

**Twin Falls District
FIR GROVE LESSONS LEARNED REVIEW (LLR)**



Photo as it appeared on the front page of the July 29, 2013 edition of the Times-News.

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Date/Time: August 3, 2013 MST 0900 hours.

Synopsis: The Fir Grove fire, discovered at 1304 hours MST on Sunday, July 28, started from a lightning strike north of Gooding, Idaho on the west side of highway 46. Response to the incident included multiple air and ground resources. At approximately 1645 hours, a photographer from the Times-News in Twin Falls, Idaho took a photo of a firefighter who was helping to conduct a burn out operation on the Fir Grove fire. The photo appears to show a firefighter walking and/or jumping through flames. The caption, included with the photo appearing on the front page of the Times-News on July 29, read *“A firefighter jumped through a wall of flame Sunday night after lighting a back burn on Highway 46.”* No injuries regarding the incident were reported. The Fir Grove fire was contained on July 30 at 2000 hours and controlled on August 1 at 2000 hours at just over 6500 acres.

As a High Reliability Organization (HRO) the Twin Falls District recognized what appeared to be a questionable act of a firefighter jumping through or over flames on a Twin Falls BLM fire. Throughout the LLR, additional HRO principles were identified.

Reluctance to Simplify

- The Twin Falls District Manager resisted the temptation to over simplify the potential the photograph captured and requested the LLR.

Sensitivity to Operations

- Managers on the Twin Falls District recognize and assist operations by providing information and resources necessary to enable front line supervisors to make appropriate and timely decisions.

Commitment to Resilience

- The Fir Grove Type 3 organization conducted a successful burnout operation to establish an anchor point after the fire had jumped the road they were attempting to hold, highway 46.
- Over the following days the Twin Falls fire program successfully managed more than twenty additional fires on the district while hosting a LLR team.

Deference to Expertise

- The Twin Falls District Fire Management Officer has the confidence in his program and employees to allow leadership and decision making to migrate up and down the chain of command while focusing on the overall fire management of the district.

In addition to the guidance outlined in the *Interagency Standards for Fire and Fire Aviation Operations*, the LLR Team chose to utilize the P.L.O.W.S. after action review process. Plan, Leadership, Obstacles, Weaknesses, Strengths (P.L.O.W.S.) is an alternative to the standard After Action Review (AAR) emphasizing safety in a learning environment. Information as it pertains to facilitating an AAR in the standard format is still relevant and applicable.

The following Lessons Learned have been identified:

- While the review team was unable to determine, through photographs and interviews, whether or not the firefighter actually walked/jumped through flames, it is clear that moving through flames is not an acceptable practice. In order to avoid this situation ensure adequate , briefing, Lookouts, Communications, Escape Routes, Safety Zones situational awareness, and span of control is in place prior to and throughout fire suppression operations.
- Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), while helping to lower the risk of injury, is not designed and does not provide adequate protection to firefighters from direct flame impingement.
- Today's fire community is continually in the public eye. Without proper training and experience it may be easy for the public to perceive some fire suppression activities as unsafe or dangerous. Continued education and wildland fire awareness can help foster an increased understanding of the efforts necessary during wildland fire suppression.



Original full sized photo, that appeared in the July 29, 2013 edition of the Times-News.