

# Norway Observing Incident Command System, Project Fires

## **A. Introduction**

**Nils-Erik Haagenrud** visit to the US is the continuation of an active exchange program with Norway. Contact with Norway started in 1997 and has resulted in several exchanges between the two countries.

The most recent exchange occurred in May of 2001 when John Gebhard, Group Leader for Information Resources, OFA, visited Norway to study their use of advanced emergency response technology. The intent of John's trip was to observe their use of GIS/GPS and the TETRA digital radio system. The Norwegians are implementing the TETRA digital radio system nationally and their dispatch centers use GIS and GPS in their dispatch process to aid with location of fires and other emergencies and to display information pertinent to the situation.

Many of our Norwegian guests have been interested in our use of the Incident Command System (ICS) . Because of an ongoing major reorganization of emergency services in Norway, many Norwegian officials believe that this may be a good time to implement ICS .

## **B. Goals of visit**

The primary goal was to provide a better understanding of how we use the ICS with emphasis on its all risk capabilities.

Though not a specific goal of his visit to the U.S., Nils wished to gain a broad perspective of US culture and the history of the uses and development of public lands in the western United States.

## **C. Itinerary**

Our itinerary was organized to provide as many opportunities as possible to accomplish our goals. An introductory briefing of ICS was presented by Tom Frey. A tour was scheduled of the Lower Snake River BLM fire organization and he visited the Eagle fire station and the Ada County sheriffs office 911 dispatch. He traveled to McCall and visited with Paul Hefner who has extensive experience with ICS as used in "All Risk" situations and visited five fires where the ICS was being used.

Fires Visited Included:

- 1.Type 3, Grassland fire, South of Emmett
- 2.Type 2, Elk Creek, N. of McCall

3. Type 2, Upper Willow, N. of Winnemucca, Nevada
4. Type 1, Mollie Fire, S of Spanish Fork, Utah.
5. Type 1, Fridley fire, Southwest of Livingston, Mt.

#### **D. Summary of Hosted Activities.**

Nils overview of the ICS started with a tour of NIFC and a power point presentation on “Managing Wildland Fire in the USA” presented by Tom Frey. This introduction was followed by a more detailed presentation from Tom on the ICS including an in-depth explanation of the organizational structure. Emphasis was placed on the all-risk capabilities, how it can be used in initial and extended attack, how it provides for standardized training and qualifications as well as its reliance on shared resources and interagency cooperation.

Rosey Thomas, fire management officer for the Lower Snake district of the BLM and several members of her staff hosted a tour of the district fire organization emphasizing how ICS is utilized in initial and extended attack. Nils was shown how the cooperative agreements with local cooperating fire organizations were developed and implemented as well as an overview of wildland fire fighting equipment, crew tactics, fire investigation and reporting.

Dan Friend, fire chief of the Eagle, Idaho Fire Station and members of his staff hosted Nils on a tour of the Eagle Fire Station. Dan emphasized how interagency cooperative agreements are organized and functioning. Dan explained how the agreements deal with urban interface as well as other cooperative wildland fire issues. Additionally, he explained how the cooperative agreements work on the Boise Front and how ICS is used on structural fires as well as its all-risk and general organizational usefulness. The next visit was to the Ada County Sheriff’s office 911 dispatch center.

As stated earlier, the primary goal for Nil’s visit was to provide opportunities for him to visit and experience the use of ICS . The primary opportunities for actually experiencing the use of ICS at the field level was wildland fires. Jim Owings hosted Nil’s on five fires including one Type 3, two Type 2’s and two Type 1’s. A summary of each experience follows:

Emmet Fire, Type 3: Nils and Jim Owings visited a large grassland fire south of Emmett Idaho on August 15<sup>th</sup>. The ICS was a unified command structure with the BLM and the Star community fire department. Nils was able to interview each of the IC’s and several of the other members of the command staff. In addition, he was interviewed by a local Television Station. The station was interested in the differences between wildland firefighting in the U.S. and Norway.

Elk Creek, Type 2: Paul Hefner, FMO on the Payette National Forest hosted Nils on August 17<sup>th</sup>. Before we arrived at the fire, Paul briefed us on his use of the ICS at the Denver International Airport. Paul presented a very concise and informative briefing followed by a hosted visitation to the fire camp north of McCall. Nils attended the overhead staff briefing that evening and had an opportunity to discuss several aspects of the ICS with IC staff.

Upper Willow, Type 2: We arrived on the this fire the evening of August 20<sup>th</sup>. The fire was located North of Winnemucca Nevada. Nils was hosted by Merrill Saleen, the Upper Willow IC.

Merril provided access to all staff meetings and provided for an overflight of the fire on August 21<sup>st</sup>. This fire had been active for several days and Nils was able attend several briefings and witness how a fire camp that has already been established functions.

Mollie, Type 1: We arrived on the Mollie fire on August the 22<sup>nd</sup>. We were again hosted by Paul Hefner who was the Incident Commander. Paul was very helpful by providing access to several members of his staff. Nils had a very productive and informative discussion with Merrie Johnson, the fire Finance Section Chief, who provided a very informative overview of the ICS. In addition, Larry Hamilton, Director of NIFC, Brian Wademan, the Sec. Of Interiors Chief of Staff and Nina Hatfield, acting Director of the BLM visited the fire and Nils had an opportunity to meet them and attend a briefing presented by Incident Commander Hefner. Nils toured the extensive Type 1 fire camp and discussed firefighting tactics, camp organization and numerous other support functions.

Fridley, Type 1: We arrived on the Fridley fire north of Gardner Montana on August 23<sup>rd</sup>. The Incident Commander, Steve Frye provided an overview of the fire situation and, on August 24<sup>th</sup>, provided a qualified escort to the northern section of the fire where Nils was able to observe how structure protection protocols were implemented. This fire was very active when we arrived and was in the process of being mobilized. Nils was able to observe the activities necessary to organize and implement a Type 1 incident as well as the importance and complexity of interagency coordination and cooperation.

We returned to Boise on August 25<sup>th</sup> traveling through Yellowstone National park. We arrived back in Boise the evening of the 26<sup>th</sup>.

Nils participated in a closeout briefing with Tom Frey, Larry Hamilton, Connie Lewis and Jim Owings on August 28<sup>th</sup>. Nils related several observations from his visit.

1. As mentioned earlier, the primary goal of his visit was to observe and learn as much as possible about the ICS . Nils felt that he had been provided a very excellent overview of the ICS and that he was now relatively familiar with its function and value in “all-risk” situations.
2. Nils plans to return to Elvrum, Norway and implement an ICS on the community fire station for use in “All-Risk” situations.

#### **E. Overview**

Nils will present an and summary of his experiences. He will discuss what he has gained from the experience, how it could be improved in the future, and his observations.