

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT  
Office of Fire and Aviation  
3833 South Development Avenue  
Boise, Idaho 83705

January 14, 1999

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EMS Transmission 1/15/99  
Information Bulletin No. OF&A 99-021

To: All Field Officials  
From: Director, Office of Fire and Aviation  
Subject: SAFE Initiative - Information Packet

The purpose of this memo is to transmit the attached SAFE Initiative information packet. The three-part packet is intended to provide the field with an update on the status of the Wildland Firefighter Safety Awareness Study (now referred to as the SAFE Initiative).

Please ensure that the information packet is made available to BLM employees at all levels. This information is especially important to agency administrators, fire personnel, and safety personnel. It is also accessible at: <http://www.nifc.gov>. It can be found under "Initiatives."

Questions regarding this information may be addressed to Sandy Guches at 208-387-5175.

Signed by:  
Lester K. Rosenkrance  
Director, Office of Fire and Aviation

Authenticated by:  
Pat Lewis  
Supervisory Mgmt. Asst.

1 - Attachment  
1 - SAFE Initiative Information Packet (7 pp.)

Distribution:  
Jay Thietten, 5627 MIB  
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Fire Program Manager  
Aviation Program Manager  
NIFC Administrator

# **FEDERAL FIRE & AVIATION LEADERSHIP COUNCIL**

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January 4, 1999

Memorandum

To: Fire Directors, NIFC

From: Roger D. Erb, Chair

Subject: Information Packet - SAFE Initiative

The purpose of this memo is to transmit an important three-part information packet that provides an update of the Firefighter Safety Awareness Study, Phase III. In transitioning from the study to the actual implementation phase of this initiative, future references will be to SAFE -- Safety Awareness in the Fire Environment.

The three-part packet was developed to assist you in keeping your staff informed on the SAFE Initiative. It consists of:

- Introduction Sheet (background, current status, the future)
- Focus Areas of SAFE (Appendix A)
- Newsletter Update (Appendix B)

The Introduction Sheet contains an overall summary of the SAFE Initiative, and is intended for top managers. The entire package is intended for mid-level managers and fire program managers, and safety personnel where responsibility for actual implementation efforts exists. The newsletter is intended for ground-level firefighters and employees who are interested in staying up-to-date with our progress. You may, however, choose to use the packaged material as it suits your needs.

A great amount of work has been done by field team members to streamline and summarize the many parts of the SAFE Initiative. These efforts are condensed into nine Focus Areas which are intended to provide a starting point for implementation.

Steve Holder (currently Chief Ranger at Zion National Park) has been selected as the term Project Manager for the SAFE Initiative, and will report for duty in February 1999.

The attached information should be distributed immediately. Questions regarding the packet may be addressed to Sandy Guches, Interim Project Manager, at 208/387-5175.

Attachment 1-1

**SAFETY AWARENESS IN THE FIRE ENVIRONMENT  
UPDATE  
January 1999**

## **INTRODUCTION**

Following the tragic 1994 fire season, the “Wildland Firefighter Safety Awareness Study” was chartered by the five federal agencies most involved in wildland firefighting (U.S. Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management, Bureau of Indian Affairs, National Park Service, and U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service). The study was initially chartered in 1995 and contracted with TriData Corporation. This three year contract encompassed a survey and analysis, aimed at changing the culture of wildland firefighters to improve safety. The contract involved contacting more than 1,000 wildland firefighters. Their input was recorded, analyzed and used to produce goals and recommendations to help improve safety in wildland firefighting. The results of this contract have led the way to development of the Safety Awareness in the Fire Environment Initiative (SAFE). The SAFE Initiative endeavors to create an environment and culture that puts safety first through actions, leadership, commitment and accountability.

The contract has five phases:

- 4,0 Phase I: Information gathered from the field through focus groups, interviews and surveys describes the wide range of issues and problems associated with wildland fire safety.
- 4,0 Phase II: Analysis of data identified 86 goals, concerns and problems raised in Phase I. These goals provide the basis for the vision of the desired workforce culture of the future.
- 4,0 Phase III: Phase III provided 227 implementation strategies for the 86 goals.
- 4,0 Phase IV: Assist agencies in development and implementation of strategies.
- 4,0 Phase V: Changes are monitored and evaluated.

