COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES

FIRE DEPARTMENT

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LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA 90063-3294
(323) 881-2401

P. MICHAEL FREEMAN
FIRE CHIEF
FORESTER & FIRE WARDEN

November 17, 2009

TO: EACH SUPERVISOR

FROM: P. MICHAEL FREEMAN

STATION FIRE REVIEW, OBSERVATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The Station Fire in the Angeles National Forest (ANF) has generated concerns, questions, and considerable speculation. After careful analysis and deliberation, I directed that an ***Executive Review of Los Angeles County Fire Department (LACoFD) Actions*** be prepared.

The attached Executive Review focuses on the first five days of LACoFD actions at the Station Fire, and will be used by the Department to capitalize on opportunities for improvement in the future. Also attached are ***Station Fire Observations***, along with ***LACoFD Recommendations for Improved Fire Suppression in the Angeles National Forest (Mt. Wilson)***, outlining policy/practice changes needed by the U.S. Department of Agriculture, which sets policy for the U.S. Forest Service (USFS).

These recommendations will be finalized, working with your staff for formal Board action to transmit them to the Secretary of Agriculture and appropriate Congressional members.

We must never lose sight of the flammable and volatile nature of wildfire in this region of the country. There is no doubt that all firefighters and command staff did their very best under the extremely difficult circumstances of this incident.

If there should be any questions or a desire to discuss any aspect of this, please contact me in my office at (323) 881-2401.

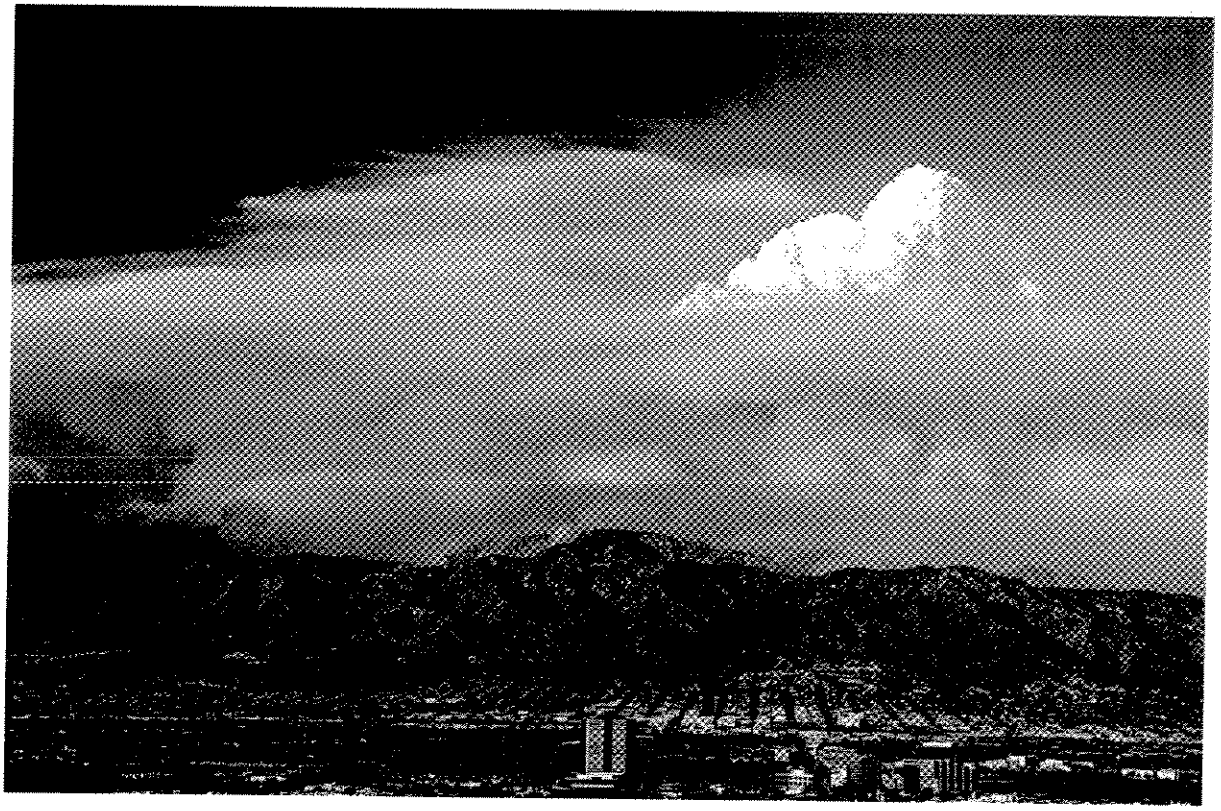
PMF:at

Attachments

c: William T Fujioka
Brence Culp
Vicky Santana
Randi Tahara
Joseph Charney
Rick Velasquez
Sussy Nemer

