

TWO MORE CHAINS

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Wildland
Fire
Lessons
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Center



What Did We Learn in 2023?

By Kelly Woods, Director
Wildland Fire Lessons Learned Center

At the Wildland Fire Lessons Learned Center (LLC) we get tactical again in this issue of *Two More Chains* with our focus centered on some of the lessons we saw in 2023.

In 2023, we received over 140 learning reviews and incident reports. Our staff read each of them. As we studied the stories shared in these documents, we looked for anomalies, recurring lessons, and opportunities to shine a light on what has been happening in our wildland fire community.

Remember, our mission at the LLC is to “reveal the complexity and risk in the wildland fire environment.” We ground our work in support of this mission to the lessons and stories we gather each year. 2023 was no exception. This issue of *Two More Chains* reflects that work.

In the next several pages, you will find topics, some familiar and some perhaps new, presented in a way to get you thinking, talking, and learning. That is always our intent.

In his Ground Truths article, Travis Dotson offers a call to action with two relatively simple lessons that are easy to implement.

In our One of Our Own feature, I visit with women’s fire module leader Liz Skelly. Liz is someone who loves what she does which is always inspiring. She shares lessons learned in her career and how she instills them into the brand-new firefighters she leads. She also offers perspective on the value an all-female fire crew can bring to our community.

Be sure to check out our Staff Picks section where we highlight a few specific learning reviews or reports that you may have missed in 2023.

We hope you enjoy some learning!

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Your feedback is important to us.

Please share your input on this issue of *Two More Chains*: bit.ly/2mcfeedback

Lessons from 2023

UTV Related Incidents

There were more UTV related incidents reported in 2023 than the past five years combined. The jump from 2022 to 2023 was over 300 percent (from 3 to 13).

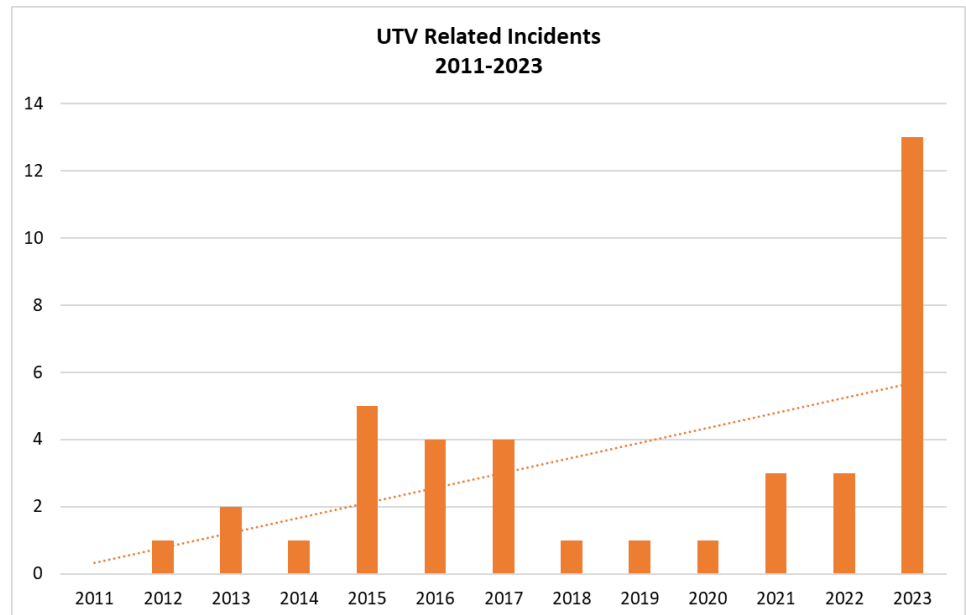
We can't say exactly why this dramatic increase took place. But we can use it as an opportunity to take a tactical pause and consider the risk involved with UTV use related to wildland fire.