Phase III of the contract was completed in March, 1998 and a review, prioritization and summary of the information was completed on October 8, 1998. The Phase III report “Implementing Cultural Changes for Safety” was distributed to the field and is available from your local agency contact. One product of this phase, Appendix A, includes: (1) grouping of the implementation strategies into focus areas, and; (2) ranking of the goals and implementation strategies to determine their relative importance based on established criteria developed by the Federal Fire and Aviation Safety Team (FFAST) and the Federal Fire and Aviation Leadership Council (FFALC).

Attachment 1-2

Phase IV will begin by establishing a SAFE Initiative Working Group dedicated to the development and implementation of the SAFE Initiative. This group should be operational the first of calendar

1999. They will be located at NIFC and report to the FFALC. This will be a 1 to 4 year project with dedicated membership from all the respective five federal agencies. Steve Holder of the National Park Service was selected as the SAFE Initiative Project Manager.

One of the key objectives of the Project Team will be to form partnerships with government and cooperative entities to work on implementing goals and strategies. We will look to the field for the expertise and field perspective that will be essential for overall SAFE Initiative implementation. A newsletter entitled "SAFE" (Appendix B) has been developed and distributed to the field via the Internet. This newsletter provides updates on the SAFE Initiative as information becomes available.

## **WHAT TO EXPECT IN THE FUTURE**

A lot of "work in progress" associated with the goals and strategies has been identified. We know that some goals can be acted on *now*, and others will take years to complete. We also know that the field must be involved in these efforts -- and there will be many opportunities ahead to do just that.

One task ahead is to further define what some of the strategies really mean. What is involved in "fostering a culture," or "promoting a code of conduct," or "developing an attitude?" We must still define what our culture will look like in the years 2010 and 2015. Some of you will be asked to help with these efforts.

## **WHAT ELSE?**

There are two more phases of the contract that will involve the TriData Corporation. Phase IV is simply a "Consulting" phase where TriData personnel are available to consult with us regarding implementation. Phase V is a "monitoring and evaluation" phase that will enable us, not just to complete goals and strategies, but to ensure they are effectively institutionalized in the wildland firefighting community.

## **YOUR ROLE**

Culture changes are made a little at a time, over a long period of time. It requires that our managers and leaders be involved. Just as important are the informal leaders in the fire program, and the field fire personnel. They are truly the "change-masters" in this plan to improve firefighter safety. Field fire staff are the backbone of our program and are really the solution to many of the problems we face with regard to safety.

The involvement of field fire and safety staff is paramount. The shared successes and feedback will be vital to our success.

## SAFE Initiative

### FOCUS AREAS

The 86 goals and 227 implementation strategies outlined in Phase III of the Wildland Firefighter Safety Awareness Study are varied, complex, and touch every part of the Fire Management Program. A Field Team formed of firefighters, fire managers, safety managers, union representation, and line managers completed the difficult task of prioritizing the goals and strategies. The condensed result in that effort is the nine Focus Areas described below:

**1. Interagency Cooperation: *Improve interagency working relationships by encouraging and assisting non-federal agencies to obtain equipment, training, and operational parity with the Federal agencies. Continue to improve the cooperation in a wide range of activities among the Federal agencies.***

**2. Incident Operations: *Improve the effectiveness and consistency of incident operations by:***

- updating and improving incident management training
- developing and clarifying policies and procedures
- develop job aids and new technology
- enhancing and encouraging interpersonal communications
- define, develop, and ensure certification, redcards, and currency
- training methods, procedures and instructors (CRM)
- communications skills
- develop on-the-job training
- agency administrator education
- implement a strategy to recruit, develop, maintain, honor, and retain a workforce of capable firefighters (firefighter image)
- seasonal programs

**3. Safety Culture: *Institutionalize safety as a core value throughout the fire program.***

**4. Healthy Workforce: *Define and develop a healthy workforce and environment.***

**5. Database: *Acquire, manage, and analyze information to identify accident trends and to provide real-time safety information.***

**6. Equipment: *Provide equipment to incidents in acceptable time frames, in good working order, and in quantities sufficient to support the incident.***

**7. Program Oversight: *Continue to provide information and education to supervisors on program leadership and oversight responsibilities within wildland fire to facilitate safe, effective policies, implementation strategies, and budget requests consistently across agencies.***

8. Situational Awareness: Define and develop situational awareness concepts in all fire operations.

9. External Influences: Foster coordinated public education and outreach programs to disseminate prevention information, fuel reduction program information, and the capabilities/limitations of firefighting resources.