EXECUTIVE REVIEW OF ACTIONS

Los Angeles County Fire Department



Station Fire
November 17, 2009

In memory of

Fire Captain Tedmund "Ted" Hall
Superintendent, Camp 16

and

Firefighter Specialist Arnaldo "Arnie" Quinones
Foreman, Camp 16

November 17, 2009

TO: P. MICHAEL FREEMAN
FIRE CHIEF

FROM: JOHN B. TRIPP
CHIEF DEPUTY, EMERGENCY OPERATIONS

EXECUTIVE REVIEW OF ACTIONS

The Station Incident began on Wednesday, August 26, 2009, and was determined to be fully contained by the U.S. Forest Service on Friday, October 16, 2009. Located predominately within the Angeles National Forest, it consumed over 160,000 acres and is the largest fire in recorded history of the Angeles National Forest (which was established in 1892), the largest fire in Los Angeles County history and the tenth largest fire in California since 1933.

Determined by fire and law enforcement officials to be caused by an act of arson, the Station Incident took the lives of two Los Angeles County firefighters and destroyed as many as 96 residences and commercial properties. The cost of fighting the Station Incident has been estimated to be near $90 million. At its height of intensity, nearly 5,000 firefighters were deployed to fight this massive fire.

The information contained within this review is intended to provide factual information regarding the personnel and equipment response of the Los Angeles County Fire Department to the incident from the period beginning at 3:24 p.m., Wednesday, August 26, 2009, through 6:00 a.m., Monday, August 31, 2009.

This time frame represents several critical and successive stages of the fire, beginning with the Los Angeles County Fire Department's initial response of personnel and equipment to its partners in the Angeles National Forest, through the incident's escalation in intensity, the transition of the Department from an assisting agency to a Unified Command partner, and to the burn over and accident at Fire Camp 16 in Mt. Gleason.

The information gathered to compile this review relies on call history and response time data gathered from the Los Angeles Communication Center (LACC) and the Resource Ordering Status System (ROSS), as well as testimony and statements provided by command and general staff personnel who responded to the incident.

Importantly, this review will enable the Department's Executive Team to assess key and critical areas of current strengths, as well as improvement opportunities regarding command, structure protection, citizen evacuation, and interaction with other agencies. Implementation of improvements where deemed necessary shall begin immediately.

EXECUTIVE REVIEW OF ACTIONS
STATION INCIDENT

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Station Incident
Los Angeles County Fire Department

Command Actions

The responsibility for command of the Station Incident generally followed the path of jurisdictional responsibility; agencies threatened or impacted by the fire entering into and exiting unified command as the situation dictated. However, from the initial dispatch of resources until the conclusion of the incident, the Angeles National Forest was either the primary agency with command responsibility or shared the command responsibility with other agencies as the fire impacted their jurisdictions.

Wednesday, August 26, 2009

Afternoon

With initial attack on Wednesday, August 26, 2009, the Los Angeles County Fire Department was assigned an assisting agency role due to the location of the incident, with an initial attack battalion chief assigned as the Agency Representative.

An additional initial attack battalion chief was assigned as the Operations Section Chief for the incident by the Forest Service Incident Commander. Throughout the afternoon, the Los Angeles County Fire Department provided operational assistance to the Angeles National Forest as requested.

The jurisdictional assistant fire chief also responded to the incident and interacted with Angeles National Forest command personnel until early in the evening.

Evening

During the evening, many of the resources assigned to the incident were released. A Los Angeles County Fire Department battalion chief continued as the Agency Representative due to the continued use of engine and crew resources for the night shift.

Thursday, August 27, 2009

Early Morning/ Morning

The Los Angeles County Fire Department continued as an assisting agency to the Angeles National Forest. The Agency Representative remained on scene through the night, communicating incident status reports and providing ongoing threat assessments back to the Department.

Thursday, August 27, 2009 – continued

The jurisdictional Operations Bureau battalion chief was requested by the Angeles National Forest Incident Commander to serve as a Structure Protection Specialist, with initial responsibility of protecting the Angeles Crest Ranger Station. He also filled the role of Agency Representative for several hours.

As the morning progressed, the incident escalated and the jurisdictional Los Angeles County Fire Department assistant fire chief was dispatched to the incident to assume the role as Agency Representative and continue fire intelligence gathering and threat assessment.

Afternoon

A team of Los Angeles County Fire Department chief officers, including the Department's Agency Representative and Structure Protection Specialist, boarded a helicopter and flew a reconnaissance mission over the fire to gain better intelligence regarding the fire's growth and potential.

From the initial dispatch of the fire until then, the Department had been participating in the incident as an assisting agency. During this phase of the fire, fire intelligence and threat assessments were communicated from the Agency Representative to the on-duty battalion chief at the Los Angeles County Fire Command and Control Facility (FCCF) and ultimately to an Executive Team chief officer at the East Los Angeles Headquarters Facility, whereby specific and defined strategic and operational decisions were made and approved.

