

Apple Fire Lessons Learned Executive Summary

NOTE: The Executive Summary is derived from the 15-page “Apple Fire Lessons Learned”, dated August 14, 2020.

The Apple Fire, near the San Bernardino National Forest, was the first fire to burn more than 30,000 acres in 2020 as well as the first signature fire with more than 2,600 assigned personnel to integrate COVID-19 prevention techniques at the camps. Over the course of several weeks, personnel highlighted several key lessons learned and identified obstacles that can assist fire personnel in future fires. The majority focused on COVID-19-related issues.

COVID-19 Lessons Learned

- Integrate and incorporate a COVID Advisor to facilitate communication between IMO and IMT
- Camp Life– less than 1k per camp is ideal
 - Two-step access to enter camp – 1) security, 2) COVID symptoms
 - Security should be enforced at entry/exit points – “closed camp” emphasized
 - Signage should be abundant, repetitive, simple, and visual – displayed in front of every “community” area (yurts, dining, etc.)
 - Smart camp layout – identify choke holds for crowd potential, hand sanitation station placement at entry/exit points, etc.
 - Adjust cleaning frequency when and where possible
 - Module of One should be enforced when assigning trailers and sleeping bunks
- Testing/Medical
 - Include County Health Officials as part of the IMT in brief
 - Have clear and concise protocols and/or recommendations for the team relating to COVID during in brief and include county health professionals
 - Integrate Medical Support Units with capacity for assessment, testing, & isolation
- IMT Challenges
 - Mobilization issues where multiple agencies from multiple jurisdictions with differing policies and procedures related to COVID-19 reported directly to the fire line
 - Issues with delegation of authority was identified early so an ad hoc “IMT COVID Support Team” was established with two dedicated Safety Officers and one Medical Unit Leader and reports directly to the IC
 - IMT’s have numerous documents and guidance pertaining to COVID-19 from NMAC and NCWG. They were not familiar with the Region 5 Response Action Process, and there are several differences in these documents and they also use different terminology

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- Have an Expanded IMO in place by identifying additional contact assessors, purchase card holders, and people to support logistics for hotel research as well as driving

Overall recommendations

- IMO and IMT should determine protocols each will follow if cases involving federal employees occur
- Consider embedding a member or two from the IMO during the 2 days preceding IMT DEMOB or having the IMT leave a COVID Team member for transition for 2 days after the IMT leaves
- Provide all IMO employees basic ICS training to provide an understanding of the structure of an incident