Risk & Reward

As you consider the risk involved with UTVs, don't forget to acknowledge the important benefits gained from the use of UTVs.

Common benefits include moving heavy equipment or supplies that would otherwise be hand-carried (fuel, water, hose) and transporting personnel efficiently, which reduces hike time.

The utilization of UTVs is actually a mitigation for some of the dangers that we face (heat illness, falls under load, fatigue, etc.). This obviously does not negate the hazards associated with operating UTVs. However, it does give us reason to pay attention to how important it is to maintain this precious equipment and exercise caution—to ensure that we can continue to benefit from their use.



What Will You Do to Improve Risk Management?

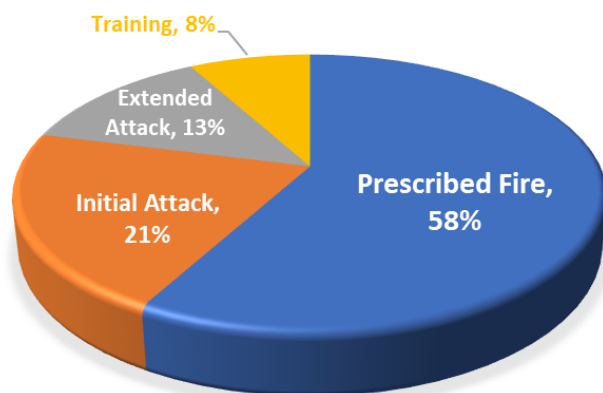
As you consider your exposure and risk as it relates to UTVs, consider what types of activities you perform with them.

The majority of reported UTV related incidents have occurred during prescribed fire related activities.

Why do think that is? Is that just where we use them most? Is it the mix of flammable liquids and fire?

Regardless of "Why"—WHAT will you do to improve risk management related to UTVs?

UTV RELATED INCIDENTS BY ACTIVITY 2011-2023



Chainsaw Cut Incidents



2022 Seven Chainsaw Cuts

- ❖ 2 to Sawyer
- ❖ 5 to Swamper



2023 Four Chainsaw Cuts

- ❖ 4 to Sawyer
- ❖ 0 to Swamper

In 2023 we saw a slight reduction in the number of chainsaw cuts. The most notable change was the difference in the “Cuts to Swamper” category.

Last year there were five. This year there were zero.

In preparing for the 2024 fire year, take a look into these events and revisit the standard risks associated with chainsaw operations.

Of the FOUR Chainsaw Cut incidents in 2023:

- ❖ TWO involved chainsaw kickback.
- ❖ TWO involved the sawyer slipping and falling.

Hit by Tree Incidents

In 2023 we received reports on 12 different Hit by Tree incidents.

Six of these incidents occurred during tree felling operations.

Similar to chainsaw cut incidents, it’s good to remember that in tree felling operations, the person holding the chainsaw is not the only person facing danger.

This is a good time to look over [recent incidents](#), consider their lessons, and revisit your process for tree felling.

What is your standard approach? Is there reason to adjust it?

Specifically, think about the number of people at the base of the tree and typical escape routes.



Of the SIX tree felling operations that resulted in tree strikes:

- ❖ In FOUR instances the sawyer was hit.
- ❖ In TWO instances the swamper was hit.

Entrapments

In 2023 the LLC recorded 12 separate entrapment events.
These entrapments occurred in the following scenarios:

- ❖ 9 during initial attack engine operations.
- ❖ 2 during initial attack dozer operations.
- ❖ 1 during firing operations from a UTV on a prescribed fire.

Seven of the entrapments in 2023 (58%) involved equipment becoming immobilized and impacted by fire (5 engines, 1 Dozer, 1 UTV).

Several of the lessons from these incidents focused on the difficult decision about when to stay with immobilized equipment or try to make an escape. Other lessons highlighted the need for well-practiced engine protection measures.