At 1:10 p.m., as the fire continued to increase in size and become an immediate threat to the communities of La Canada Flintridge, La Crescenta and Altadena, the Los Angeles County Fire Department entered into Unified Command with the Angeles National Forest. Los Angeles County Fire Department was represented by an assistant fire chief who dialoged and interfaced directly with Angeles National Forest incident commanders to collaborate on current and future incident strategies.

The decision was made to deploy resources to the La Canada Flintridge area to scout and maintain a presence.

Thursday, August 27, 2009 – continued

Late Afternoon/ Evening

At 6:00 p.m., the Angeles National Forest transitioned responsibility for command of the Station Incident to Southern California Incident Management Team 2 (SCIMT2), which was established in the San Gabriel Valley, 22 miles to the east at the Santa Fe Dam Recreational Facility (Irwindale, California). SCIMT2 was assigned to manage the Morris Incident in the San Gabriel Canyon area above the city of Azusa.

When this transition occurred, the Los Angeles County Fire Department also entered into Unified Command with SCIMT2. A Los Angeles County Fire Department assistant fire chief already assigned as Agency Representative to the Morris Incident, would now become the Department's Unified Incident Commander. The Department's initial Unified Incident Commander was assigned as a Deputy Branch Director (working cooperatively with an Angeles National Forest chief officer) to supervise and support operations on the Station Incident.

The Department's assigned Branch Director to the incident established a primary mission for the Los Angeles County Fire Department to provide structure protection. During the evening, a Structure Protection Group was established in the La Canada Flintridge area with a Los Angeles County Fire Department battalion chief as the group supervisor.

Friday, August 28, 2009

Morning

During the planning process for this operational period, the focus of the Los Angeles County Fire Department Unified Incident Commander was structure protection in three areas; La Canada Flintridge, Altadena and Big Tujunga Canyon. The Incident Action Plan identified three structure protection groups; one staffed and the others identified for contingencies. The staffed group was under the supervision of a Los Angeles County Fire Department battalion chief.

Additionally, another Los Angeles County Fire Department battalion chief was assigned to meet with fire and law enforcement agencies whose jurisdictions shared threat potential (Los Angeles, Glendale and Pasadena) and identify possible decision points for effecting structure protection and/or evacuations.

Friday, August 28, 2009 - continued

The Los Angeles County Fire Department (along with the Angeles National Forest as Unified Commanders within SCIMT2) remained in Unified Command until 11:00 a.m. whereby command, incident responsibility, and delegation of authority were discussed in preparation for transfer of command to California Interagency Incident Management Team 5 (CIIMT5).

Afternoon

Additional engine strike team (five engines and a leader) requests were placed to support the structure protection mission.

At 2:00 p.m., the Los Angeles County Fire Department Unified Incident Commander submitted a Fire Management Assistance Grant (FMAG) request and met with the Los Angeles Sheriff's Department Unified Incident Commander to discuss evacuation strategy and procedures.

At 2:11 p.m., CIIMT5 took command of the incident, with the Los Angeles County Fire Department participating as a Unified Commander. An Executive Team chief officer continued as the Department's Unified Command Incident Commander.

Evening

A Los Angeles County assistant fire chief was assigned as the night Unified Incident Commander. As the fire continued to grow and the threat to homes and structures increased, a Structure Protection Branch was established with a Los Angeles County battalion chief assigned as the Branch Director.

Additional engine strike teams (five engines and a leader) were requested to support an increased threat to the upper portions of La Canada Flintridge.

Saturday, August 29, 2009

Early Morning/ Morning

At 1:00 a.m., Incident Commanders (to include the Los Angeles Sheriff's Department) began an evacuation of portions of La Canada Flintridge.

By 6:00 a.m., as many as 160 residents were evacuated from their homes in La Canada-Flintridge (proximal to the La Canada Country Club) due to a fire ember

increase in the neighborhood. La Canada High School was recognized as a viable Red Cross Evacuation Center.

The command structure of the Incident Action Plan for the day reflected a Deputy Branch Director with specific responsibilities for structure protection in areas outside the Angeles National Forest.

The Incident Action Plan identified two structure protection groups under the supervision of two Los Angeles County Fire department battalion chiefs, and one supervised by a CIIMT5 division group supervisor (Big Tujunga).

Afternoon

As the day progressed, the fire grew in intensity and size. Incident managers executed an evacuation order for 120 homes in Big Tujunga and executed the full evacuation of Little Tujunga immediately thereafter.

The fire moved aggressively toward La Canada Flintridge, La Crescenta and Altadena, with crews and resources effecting successful structure protection firefighting. Jurisdictional resources were surged into the area to assist with structure protection.

