



****New Generation Fire Shelter Alert****

(SAFETY COMMUNICATION 2008-4)



SEVERAL ISSUES RELATIVE TO THE NEW GENERATION FIRE SHELTER HAVE PROMPTED THE NEED FOR FOCUSED ATTENTION

The purpose of this ALERT is to draw attention to all issues that have been identified effecting the transition, training, inspection, approved modification, and use of the New Generation Fire Shelter (NGFS).

Transition:

- ✓ As per the Departmental Memo from Deputy Director Ken McLean dated September 27, 2007, all state funded employees required to carry a fire shelter in the course of their duties were to be transitioned into the NGFS on or before November 1, 2007. This due date was subsequently extended to December 1, 2007 as a result of high level fire activity.
- ✓ All local government funded employees are to be transitioned into the NGFS on or before December 31, 2009.
- ✓ All "old" style fire shelters previously assigned to state funded employees are to be removed from service, including those carried in any state vehicle or apparatus, as of December 1, 2007.
- ✓ All "old" style fire shelters are to be disposed of in accordance with the CAL FIRE Memorandum.

Definitions:

Regular Size: Meant to fit individuals up to 5'-7" in height with a girth (largest area of circumference of the body) of less than 53".

Large Size: Meant to fit individuals taller than 5'-7" in height with a girth greater than 53". ****NOTE:** Individuals between 5'-7" and 6'-1" and less than 53" in girth may carry either size as they deem appropriate.

Fire Shelter Hard Plastic Liner: The protective hard plastic liner required to be inserted into the NGFS carrying case or sleeve.

Fire Shelter Carrying Case/Sleeve: The carrying case which contains the protective hard plastic liner and the NGFS on an individual's webgear.

Fireline Pack with Fire Shelter Sleeve: The FSS Blue Fireline Pack with integrated NGFS carrying sleeve.

Fire Shelter PVC Bag: The clear polyvinyl protective bag encasing the NGFS.

Pull Handle: The Yellow ("Regular" sized NGFS) or Orange ("Large" sized NGFS) colored pull handle used for removal of the shelter from the carrying case or sleeve.

Pull Tabs: The Red rubberized tabs attached to the PVC bag and used for removal of the NGFS from the PVC bag. These tabs are NOT to be pre-torn.

Shaker Handles: "Right" and "Left" identified handles used for flaking out the NGFS during deployment.

Issues:

1. The appropriate sized NGFS needs to be carried by each individual as defined by "Regular Size" or "Large Size" above. Refer to Missoula Training and Development Center (MTDC) June 2005 Tech Tip #0551-2325-MTDC and Briefing Paper "Short Fire Shelters 04-24-08."
2. NGFS manufactured prior to June 2005 may require modification to reinforce the Pull Strap. This is easily identified by the lack of black nylon webbing across the top of the PVC bag and Pull Strap. Refer to MTDC April 2006 Tech Tip #0651-2322-MTDC or Cache Memorandum No. 07-4 dated April 13, 2007.
3. Degrading of the polyvinyl bag: Some polyvinyl bags are showing tears in the area where the bag is not well protected by the hard plastic liner. During inspections the shelters appear to be in serviceable condition. However, the polyvinyl bag tears (as seen below) create a potential safety concern and allow dirt and moisture into the fire shelter thereby reducing the life of the shelter.



To address this problem, the Department has reached an agreement with Weckworth Inc. to replace the degraded polyvinyl bags. Weckworth has agreed to re-bag the shelters at a cost of \$26.00 per shelter. Weckworth is not willing to work with individual CAL FIRE Units or Camps and will only accept shelters from one origination location and will only provide one invoice.

To adhere to this contract stipulation, each Unit and Program shall coordinate the gathering and shipping of the fire shelters to the California Southern Region Operations Warehouse in Riverside [FLO Alton Taylor (951) 320-6130] where the shelters will be shipped to Weckworth (minimum of 200 shelters per shipment). Every attempt should be made to have the shelters sent to the CSR-Riverside Warehouse prior to Monday October 6, 2008. Additionally, each Unit and Program is required to coordinate the invoicing and payment with the CSR-Riverside Warehouse. **PER THE TERMS PROVIDED BY WECKWORTH, NO PROGRAM, UNIT OR CAMP IS AUTHORIZED TO CONTACT WECKWORTH DIRECTLY.**

APPROVED PROCESS:

FIRE SHELTERS TO BE SHIPPED FROM ONE LOCATION TO WECKWORTH TO BE RETRO-FIT IN QUANTITIES OF NO LESS THAN 200 EACH AT A TIME. ALL UNITS TO BE RETRO-FIT UNDER THE RESULTING ORDER MUST BE RECEIVED PRIOR TO 12/01/08.