## Safety Awareness in the Fire Environment

*"Safety Comes First on Every Assignment, Every Time."*

- Federal Fire Policy

### **ALL ABOUT S.A.F.E.**

"Safety Awareness in the Fire Environment" is everyone's responsibility. From front-line firefighters to fire program managers - building the most safe and effective workforce requires us all. Keeping safety first and foremost is the true reflection of a workforce culture that puts emphasis on personal commitment, leadership, responsibility and accountability.

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After the 1994 wildland fire season, the five federal wildland fire management agencies commissioned a study of the federal wildland firefighting workforce. The project was conducted by TriData Corporation and encompassed three initial "study" phases. The entire project, aimed at improving the workforce culture with regards to safety, accountability and leadership, is now entering the fourth of five phases. The study is done.

The five agencies are now working through phase IV - implementation, and look to the future - Phase V - for monitoring and evaluating change.

Out of the Wildland Firefighter Safety Awareness Study arises the S.A.F.E. Initiative. SAFE is the encapsulation of 86 goals and over 200 implementation strategies identified in Phase III of TriData's work. SAFE now puts these findings into action. No easy task, the goals and their implementation strategies are now captured in nine major Focus Areas. The Focus Areas presently represent the critical working foundation for ensuring successful implementation of "fostering a safety minded workforce and culture" for the 21st century.

### **ABOUT THE FOCUS AREAS.....**

The FOCUS AREAS serve to identify the broad scope of the implementation strategies. During October, 1998, Phase I through III information was reviewed, prioritized and summarized by a "Field Team" comprised of personnel from all levels of the fire community. The Field Team assessed all 227 implementation strategies presented in the Phase III report and put them into clearer focus. Remaining work is now identified as: completed actions, works in progress, or work that will clearly require more time.

As you examine the Focus Areas it will be handy to work parallel with the Phase III report, "Implementing Cultural Changes for Safety." Also, hard copies remain available at the National Interagency Fire Center (address listed below.) A detailed FOCUS AREA STATUS CHART, which displays the status of each implementation strategy, is also available on NIFC's web site in the SAFE page.

#### THE FOCUS AREAS.....

- INTERAGENCY COORDINATION
- INCIDENT OPERATIONS
- SAFETY CULTURE
- HEALTHY WORKFORCE
- DATABASE
- EQUIPMENT
- PROGRAM OVERSIGHT
- SITUATIONAL AWARENESS
- EXTERNAL INFLUENCES

FOCUS AREAS are further defined in the FOCUS AREA SUMMARY on the NIFC web site. Now that the FOCUS AREAS have been clearly identified, the work begins!

## **MOVING FORWARD**

As you review Phase III and the associated FOCUS AREA CHART and SUMMARY, you will notice that many of the "works in progress" have been identified. It's clear that some of the goals can be achieved now, while more time will be needed for others. How we get there will continue to involve input and help from firefighters, either working in teams or on special task groups. The process will continue until we collectively effect positive, organizational culture change.

For continuity and leadership, Phase IV and V will be assigned a full time project leader, and it is anticipated that completion of the work may take 3-4 years. But this is a critical time for all to be involved. Expect to hear more, and also plan to be a part of the process!

Next steps include further defining what is involved in "fostering a culture," or promoting a "code of conduct," or "developing safety-minded attitudes." Keep the future in mind as the process evolves. As you are asked to participate - remember - change requires effort. Safety affects all of us equally and is as critical for us today, as it is in the future. The SAFE Initiative reflects this goal and asks commitment from everyone involved in wildland fire management.

**THE SAFE INITIATIVE IS THE CAPSTONE FOR LONG-TERM CULTURE CHANGE. IT BEGINS NOW!** The Initiative endeavors to create an environment and culture that puts safety first through personal action, leadership, commitment and accountability.

## **FOR MORE INFORMATION**

More detailed Information on the Focus Areas and the Implementation Strategies can be found on the National Interagency Fire Center's Homepage at "Wildland Firefighter Safety Awareness Study" (Phases I, II and III), and the latest on the SAFE Initiative.

For hard copies of the Phase III study contact the National Interagency Fire Center at: NIFC; 3833 S. Development Ave; Boise, Idaho 83704-5354 -- (208) 387-5512.