Within hours, Incident Commanders placed an "immediate need" order for 10 engine strike teams (50 engines with 10 leaders) to fulfill structure protection missions in La Canada Flintridge, La Crescenta and Altadena, as well as placing a "planned need" order for an additional 20 engine strike teams (100 engines and 20 leaders)* to perform like missions in other local areas in anticipation of future threat potential.

Late Afternoon/ Evening

With the incident escalating and becoming an increased threat to more homes and structures within Los Angeles County Fire Department's jurisdiction, the Department deployed its own Incident Management Team (Team 3), which was activated at 6:00 p.m. The activation brought with it an Executive Team chief officer who transitioned into Unified Command with CIIMT5 as the Department's new Unified Incident Commander.

In anticipation of fire spread toward the Acton area, a Los Angeles County Fire Department assistant fire chief, battalion chief and jurisdictional battalion chief

* These resources were provided from other fire agencies through the California Mutual Aid System.

Saturday, August 29, 2009 – continued

were assigned responsibility for developing a structure protection plan for that area and ensuring that it was incorporated into the Incident Action Plan for the next operational period.

Sunday, August 30, 2009

Morning

To provide appropriate protection to homes and structures for the growing fire, the Incident Commanders establish two Structure Protection Branches under the supervision of two Los Angeles County Fire Department assistant fire chiefs; "Foothill" (Altadena, La Crescenta and Tujunga areas) and "Acton" (Crown Valley, Agua Dulce and Sand Canyon). Los Angeles County Fire Department dozer and crew strike teams (brush firefighting personnel and equipment) were also assigned to staff several divisions and groups within the incident.

Afternoon

At approximately 5:00 p.m., the fire approached the Mt. Gleason area and Los Angeles County Fire Department Camp 16. Staffed with Los Angeles County Fire Department personnel and inmate crew members, the fire overran Camp 16, taking the lives two firefighters.

Evening

At approximately 6:00 p.m., the fire burned through Aliso Canyon. In the Acton community, Incident Commanders surged two engine strike teams into the area to ensure that structures and homes were appropriately protected.

Following the accident at Camp 16, the Los Angeles County Fire Department Unified Incident Commander established a command and recovery organization led by a Los Angeles County Fire Department assistant fire chief.

Based on structure protection needs, three Los Angeles County Fire Department helicopters were committed at dusk to the incident in the Acton area and flew approximately five hours collectively on water-dropping missions. This is the only night helicopter firefighting on the incident.

Later in the evening a strategic planning team was identified to assist the Incident Command Staff with perimeter control efforts. The team was comprised of an

Sunday, August 30, 2009 – continued

Angeles National Forest chief officer and a Los Angeles County Fire Department assistant fire chief. The team interacted with the Incident Command staff over the next several days and provided intelligence and suggestions on possible opportunities for direct attack on the fire.

Structure Protection Actions

With the point of origin and initial spread of the fire located well within the Angeles National Forest, the only initial Structure Protection concern for the Incident Commanders was the Angeles National Forest *Crest Station* (this facility provided the name for the incident – "Station Incident"). The closest residential structures to the point of origin were those located within La Canada Flintridge several miles to the south. At the height of the fire 7,000 homes and 200 commercial properties were threatened, among which 96 were destroyed.

Thursday, August 27, 2009

Morning

Following an early morning threat assessment, the Station Fire Incident Commander requested a Los Angeles County Fire Department Structure Protection Specialist, so the jurisdictional battalion chief was responded. His initial responsibility to provide protection for several structures that make up the Angeles Crest Station. With the fire not immediately threatening the station, minimal structure protection efforts were required.

Afternoon

The structure protection efforts continued to be minimal, but following the decision to enter into Unified Command, a Type IV engine strike team (five patrols and a leader) was assigned to the La Canada Flintridge area with the assignment of patrolling the area and providing a threat assessment.

Evening

The structure protection efforts continued into the evening, but with an increased down canyon wind, a structure protection group was established and additional resources were added, including a Type I and Type III engine strike team (10 engines and 2 leaders). The structure protection areas also increased to include the Angeles Crest Station and the upper portions of La Canada Flintridge.

Station Incident
Los Angeles County Fire Department
Structure Protection Actions

Friday, August 28, 2009

Morning/Afternoon

During the planning process for this operational period the focus of the Los Angeles County Fire Department Branch Director was to ensure that structure protection was addressed in the areas of La Canada Flintridge, Altadena, Big Tujunga Canyon and Mt Wilson. The Incident Action Plan continued with a structure protection group in the La Canada Flintridge area, under the supervision of a Los Angeles County Fire Department battalion chief.