WECKWORTH TO REMOVE RETURNED FIRE SHELTERS FROM THEIR ORIGINAL CARRYING CASE, LINER AND POLY-VINYL BAG. SHELTERS TO BE RE-INSERTED IN TO NEW POLY-VINYL BAGS, PLACED IN NEW LARGER SIZED LINER AND PLACED INTO A NEW CARRYING CASE WITH THE NEWLY DESIGNED LARGER LID.

UPON COMPLETION WECKWORTH TO REPACKAGE AND RETURN SHIP THE SHELTERS TO ONE LOCATION. PRICE INCLUDES FREIGHT FROM CALFIRE TO WECKWORTH AND FROM WECKWORTH BACK TO CALFIRE. WECKWORTH TO COMPLETE RETRO-FIT WITHIN 30 DAYS AFTER RECEIPT OF SHIPMENT.

4. Special attention must be paid by those individuals carrying the Large size NGFS in an original Carrying Case in the horizontal position. The current amount of hook-and-loop closure material may not be sufficient to retain the NGFS in the carrying case. New larger hard plastic liners and new carrying cases with newly designed larger lids can be purchased individually from Weckworth for fire shelters in serviceable condition (not requiring re-bagging). It is highly recommended that Units and Camps purchase the larger NGFS Hard Plastic Liner and larger NGFS Carrying Case for all "Large" size NGFS's not requiring re-bagging. This will improve the life span of the Large NGFS. Purchase of the larger Hard Plastic Liners and Carrying Cases must be coordinated with the Sacramento Warehouse in order to meet the contract stipulation set by Weckworth.
5. At no time is any form of unauthorized modification of the NGFS permissible. This would include the NGFS itself, the PVC bag, the Carrying Case or Sleeve, or the Fireline Pack. Such unauthorized modifications (example below) may include the use of duct tape, packing tape, wire ties, bailing wire or hose rubbers.



6. The current FSS Blue Fireline Pack with integrated NGFS sleeve, may not have adequate retention ability for the Large size NGFS. The Velcro which holds the NGFS in the Blue Fireline Pack Sleeve has become worn over the past several fire seasons. This has resulted in the difficulty of keeping the fire shelter secured in the Blue Fireline Pack Sleeve (example below).



7. The Missoula Technology and Development Center has approved a retrofit for the Blue Fireline Pack NGFS Sleeve. The retrofit, as shown below, can be completed by sending the pack to Antelope Conservation Camp or Pilot Rock Conservation Camp. Contact Antelope Camp [FC Adam Mattos – (530) 257-2295] or Pilot Rock Camp [FC Carl Thomas (909) 338-2812] for pricing information and details prior to shipping. Any and all packs shipped for retrofit must be decontaminated and cleaned prior to shipping to prevent exposure to any type of contaminants.



8. CAL FIRE recently took delivery of 1,500 sets of DONATED "Wolfpack Low Profile Web Gear". Shortly after delivery, it was found that the sewing tolerances on a few of the shelter case lids were so close that the lid was hanging up during removal of the NGFS. Every CAL FIRE Unit was given direction to check each case, donated or not, to ensure that the NGFS can be easily removed. Additionally, Wolfpack has agreed to replace any NGFS carrying case that has any problem. Units are authorized to contact Wolfpack Gear directly for exchange.



9. Shortly after taking delivery of the 1,500 sets of DONATED "Wolfpack Low Profile Web Gear" there were complaints about the fire shelter falling off of the waist belt MOLLE attachment system. Investigation of the problem found that individuals were not attaching the fire shelter to the MOLLE system correctly. Below is a diagram showing the correct and only acceptable attachment procedure. Carrying cases of various types and sizes that are still equipped with metal ALICE clips are acceptable to attach to the MOLLE system. However, if the cases are equipped with the MOLLE system, they must be attached as indicated below:

MOLLE

- 1.Lay the belt flat in front of you with the rows of webbing facing you
- 2.Place bag above belt upside down with the back facing you
- 3.Lace vertical strap a. from the bag thru horizontal strap b. of the belt
- 4.Pull vertical strap a. tight so that the bag is tight against the belt
- 5.Lace vertical strap a. thru horizontal strap c. of bag and pull tight
- 6.Lace vertical strap a. thru horizontal strap d. of the belt and pull tight
- 7.Lace vertical strap a. thru horizontal strap e. of the bag and pull tight
- 8.Secure the snap on the end of vertical strap a to the back of the bag