Equipment becoming immobilized during fire operations is obviously a dangerous scenario. We see reports of this occurring almost every year. The reasons for equipment becoming immobilized most commonly involves getting stuck in various terrain (sand, rocks, ditches) or some sort of mechanical failure.

Immobilized equipment leading to entrapment overwhelmingly occurs during initial attack.

Engine Entrapments 2019-2023

80%

Occurred During **Initial Attack**



45%

Involved an **Immobilized Engine**



Practice Engine Protection!

You never know when you might need it. And you want to be very good at it if you find yourself in a “cut and run” or “stay and defend” situation.

Discuss what factors you will consider when making the decision to stay or to go. Know that this decision will be way more difficult than you can imagine!



GROUND TRUTHS

By Travis Dotson
Wildland Fire Lessons Learned
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Things You Should Do

Some people learn quickly. Some do not. I learn slowly. I am working on writing longer sentences.

Learning involves change. Change is hard. I like short sentences.

The Wildland Fire Lessons Learned Center wants you to learn. We collect lessons all year. We put the lessons in *Two More Chains*. You read *Two More Chains*.

Then what?

Hopefully . . . Change. But change is hard. I like short sentences.

I will now tell you two things you should do. Maybe you already do them. Strong work. If not, please change.

UTVs

Treat your UTVs like the engine or crew rig. Have a checklist used for preventive maintenance and use it to routinely inspect the UTV.

Why?

Multiple UTV incidents where the primary lesson from those involved was “do better routine inspections”. These incidents involved broken welds, exposed wiring, dry vegetation accumulation, old or loose tie-downs, and leaking cargo (fuel cans).

Medical Incident Report

Gather the people you go to fires with and look at the Medical Incident Report on page 118 of the IRPG. Discuss the fact that the color priority (RED, YELLOW, GREEN) has nothing to do with HOW the patient will be transported.

The color is about the medical condition of the patient and the urgency (how SOON do we need to get them out?). HOW the patient is transported is completely dependent on the location, environmental conditions, and extraction resource

availability. To be clear: RED does not automatically = helicopter, and helicopter does not automatically = RED. Figure this out and get it right.

Why?

Multiple instances of confusion related to assumptions. Lessons from 2023:

“Is there a perception that a medical incident must be ‘Red’ (‘Priority 1’) before considering the use of extraction aircraft? A patient could even be ‘Green’ yet be unable to walk with a twisted knee or ankle—and be in a compromised location due to geography or fire behavior.” – [Anvil Fire Extraction](#)

“Getting in the habit of adjusting the patient priority based on what those on the ground think is available, possible or prudent upends the intent of the MIR.”

The MIR should paint an accurate picture of the situation which allows command and support staff to orchestrate the best available extraction support.” – [Whiskey Creek Fire Burn Injury](#)

There you have it. Two simple things you should do. Maybe you already do them. Strong work. Teach someone else to do them.

Learning involves change and change is indeed difficult, but I assure you it is possible—and I offer the length of this sentence as proof.

Adapt and Improve, Tool Swingers.



Liz Skelly

In this conversation between Kelly Woods, Director of the Wildland Fire Lessons Learned Center, and Liz Skelly, the Acting Captain of the U.S. Forest Service Southern Region's new partner-enabled women's training crew, Liz shares her insights about the importance and benefits of this crew. She also reflects on her own career path and wildland fire leadership lessons.

Helping Women Navigate the Beginning of a Wildland Fire Career



Liz Skelly leads a contingent of the 2024 Table Rock Fire Crew off a prescribed fire fireline.

Kelly: So let's start by you telling me about yourself. Where you work, what your job is, and a little bit about how you got your start in fire, as well as what stops you've had along the way.

Liz: I started my fire career a little later than most. I had a previous career in the medical office world and did that until my early thirties, then had an opportunity to take a step back and reevaluate things. My partner's mom got sick, and I was in a better position to step out of the workforce and take care of her.