Additionally, another Los Angeles County Fire Department battalion chief was assigned to meet with fire and law enforcement agencies whose jurisdictions shared threat potential (Los Angeles, Glendale and Pasadena) and identify possible decision points for effecting structure protection and/or evacuations.

During the afternoon (2:00 p.m.) a Fire Management Assistance Grant (FMAG) request was submitted, and the Los Angeles County Fire Department Unified Incident Commander met with the Los Angeles Sheriff's Unified Incident Commander to discuss evacuation strategy and procedures.

Evening

With the increasing threat, a structure branch is established under the supervision of a Los Angeles County Fire Department battalion chief with one Type IV engine strike team (five engines and a leader). Following a full threat assessment, two additional Type I engine strike teams (10 engines and two leaders) were assigned. The resources provided structure protection and met with the homeowners in the upper portions of La Canada Flintridge adjacent to Angeles Crest Highway.

The incident organization also assisted with structure protection by ensuring that the fire was pushed around the uppermost structures east of Angeles Crest Highway.

Saturday, August 29, 2009

Early Morning/ Morning

At 1:00 a.m., Incident Commanders (to include the Los Angeles Sheriff's Department) began an evacuation of portions of La Canada Flintridge.

Saturday, August 29, 2009 – continued

By 6:00 a.m., as many as 160 residents were evacuated from their homes in La Canada-Flintridge (proximal to the La Canada Country Club) due to a fire ember increase in the neighborhood. La Canada High School was recognized a viable Red Cross Evacuation Center.

Additional Structure Protection Groups were identified in the dayshift Incident Action Plan; La Canada-Flintridge, La Crescenta, Altadena, Big Tujunga and Mt. Wilson. During the day the fire moved rapidly to the east and west.

Qualified Los Angeles County Fire Department personnel were utilized as the structure protection group supervisors for the groups in the La Canada Flintridge and Altadena area, and qualified CIIMT5 personnel were utilized to supervise the other structure protection groups.

As the fire advanced on La Canada Flintridge and La Crescenta, jurisdictional resources were activated and responded into the area to supplement structure protection resources. An immediate need request of 10 strike teams (50 engines and 10 leaders) and a planned need request of 20 strike teams (100 engines and 20 leaders) were placed to support the structure protection mission.

A Los Angeles County Fire Department assistant fire chief was assigned as the Deputy Branch Director for Branch II with the assignment to coordinate structure protection within the La Canada Flintridge and Altadena area and in cooperation with the Branch Director, coordinate structure protection resources with perimeter control resources. During this operational period additional Type I engine strike teams (five engines and a leader) were requested and assigned as they arrived on scene.

Afternoon/ Evening

Fire reconnaissance and intelligence gathering by Los Angeles County Fire Department chief officers was a continual process and was conducted throughout the night.

With the activation and assignment of Los Angeles County Fire Department Incident Management Team 3 to the incident, the Department assumed responsibility for all structure protection on the Station Incident.

Saturday, August 29, 2009 – continued

As evening fell, the fire had made a significant run toward the north and was visible on the ridge to the south of Acton. In anticipation of fire spread toward the Acton area, a Los Angeles County Fire Department assistant fire chief and two battalion chiefs were tasked with developing a structure protection plan for the area and ensuring that it was incorporated into the Incident Action Plan for the next operational period.

That evening, structure protection resources continued in place in La Canada Flintridge, La Crescenta, Altadena, Big Tujunga, and Acton.

Sunday, August 30, 2009

Morning

To provide appropriate protection to homes and structures for the growing fire, the Incident Commanders established two structure protection branches – "Foothill" (Altadena, La Crescenta and Tujunga areas) and "Acton" (Crown Valley, Agua Dulce and Sand Canyon) – under the supervision of two Los Angeles County Fire Department assistant fire chiefs. Los Angeles County Fire Department dozer and crew strike teams (brush firefighting personnel and equipment) were also assigned to staff several divisions and groups within the incident.

Afternoon

Structure protection efforts continued on both the north and south sides of the fire. Additional staged Los Angeles County Fire Department engine strike teams were activated and deployed into the Acton area to supplement the resources already assigned.

Evening

Los Angeles County helicopter resources were also utilized from dusk to 11:00 p.m. to support the structure protection mission in this area and flew a combine total of five hours.

Evacuation Actions

There was no need for evacuations during the first 24 hours of the incident due to the location of the fire. The closest structures were those at the Angeles National Forest Crest Station, several miles to the south of the fire.

Thursday, August 27, 2009

Evening

As the incident moved towards La Canada Flintridge, the Los Angeles County Fire Department Branch Director initiated voluntary evacuations for several streets at the upper portion of La Canada Flintridge adjacent to Angeles Crest Highway.

Friday, August 28, 2009

Morning/Afternoon

Additionally, a Los Angeles County Fire Department battalion chief was assigned to meet with the potentially threatened fire and law enforcement agencies (Glendale, City of Los Angeles, and Pasadena) and identify possible decision points for structure protection and/or evacuations.

