	\$423.00	\$121.00	\$4,840.00	3	\$14,520.00	\$2,400.00	\$16,920.00
20	SME	3	\$85.00	3	\$255.00	\$36.00	3	\$108.00	\$60.00	\$423.00	\$121.00	\$363.00	3	\$1,089.00	\$180.00	\$1,269.00
21	CISM	2	\$85.00	3	\$255.00	\$36.00	3	\$108.00	\$60.00	\$423.00	\$121.00	\$242.00	3	\$726.00	\$120.00	\$846.00
22		54										\$6,534.00			\$3,340.00	\$23,931.00
23	Option 1: This is our preferred option and it includes a ½ day workshop for participants to work within their conference groups to discuss and answer questions that have been identified during the staff ride. They will brief the other groups and will benefit from what others have learned. Additionally, the agency will capture thoughts and ideas that may benefit all firefighters in Florida and the Southeast.															
24																
25																
26	<b>Option 2</b>															
27	<b>Alpha</b>															
28	<b>Participant</b>	<b>#</b>	<b>Hotel</b>	<b>Nights</b>		<b>Meals</b>	<b>Days</b>		<b>Per Diem</b>	<b>Total</b>		<b>Cost/Day</b>	<b>Days</b>		<b>Per Diem</b>	<b>Total</b>
29	Team	4	\$85.00	3	\$255.00	\$36.00	3	\$108.00	\$60.00	\$423.00	\$121.00	\$484.00	3	\$1,452.00	\$240.00	\$1,692.00
30	CGL	5	\$85.00	2	\$170.00	\$36.00	2	\$72.00	\$60.00	\$302.00	\$121.00	\$605.00	2	\$1,815.00	\$300.00	\$1,510.00
31	SME	3	\$85.00	2	\$170.00	\$36.00	2	\$72.00	\$60.00	\$302.00	\$121.00	\$363.00	2	\$1,089.00	\$180.00	\$906.00
32	CISM	2	\$85.00	2	\$170.00	\$36.00	2	\$72.00	\$60.00	\$302.00	\$121.00	\$242.00	2	\$726.00	\$120.00	\$604.00
33		14										\$1,694.00			\$840.00	\$4,712.00
34	<b>Beta</b>															
35	<b>Participant</b>	<b>#</b>	<b>Hotel</b>	<b>Nights</b>		<b>Meals</b>	<b>Days</b>		<b>Per Diem</b>	<b>Total</b>		<b>Cost/Day</b>	<b>Days</b>		<b>Per Diem</b>	<b>Total</b>
36	Team + CGL	9	\$85.00	3	\$255.00	\$36.00	3	\$108.00	\$60.00	\$423.00	\$121.00	\$1,089.00	3	\$3,267.00	\$540.00	\$3,807.00
37	Students	20	\$85.00	2	\$170.00	\$36.00	2	\$72.00	\$60.00	\$302.00	\$121.00	\$2,420.00	2	\$4,840.00	\$1,200.00	\$6,040.00
38	SME	3	\$85.00	2	\$170.00	\$36.00	2	\$72.00	\$60.00	\$302.00	\$121.00	\$363.00	2	\$726.00	\$180.00	\$906.00
39	CISM	2	\$85.00	2	\$170.00	\$36.00	2	\$72.00	\$60.00	\$302.00	\$121.00	\$242.00	2	\$484.00	\$120.00	\$604.00
40		34										\$4,114.00			\$2,040.00	\$11,357.00
41	<b>Operational</b>															
42	<b>Participant</b>	<b>#</b>	<b>Hotel</b>	<b>Nights</b>		<b>Meals</b>	<b>Days</b>		<b>Per Diem</b>	<b>Total</b>		<b>Cost/Day</b>	<b>Days</b>		<b>Per Diem</b>	<b>Total</b>
43	Team + CGL	9	\$85.00	3	\$255.00	\$36.00	3	\$108.00	\$60.00	\$423.00	\$121.00	\$1,089.00	3	\$3,267.00	\$540.00	\$3,807.00
44	Students	40	\$85.00	2	\$170.00	\$36.00	2	\$72.00	\$60.00	\$302.00	\$121.00	\$4,840.00	2	\$9,680.00	\$2,400.00	\$12,080.00
45	SME	3	\$85.00	2	\$170.00	\$36.00	2	\$72.00	\$60.00	\$302.00	\$121.00	\$363.00	2	\$726.00	\$180.00	\$906.00
46	CISM	2	\$85.00	2	\$170.00	\$36.00	2	\$72.00	\$60.00	\$302.00	\$121.00	\$242.00	2	\$484.00	\$120.00	\$604.00
47		54										\$6,534.00			\$3,340.00	\$17,397.00
48	Option 2: This is another option should cost reduction be necessary. It eliminates the workshop and would also require reducing the number of stands so that the integration dinner can be conducted after the field portion. Participants will certainly benefit from their own take-aways, but we may miss the opportunity to incorporate thoughts and ideas of all groups working together.															
49																
50																
51																
52																
53																
																102
																Option 1 Total Cost \$45,808.00
																102
																Option 2 Total Cost \$33,466.00
																Option 1 vs 2 \$12,342.00

## Participant Guide

While not required, a formal participant guide helps everyone involved with preliminary study, field study, and integration. These are best crafted using Microsoft PowerPoint, and the total number of pages (including covers) must be divisible by four in order for a printer to bind them properly. If you're short on pages, just add some blank pages for notes. A map and a schedule with themes on the back is always helpful.



Examples of Staff Ride Guides.

The *NWCG Wildland Fire Staff Ride Guide*. is developed and maintained by the Leadership Curriculum Management Subcommittee (LCMSC), under the direction of the Leadership Committee (LC), an entity of the National Wildfire Coordinating Group (NWCG).

Previous editions: 2010

While they may still contain current or useful information, previous editions are obsolete. The user of this information is responsible for confirming that they have the most up-to-date version. NWCG is the sole source for the publication.

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