I took that time to basically figure out what I wanted to do with the rest of my life. I really enjoy hiking and being outdoors. So I was looking at things like park ranger jobs. The idea of going back to school was unappealing. I found out about wildland fire and it just looked awesome.

I played team sports my whole life. So I really was attracted to the teamwork aspect of fire. Everything about fire just seemed amazing to me. I started out on an engine in Minnesota, went to Utah the next season, and then landed my first permanent federal position as an apprentice on the Sequoia National Forest in California and spent five years out there.

In 2023, I got what I considered a "dream job"—to take a one to three-year detail as the Assistant Captain for the U.S. Forest Service Southern Region's new partner-enabled women's training crew, comprised of Forest Service overhead and Student Conservation Association (SCA) crew members. The crew is now in its sophomore year, and I'm currently the acting Crew Supervisor for what's been dubbed the Table Rock Fire Crew. We're based in Clemson, South Carolina.

Kelly: What appealed to you about taking the Table Rock Fire Crew and being a part of this program?

Liz: I think the first thing that attracted me was really just building a program from the ground up. I was at a point in my career where I really wanted to be challenged. I was an Assistant Fire Engine Operator at the time and was enjoying it, but I was definitely looking for some more responsibility. This just seemed like a lot of fun and like it was going to be a lot of problem solving.

I was excited about getting into something where I was going to have a lot more on my plate. I was used to that in my prior career and really enjoyed it. I was also excited about helping women navigate the beginning of a wildland fire career. I feel like I had a pretty good experience my first couple of seasons in fire and I wanted to be a part of other people getting that.



The 2023 Table Rock Fire Crew.

I thought the idea of a women's training crew sounded pretty great. It was not something that I felt like I needed coming up through my career. But, even so, I thought it was really cool that it was being offered. Also, it was great to get back closer to home. My family is from South Carolina and my long-term plan had always been to get back closer to home, closer to family and friends and all that good stuff.

***I was also excited about helping women navigate the beginning of a wildland fire career.
I feel like I had a pretty good experience my first couple of seasons in fire
and I wanted to be a part of other people getting that.***

A Focus on Learning and Foundational Skills

Kelly: Nice. At the Lessons Learn Center, we always like to focus on the learning aspect of things and how people learn, where they find value in lessons and things like that. So, I'm curious, in your career were you taught to learn or to focus on learning when you were new to fire?

Liz: I would say I was very blessed my first couple seasons in fire. I had three really great supervisors over the course of a couple of years. First in Minnesota, and then back in South Carolina for a winter burn season, and then out in Utah. They were really outstanding and had built a great team of folks around them.

I think they did a great job of laying a foundation for me. I didn't have a lot of practical field skills when I first came to fire. I wasn't good at any of the mechanical stuff—that was all totally foreign to me. And then I came to work with folks who had that experience and I got to learn those skills—even building and carpentry skills and just all of those things that you get asked to do being in the fire world. Initially, I didn't have a lot of practical foundational experience for that.

So, I thought it was really cool. I felt like they were constantly putting good tools in my toolbox and giving me opportunities to get out and expand on my capabilities. I think another thing that was really key was teaching me the difference between taking responsibility and leadership.



The 2024 Table Rock Student Conservation Association (SCA) participants performing prescribed fire operations on the Sumter National Forest in South Carolina.

I had previously, like I said, played team sports. I had been a captain of my roller derby team. And I'd been in leadership on my rugby team in college. I thought that I was comfortable with basically taking on leadership responsibilities. But coming into the fire world, of course, there's that whole "life and death" aspect to the work.

Instead of beating me down, my early mentors gave me things to be responsible for, to build me up. Like, "You're responsible for the cache, and you're responsible for inventory."

I was all about that. I quickly learned that slowly taking on responsibilities in wildland fire is the way to go, for sure. There's a lot out there to learn. Because I was a little later getting into the fire world than most people, I think I wanted to hurry up and get to where I thought I wanted to be in my career. Those great supervisors also taught me to be patient

and enjoy the journey.