During the afternoon (2:00 p.m.) a Fire Management Assistance Grant (FMAG) request was submitted, and the Los Angeles County Fire Department Unified Incident Commander met with the Los Angeles Sheriff's Unified Incident Commander to discuss evacuation strategy and procedures.

Evening

At 1:00 a.m., Incident Commanders (to include the Los Angeles Sheriff's Department) began a mandatory evacuation of portions of La Canada Flintridge.

By 6:00 a.m., as many as 160 residents were evacuated from their homes in La Canada Flintridge (proximal to the La Canada Country Club) due to a fire ember increase in the neighborhood. La Canada High School was recognized as a viable Red Cross Evacuation Center.

Station Incident
Los Angeles County Fire Department
Evacuation Actions

Saturday, August 29, 2009

Morning/Afternoon

As the day progressed and the fire grew in intensity and size, the Incident Commanders executed an evacuation order for 120 homes in Big Tujunga and executed the full evacuation of Little Tujunga immediately thereafter. The Little Tujunga area included the most southerly portion of Sand Canyon.

The incident commanders, along with command and general staff, held a meeting to discuss the strategy of civilian re-entry into evacuated areas, and the evacuation process and procedures were identified.

The Glendale Fire Department, now part of Unified Command, initiated evacuations for the northern portion of their city where it abuts the foothills. This area is immediately west of the La Crescenta area. The Pasadena Fire Department, also now part of Unified Command, issued a voluntary evacuation notice for the northern portion of their city adjacent the Altadena area.

Sunday, August 30, 2009

Morning/Afternoon

With the movement of the fire north toward Acton and west towards Sand Canyon mandatory evacuations were initiated from Highway 14 to Soledad Canyon Road.

Additional evacuations were initiated as the fire moved east from the Acton area to include Aliso Canyon Road from Soledad Highway to Angeles Forest Highway and on Angeles Forest Highway from Mount Emma Road to La Canada-Flintridge.

Public Information and Community Communication Strategy

Public information

From the incipiency of the fire through Sunday, August 31, 2009, the sharing of public information with other agencies, the impacted communities, and the media was performed by the initial response command structure.

As the Incident Command organization began to grow and change, a robust and well-formed media and community communication effort ensued.

As is prescribed within the Incident Command System (ICS) doctrine, information released to the public and the media shall first be approved by the Incident or Unified Commanders. Throughout the incident, this basic ICS principal was followed. Press briefings were conducted twice daily by the Unified Commanders (7:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m.). Individual media Interviews were given by Incident Information Officers, and only authorized information was released.

Community Communication Strategy

Community Briefings and Town Hall Meetings

As the Incident continued to grow, and in an effort to ensure openness and transparency all of their actions, the Unified Commanders held a series of community and town hall meetings:

September 1, 2009 – 7:00 p.m.
High Desert Middle School
3620 Antelope Woods Roads
Acton

Nearly 250 area residents attended this meeting, which featured comments from the U.S. Forest Service Incident Commander, Los Angeles County Fire Department Incident Commander, Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department Incident Commander, and the Los Angeles County Fire Department Fire Chief. Other speakers addressing residents' concerns included representatives from State Senator George Runner, Los Angeles County Department of Mental Health, American Red Cross, and officials from the City of Palmdale.

Community Communication Strategy - continued

September 2, 2009 – 7:00 p.m.
Wrightwood Elementary School (athletic field)
1175 State Highway 2
Wrightwood

This meeting was attended by approximately 320 residents. Speakers included San Bernardino County Supervisor Brad Mitzelfelt, 1st District, a Los Angeles County Fire Department chief deputy, a Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department commander, representatives from the U.S. Forest Service and the local emergency preparedness committee.

September 3, 2009 – 7:00 p.m.
First Church of the Nazarene
3700 E. Sierra Madre Blvd.
Pasadena

Nearly 500 residents from the Sierra Madre, Pasadena, Monrovia, and Arcadia areas attended this meeting which featured comments from the U.S. Forest Service incident commander, Glendale and Pasadena Fire Department representatives, the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department incident commander, and the Angeles National Forest supervisor.

September 4, 2009 – 7:00 p.m.
Azusa Senior Center
740 No. Dalton
Azusa

Nearly 500 area residents from the cities of Monrovia, Bradbury, Duarte, Azusa, San Dimas, and Glendora attended this meeting which featured comments from the U.S. Forest Service incident commander, a Los Angeles County assistant fire chief, the Los Angeles Sheriff's Department incident commander, and the Angeles National Forest supervisor.

