



National Interagency Fire Center  
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July 29, 2008

To: Geographic Area Coordinating Group Chairs  
From: National Multi Agency Coordinating Group  
Subject: Safety Stand Down: August 1<sup>st</sup>

Two fatalities occurred over the weekend in two separate Northern California fires. A recent spike in accident/injury trends has also created concerns for firefighter safety. To date we have exceeded the number of deaths in wildland fire operations for 2008 that we experienced during all of 2007. In an effort to draw attention to wildland firefighter safety, NMAC is requesting that all geographic areas take one hour during the operational period of August 1<sup>st</sup> to emphasize safety practices.

Firefighter safety is and continues to be our first priority. The commitment to and accountability for safety is a joint responsibility of all firefighters, managers, and administrators. Individuals must be responsible for their own performance and accountability.

Suggested areas of emphasis are:

- Primary means of safe wildland fire operations is through aggressive risk management.
  - Consistently evaluate fireline tactics and adjust tactics as environmental and human factor conditions change—Review Risk Management Process in the IRPG, Page 1.
- Exercise extreme caution when working in timber canopy areas—assume every tree has some level of hazard associated with it. Review “**PRINCIPLES OF HAZARD TREE RISK MANAGEMENT**” at:  
[http://www.nwcg.gov/teams/shwt/http/training\\_education/s212/ht-risk-mgmt.pdf](http://www.nwcg.gov/teams/shwt/http/training_education/s212/ht-risk-mgmt.pdf)
- Driving standards and limitations need to be applied and enforced. Drivers should not be exceeding 10 hours behind the wheel driving time (state CDL limitations may be more stringent). This applies to all drivers including agency employees, ADs, and contractors. Every effort should be made to avoid driving between 2200 and 0500 hours.
- Dehydration and Fatigue – constantly monitor firefighter’s water and electrolyte intake to avoid dehydration episodes. Dehydration and long work hours coupled with poor air quality all impact fatigue—monitor and provide rest opportunities for firefighters and support personnel.

- Avoid complacency in aviation operations and reinforce the aviation risk assessment process to increase awareness of flight hazards and risks, attention to risk mitigation, and to assert added attention to the following topics:
  - Controlled Flight Into Terrain/Obstacles (especially Helo External Load)
  - Hot, High, Heavy
  - Maintenance Support
  - Acceptance of High Risk as a Normal Operation
  - Interagency Aviation Risk Assessments can be found at:  
[http://www.fs.fed.us/fire/av\\_safety/Systems\\_Safety/av\\_risk\\_mgt/index.html](http://www.fs.fed.us/fire/av_safety/Systems_Safety/av_risk_mgt/index.html).

For additional wildland fire safety information, please refer to: <http://www.nifc.gov/safety.html>

We ask that every fire manager take this time to emphasize firefighter safety and appropriate management of risk. We appreciate all the efforts of every firefighter and support personnel. Let's do everything in our power to return everyone home safely this fire season.

/s/ Lyle Carlile  
Chair, NMAC