I think these foundational skills really set me up well in the long run. I have definitely been enjoying the journey now—there's so much to learn in your whole career.

Kelly: I'm still learning, too, that's for sure.

Liz: Me, too.

Each time you take a step up in terms of learning new things out there on the fireline, you set yourself up to gain that confidence and establish a new baseline. I love that.

Kelly: If I say the term "learning in the wildland fire service," what does that mean to you? How has that concept evolved from when you first started to the leadership position that you now hold?

Liz: I think we all say this phrase: "Be a student of fire". There's good reason for that. I mean, I am never going to stop putting mental slides in my head from different experiences and lessons that I'm picking up on as I move along in fire. Wildland fire is one of the coolest, most dynamic environments to possibly work in. One of the phrases that I've really leaned on over the course of my fire career is: "Get comfortable being uncomfortable." I really love that phrase. When I'm doing something uncomfortable, it makes me feel less crazy, putting myself in that position of pushing my comfort level.

That mindset also helps me build my confidence. Each time you take a step up in terms of learning new things out there on the fireline, you set yourself up to gain that confidence and establish a new baseline. I love that.

Insights on Mentoring Your New People

Kelly: How do you instill the value of learning in your folks?

Liz: Because Table Rock is a training crew, there's a lot of brand new first-year firefighters along with our experienced overhead at the squad boss level or higher. There's a high percentage of new folks. So we really drill down on the fire readiness aspect. Being exposed to some really good, basic foundational experience and lessons enables you to feel empowered to contribute to the great work that we're doing out there—even when you don't yet have a wide skillset or wide range of mental slides.

When I mentor new folks, I emphasize that learning foundational skills is the key to you being able to take on more responsibility, harder assignments, and all of the stuff that looks fun out there. All of that starts with learning a lot of good basics. With the majority of the crew being first-year firefighters, there's not really a lot of room for anybody to



The 2024 Table Rock Fire Crew.

sit back and wait to be told what to do. We're giving all crew members responsibilities and checking in with those folks and making sure everything is going well.

When I talk about organizational learning to new folks, I like to model it by acknowledging my own mistakes. I've had other people model that way for me in my past and I've always appreciated that. It's really good to hear somebody who you're working for say: "Hey, I could have done that differently. This is what I'm learning going forward." I really like to underline that with everybody because it's so

important. It's just that acknowledgement of: "Hey, I didn't get that right and I'm going to do better next time."

Kelly: It's a humbleness value.

Liz: Yes. There are a lot of different qualities that some of us bring from our past life experience, including how we were raised. I think that on one level, women generally are instilled with a healthy dose of humility. I don't think that's a bad thing to bring to the fire service. I love that humility when I see it modeled in my male counterparts, too.

With my crew, I like to use the phrase "tightening the screws". I am always saying that. Whatever we did that day, we could always do a little bit better. We've got everything generally in the right place here. Everything's going pretty good. But we can always do a little bit better. Let's tighten the screws on this. Let's tighten the screws on that.

I think one of the amazing things about our program is that we really get to start everybody with a foundation of fire behavior right off the bat. Because our program is based out of the Southern Region, with its early fire and fuel burning seasons, these folks are getting to put fire on the ground from the get-go. They're seeing and experiencing and learning from fire behavior on prescribed fires—rather than their first experience being on a wildfire.

They get to put the fire on the ground, watch what it's doing, put it out, see how it goes out. I think that's just really special for a first-year firefighter with a whole bunch of other first-year firefighters to have that kind of experience. It's phenomenal.

When I talk about organizational learning to new folks, I like to model it by acknowledging my own mistakes. I've had other people model that way for me in my past and I've always appreciated that.

Kelly: What is this general season for your crew? When do you start and when does the crew disband or go into non-pay status?