Communication with Local Elected and Appointed Public Officials

To ensure accurate and timely information regarding the impact or potential impact of the Station Incident was conveyed to local elected and appointed public officials whose cities and areas may be affected, the Los Angeles County Fire Department assigned two assistant fire chiefs as Community/Civic Liaisons to

Communication with Local Elected and Appointed Public Officials

establish a direct and routine line of communication. Modes of communication included telephonic (cell/office/home) and electronic (e-mail and website) communication. The communication process allowed for two-way information exchange whereby daily electronic briefings (containing information approved by the Unified Commanders) would be provided by the Incident's Community/ Civic Liaison and emergent or unresolved civic concerns could be provided back to the Liaison for discussion, answer, solution, or research.

Camp 16 Accident

The accident at Camp 16 is currently under investigation by a CAL FIRE Serious Accident Review Team (SART), and the report should be available within the next 45-60 days. This portion of the summary only reflects the Los Angeles County Fire Department's actions surrounding the accident, and not the accident itself.

August 30, 2009

At approximately 5:00 p.m., the Station Fire approached the Mt. Gleason area and overran Los Angeles County Fire Department Camp 16. Two Los Angeles County firefighters lost their lives, when the fire overran the Camp.

Los Angeles County Fire Department command personnel, firefighters, and inmate crew members were at the facility during this time period. Additionally, engine companies and patrols from the Department responded and were being utilized to protect the structures.

However, communication with incident personnel was sporadic, and attempts to include those personnel within the incident were not made.

Following notification of the accident, the Department moved quickly to notify the families of those killed. At the incident, the Los Angeles County Fire Department Unified Incident Commander established a command and recovery organization led by a Los Angeles County Fire Department assistant fire chief.

The command and recovery organization had four main goals: medical assessment and treatment, preliminary investigation, recovery of the deceased, and relocation of the personnel remaining at the facility. Multiple resources were assigned to this endeavor, some from the incident and some from local Department jurisdictions.

The command and recovery organization fulfilled their mission at approximately 4:00 a.m. on the morning of August 31, 2009.

Additionally the Los Angeles County Fire Department Unified Incident Commander implemented a Critical Incident Management Support team under the direction of a Los Angeles County Fire Department battalion chief. The team consisted of 12 personnel and included both Mental Health Professionals and Department Peer supporters. Immediately, the team provided one-on-one interventions, group interventions, and support and assistance at the three hospitals where the injured personnel were transported. In the days following the accident, the team continued to provide group interventions at multiple sites.

Interaction with Other Agencies

During the initial attack on the Station Incident, the interaction by Los Angeles County Fire Department personnel followed a standard course determined by the fire location and potential threat as agreed upon within the "2009 Annual Operating Plan for Cooperative Fire Protection Agreement between the Angeles National Forest and the Consolidated Fire Protection District (Los Angeles County Fire District)" [Agreement No. 07-FI-11050100-038].

The jurisdictional battalion chiefs interfaced with Angeles National Forest fire management personnel, and conferred and agreed on the jurisdictional responsibility for the fire, the use of resources, the need for additional resources, and the payment method for the resources. Decisions made at the incident were communicated via the Command and Control battalion chief to the Executive Team chief officer for acknowledgement and approval.

As the incident de-escalated during the evening and night of August 26, 2009, Los Angeles County Fire Department assigned a battalion chief as the Department's Agency Representative and primary point of contact for the Angeles National Forest Station fire incident management personnel. Situational updates and threat assessment information were communicated by the Agency Representative to the on-duty Command and Control battalion chief.

On the morning of Thursday, August 27, 2009, as the fire escalated, other Los Angeles County Fire Department chief officers began to engage and provide Angeles National Forest personnel with threat assessment information and query them regarding contingency planning. The Department's Operations Chief Deputy met and conferred with the Angeles National Forest Chief.

Department personnel also communicated and coordinated with other emergency response agencies with a shared threat impact potential (Los Angeles Fire Department, Glendale Fire Department, Pasadena Fire Department and surrounding law enforcement agencies) to discuss their mutual involvement and/or assistance.

Recommendations for Consideration

The purpose of the *Recommendations for Consideration* section of this review is provided to assist the Department in its efforts to share knowledge and experience gained from the Station Incident for the benefit of the entire organization.

Command

- When assigned as an assisting agency representative on fires with Los Angeles County, command officers shall ensure they regularly and routinely communicate the situation status and projected developments to superior officers and the Fire Command and Control Center.

Structure Protection

- Lobby for the application of LACoFD brush clearance requirements to all structures located in the ANF. Additionally, follow up with future site protection requirements for critical communication facilities such as Mount Wilson and Mount Lukens.

- Ensure that incident management teams assigned to fire suppression within the ANF, incorporate the LACoFD procedures for structure protection including night helicopter operations.

Interaction with Other Agencies

- Update the ANF Annual Operating plan and include changes that will ensure a timely appropriate response to wildfires threatening life and property within and adjacent to the ANF.

