

Rapid Lesson Sharing

Event Type: Burned Equipment

Date: July 17, 2018

Location: Dog Creek Fire, Twin Falls District BLM;
Gooding, Idaho

How Did It Happen?

On the morning of July 17, the Idaho Bureau of Land Management had experienced significant increases in fire activity on its lands due to a weather event that had tracked lightning and gusty winds across the state the day before. That morning, the BLM's Twin Falls District was managing 13 uncontrolled fires.

The Dog Creek Fire started at approximately 1150 on July 17. It was located a few miles north of Gooding, Idaho, burning actively in cheatgrass and sagebrush. The temperature was in the mid-90s. Winds, initially, were pushing the fire to the north. The fire was growing rapidly. An order was placed with South Idaho Dispatch for additional resources, including a load of Smokejumpers.

Eight Jumpers arrived on scene, putting boots on the ground around 1430. They stacked their gear together in the black, near the heel of the fire at the Alpha/Zulu break.

After getting a briefing from the Incident Commander, two of the Jumpers took command roles as Division Supervisors (A & Z), while the rest of the crew began gearing up to engage the fire.

Fire Activity Increases

The fire intensity continued to increase, with active burning in the cheatgrass and sage, while backing and extreme fire behavior at the head. After a wind shift, the fire would eventually jump Highway 46 to the east.

Back at the heel, smoke from the backing and flanking fire filled the area and significantly reduced visibility. Engine crews and Single Engine Air Tankers were working the area to establish a solid anchor point. With the increase in fire activity and smoke and ash drifting over the gear, the crew decided to move the stacked jump gear farther into the black.

Division Alpha was able to hop-in with a district Resource Advisor who had arrived on scene with a pickup around 1700. She was able to provide a mode of transportation, local knowledge and resource concerns for Division A. About 30 minutes later, the Resource Advisor recalled driving past a pile of burning debris. Because she had no



What was the sequence of events that led to the Smokejumpers' staged gear being burned by the Dog Creek Fire?

knowledge of any staged gear in that area—and it was almost entirely consumed—she believed it to be an illegal trash site that had caught fire.

A local fire department Engine radioed at approximately 1800 that they believed the Jumpers' gear was on fire. The engine had been working the fire from the initial dispatch. They had watched the jump and knew the section of line near where the gear was staged. They did not attempt to extinguish any of the gear or equipment because it was completely consumed.

It Happens to All of Us

The following reports are other instances where equipment caught fire:

[\(2016\) Turkey Fire Camp Overrun by Fire](#)

[\(2016\) Tok River Fire Equipment Burn Damage](#)

[\(2016\) Ponderosa RX UTV and ATV Burn Damage](#)

Critical Thinking Questions

*These are not contributing factors.
Rather, they are designed to get you to think critically
or have dialogue around this topic.*

- ❖ How do you secure your vehicle or gear in the black?
- ❖ Do you know of any other fires where equipment or vehicles were damaged after being placed/parked in the black?
- ❖ What steps do you take to ensure your equipment will not catch fire or be damaged by hot spots, embers, etc. after you leave?
- ❖ What considerations would you have for flammable materials such as dolmars, chainsaws, fusees, etc.?

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