Liz: We put them through basic fire school with the other Southern Region partner-enabled teams in January. Then we stay in the Southern Region for prescribed fire season. We'll bump all over the Region. Last year, during our prescribed fire season, we were in Tennessee, North Carolina, Mississippi, Alabama, and South Carolina.

We go anywhere the Region needs us. Then we'll go into Western fire season and run all the way through to the end of September. Our new folks are going to get 12 weeks of AD (Administratively Determined employment status) time to do suppression work.

Kelly: How many people are on your crew?

Liz: We've got eight Student Conservation Association crew members via a partnership with SCA. We also have two to three qualified and experienced overhead at all times—myself and the Acting Assistant, who is on a 120-day detail. Then we'll bring other qualified and experienced folks in on two-week assignments to go out with us, both to provide different perspectives to our participants and also to bolster the crew's capabilities.

Kelly: Those qualified and experienced people who join the crew for two-week assignments to fill overhead slots, are they men, women—does it matter?

Liz: Last year we only had women come out to fill in those slots. But I've definitely been advocating this year that I would love to have some male counterparts come out, especially if they're working on leadership skills themselves. Somebody at the Firefighter 1 trainee level or Firing Boss trainee. Somebody who really wants to work on their leadership skills at that middle management role.

If they're an ally, if they support women being in fire, I definitely want to have them. I know we have allies all over the United States. It would be great to have them participate in this program.

How Do You Respond to People Who Criticize Programs Like Yours?

Kelly: Some people are critical of programs that target women or underrepresented groups. What insights or lessons from your experience leading the Southern Region Women in Wildfire crew do you have that offer a different perspective?



Liz overlooking the emerging Windy Fire from another lightning fire on the Sequoia National Forest in 2021.

Ultimately, the Table Rock Fire Crew is just a solid learning environment for people who might otherwise not have exposed themselves to a career in wildland fire.

Liz: Yeah, good question. Honestly, I had my own concerns about a program like this. While I was excited about the work, still, in the back of my head, I was like: "I didn't need a program like this when I got started." I just wanted to work in wildland fire, and so I did it. But that doesn't mean that this shouldn't be a path that's available. Wildland fire is a tough job. I guess I didn't want to be part of a program that was going to be sugarcoating that or setting people up to fail after they got out of the program.

And when I got here and plugged in with the other folks that were going to be leading the program, it was awesome. Megan Saylor, in particular, who was the Captain last year, she was really great. She had led a Women in Wildfire program in Utah.

She really was advocating for: "Hey, you and I didn't need this path, but maybe there's somebody out there who wouldn't get into fire without something like this to help bridge the gap as you come in and learn brand new skills. And who's to say that that person isn't going to be an amazing firefighter once they gain some confidence?"

That made sense to me. Just because my path worked, didn't mean that that's the only path. I feel like the many paths model is the way to go to increase recruitment and retention in any sort of field.

I also believe, as a woman, finding a community to ask women-specific questions in wildland fire can seem really daunting for folks at first.

I know it was for me until I found good avenues for dialogue, like social media, where I found the Women in Wildfire community online. A lot of women that I've talked to felt that way before they were able to build that community—which can often take a little bit of time. I definitely think a program like this eases the transition into this kind of work.

Ultimately, the Table Rock Fire Crew is just a solid learning environment for people who might otherwise not have exposed themselves to a career in wildland fire.

It's a good stab by the agency, creating this program. Again, I think the multi-pronged approach is the way to go, for sure. Being able to give women a solid first-year experience in fire helps them when or if they may end up in a work environment later on that's not as welcoming.

What Does "Success" Look Like for Your Program?

Kelly: Great perspective. What does "Success" look like for this program?

Liz: At the most basic level, we want the Student Conservation Association crew members coming through the program to see a solid and well-rounded agency. So, we're exposing them to fire, but we're also exposing them to other program areas just in case maybe they don't want to do fire long term. They might be interested in fire-adjacent sorts of positions, like resource management or district ranger type of jobs. So we try to give them a solid first year experience in wildland fire and expose them to other good things.

Then the other piece of it is really helping fire leadership development in the Forest Service, specifically for women. This training crew has a really good opportunity to make sure that we're targeting folks already in the Forest Service who want to continue developing leadership skills. I know in the past, I haven't necessarily been in a position where I was able to work on my quals or even lead other people on a regular basis.

So we're really trying to pull in people who have an interest in that and want to be in a space where they can work on their leadership skills with a bunch of brand new first-season firefighters who are generally a little less jaded and more eager to learn. I think these kinds of opportunities could really help build confidence in somebody who's working on their leadership skills.



Liz with her wife, Melissa Barfield, this year above Lake Jocassee in South Carolina.



Liz with her brother, Brandon Skelly, a U.S. Coast Guard Seahawk Pilot, in 2023.

This training crew has a really good opportunity to make sure that we're targeting folks already in the Forest Service who want to continue developing leadership skills.

Kelly: Very cool. So how do you use the tools at the Lessons Learned Center with your new folks?

Liz: We use a lot of those tools. This year, we've already studied an RLS from an extraction that was done last year. Using this review, I could illustrate to them how many people it sometimes takes to pull an injured person off the line. I know last year we also pulled up, reviewed, and discussed several FLAs on your website. One of these FLAs focused on the lessons from a helicopter crash that occurred on the ranger district we were on at the time, and it really helped make things real for the folks.

I love having the LLC as a resource; the website is a pretty easy-to-use toolbox. You can go in there, type in a few words and pull up relevant lessons to share with your folks. I think that's awesome. I mean, there's days



The 2023 Table Rock Student Conservation Association participants performing prescribed firing operations on the Conecuh National Forest in Alabama.

that we have down time. It's really nice to be able to rifle through the Lessons Learned Center's website and quickly grab lesson-focused information ready to go.

Kelly: That is awesome. What makes you excited to go to work every day?

Liz: The idea that some of the people that we're exposing all this to now have the potential to be in this for the long haul—that they'll continue to help improve the community in the future. I don't think there's anything better than bringing up the next generation. I don't think I ever fully got that feeling before—that feeling that comes from really doing some good work, bringing new people into fire, and getting them excited. This is a dream job, for sure.

Kelly: I always like to chat with folks who love what they do. And I like to close these interviews by asking folks to tell me

about an awesome shift from their experience. It's fun to hear what folks have to say and share. Tell me about an awesome shift you have worked in your career.

Liz: I would say some of my favorite shifts are the ones that are really tough—and you're laughing about later. The very first shift that our crew had last year on a prescribed fire was pretty funny. It was a 40-acre unit—the smallest unit we burned that entire season. But it was in this immature seed tree unit with tons and tons of briars. It was basically a field of briars. We were on the Sumter National Forest in South Carolina, Long Cane Ranger District. It's relatively flat, has lots of pine stands, and, like so many areas in the southeast, was just full of briars.

I don't think there's anything better than bringing up the next generation. I don't think I ever fully got that feeling before—that feeling that comes from really doing some good work, bringing new people into fire, and getting them excited. This is a dream job, for sure.

We get there and the captain, the other assistant, and I were just looking at each other like, oh, man, this is going to be a tough first shift for these ladies. We'd taken them walking in the woods. I'd had them walk around with jugs of water to simulate dragging a drip torch around, but not through briars.

The first thing we did was have them take their drip torch and just walk a hundred feet into the woods and turn around and walk back to us without carrying fire. That way, they could start to feel what it was going to be like to get hung up in the briars. We could then talk about adding fire to the equation and not panicking.

I think it was the most brutal shift that they had the entire season. It wasn't big, but man, it was all day slugging through that thing. We were trying to keep the flame lengths really low because it was a seed tree unit. They were immature pines, and so we were like 10 or 15 feet apart, spaced through this unit, walking back and forth, back and forth, back and forth—for 40 acres.

Everybody knows the story with briars. You hit the shower that night and you're just like, "AH!" searing pain, because everything hurts with the hot water on all of your scratches. It was a great first shift of the season. It was a tough one, and everybody came to work the next day. So that was a success.

I remember screenshotting the map of that place. Later on in the season, we'd look at that map and just laugh. It was miserable and hilarious at the same time. Those are the best days to look back on.

Kelly: That's awesome. Thanks so much for talking with me, Liz. I really appreciate your time.

Liz: Sweet. Thanks a lot, Kelly.

Incident Report Staff Picks

Here's the Wildland Fire Lessons Learned Center (LLC) staff members' recommended incident report "Staff Picks" from 2023.



I Suggest: [Texas A&M Forest Service Pipeline Rupture RLS](#)

Why I Liked It: This RLS captured my attention immediately. While prepping for a prescribed fire in southeast Texas, a dozer operator noticed a hole in the ground along a natural gas pipeline right-of-way. The operator stopped 50 feet away and called in the Burn Boss, who noticed a sound like rushing water at the two-foot diameter hole. The hole was identified as a sign of a ruptured natural gas pipeline. I appreciated this simple and lessons-packed story, emphasizing the need to do one more sweep for hazards on planned burns. After reading this, I will always know what a two-foot-wide gopher hole actually is. The RLS also includes a link to a short video in which you can hear the sound of the ruptured pipe, surprisingly like running water and not the hiss of escaping gas.

Recommended By: Erik Apland, LLC Field Operations Specialist



I Suggest: [Elkhorn Fire Point Protection](#)

Why I Liked It: This report has the basics—a clear account of what happened followed by actionable lessons. It also happens to be a wild story told in an engaging manner highlighting run of the mill fireline badassery. Are you prepared for your good deal point protection assignment to rapidly shift into a high-speed evacuation of families in a boat down Idaho's Main Salmon River? OK, that probably won't ever happen to you. But the lessons from this event are universal. This report gives great context on the importance of some best practices such as the tactical pause, being human, and empowering decision makers. It also goes direct with fact that point protection is working out in front of the

fire. Please go read it now. **Recommended By:** Travis Dotson, LLC Analyst



I Suggest: [Whiskey Creek Fire Burn Injury LLR](#)

Why I Liked It: Here's a quote pulled directly from this learning review: "A flaming firefighter was tumbling downslope like a rag doll." If that doesn't make you want to dive in and read it perhaps this good simple lesson will: It can be difficult to judge lateral distance when working on slopes. The images and narrative recounted in this learning review paint a picture of how terrain, vegetation, and the shape of the fireline can create an illusion that you are farther away from adjoining forces than you actually are. The review also revealed some more complex lessons that could have programmatic implications such as training and experience requirements and patient transport priority

assessment (Red, Yellow, Green) using the Medical Incident Report. One really cool thing about this review, there is a Spanish version available, too. Check it out! **Recommended By:** Kelly Woods, LLC Director



I Suggest: [Pole Mountain Prescribed Fire UXO Incident](#)

Why I Liked It: You're an Engine Boss whose crew is assigned holding duties on a prescribed fire. This is not your Forest. One of your crew members texts you that he just walked 15 feet into the black where his foot struck something. When he pulls this half-exposed object up out of the earth, he suddenly sees those telltale fins—it's a mortar shell! At the end of this unusual shift, you could have just shared your UXO experience with the people on this incident and back home on your Forest. But, while no one was injured—this time—you realize you need to share your story and—most importantly—its lessons. You write-up an RLS draft and send it to the Lessons Learned Center. Yes! The

Center's key mission is to reveal the complexity and risk in the wildland fire environment. This important RLS showcases how one wildland firefighter, by taking their own initiative, can help accomplish this critical communication heads-up for the benefit of all. **Recommended By:** Paul Keller, LLC Writer-Editor