Camp 16

- Develop a facility protection plan and train personnel in assessment procedures.

Evacuations

- Reinforce the relationship with Los Angeles County Sheriff (Sheriff), Office of Emergency Management, and appropriate cities to ensure real time information about the fire: location and evacuation directives are posted on websites in a timely manner.

- With the Sheriff, develop consistent evacuation procedures which would apply to all areas served by these two agencies. Evacuation coordination within the ANF need to always involve LACoFD and Sheriff

APPENDIX A
Timeline of Notable Events

Wednesday, August 26, 2009

Time Range	1524 hours to 2200 hours
LAC Role	Assisting Agency
Agency Representative	Battalion 4
Actions Taken	Assisting Agency Role – Battalion Chief A first Alarm Brush Response is dispatched to a reported brush fire on Angeles Crest highway at mm 29.50. Because the response in located in Battalion 4, Helitanker 732 is dispatched automatically. Los Angeles County resources are assigned to assist. Camp Superintendents assigned right and left flanks. Fingers to south and unable to work due to steepness and fuel load. Camp Superintendent assigned as Division "A" on south side. An indirect attack is taken on south side in canyon bottom. Heavy streams on eyebrow before Camp Superintendent leaves at 0000 hours.

Wednesday, August 26, 2009 – Thursday August 27, 2009

Time Range	2200 hours to 0600 hours
LAC Role	Assisting Agency
Agency Representative	Battalion Chief 46
2200 hours to 0600 hours	Camps Section Battalion Chief 46, 2 crews, 2 engines and Superintendent work the fire all night. 1 spot below road – knocked down with hose. More spots further down before Camp Superintendent departs scene. Camp Superintendant departs scene at midnight. Fire again spots below the road.
0400 hours	Los Angeles County Fire Department engines still assigned and replaced by fresh resources.
0445 hours	Los Angeles Communications Center contacted regarding Type II helicopter request.

Station Incident
Los Angeles County Fire Department
Appendix A

Thursday, August 27, 2009

Time Range	0600 hours to 0600 hours
LAC Role	Assisting Agency and Unified Command
Agency Representative	Battalion Chief 46
LAC Unified Commander(s)	Assistant Fire Chief 2 (Morris Incident) – Deputy Chief 4 (Station Branch)
0600 hours to 1000 hours	Battalion Chief 46 is Agency Representative
0600 hours	Los Angeles County Fire Department responds two crew strike teams (1176G and 1180G)
0650 hours	Los Angeles County Fire Department Battalion Chief 4 discussed helicopter decisions with Los Angeles Communications Center.
0912 hours	Jurisdictional Battalion Chief 4 responded to incident.
0918 hours	HTNK732 assigned to the incident.
0918 hours to 0959 hours	HTNK732 out of service – mechanical.
0925 hours	Jurisdictional Battalion Chief 4 conversation with Los Angels Communication Center battalion chief.
0959 hours	HTNK732 dispatched to the incident.
1002 hours	Assistant Fire Chief 3 dispatched to the incident
1000 hours to 1300 hours	Deputy Chief 4 approves/ directs Los Angels County Fire Department engine strike team 1140D (5 patrol vehicles and leader) is formed and sent to Camp 2.
1027 hours	HTNK732 on scene.
1201 hours	In a phone conversation between Los Angeles Communication Center Battalion Chief 40 and Assistant Fire Chief 3, indicates the need for a Type IV engine strike team (5 patrol vehicles and leader) for the La Canada and La Crescenta area as the fire appears to be growing in strength.
1226 hours	In a phone conversation between 1140D strike team leader and Los Angeles Communication Center Battalion Chief 40, relays a message from Assistant Fire Chief 3 that strike team 1140D should patrol Battalion 4 (La Canada Flintridge).
1310 hours / 1340 hours	Los Angeles County Fire Department enters into Unified Command.
1610 hours	Assigned strike team 1170G and one crew strike team to the incident, The Incident Command Post is moved to Camp 2.
1620 hours	Los Angeles County Fire Department sends two bulldozers to the incident (ST1191K).
1800 hours to 0600 hours	Structure Protection in La Canada-Flintridge with three local engines. Assisting with perimeter control with dozers/crews.
1800 hours to 0600 hours	The Station Incident is assigned as "Branch" with CIIMT2 (Woychak)
1800 hours to 0600 hours	Assigned jurisdictional Battalion Chief 4 as Structure Protection Group supervisor.

Thursday, August 27, 2009 – continued

2009 hours	E63 is dispatched to helispot 63A to support copter operations/ assist structure protection group efforts at Crest Station.
2037 hours	The helicopters requested to assist with structure protection group efforts at the Crest Station are diverted to the Palos Verdes Incident.
2140 hours	Assigned Office of Emergency Services strike team 1870C (5 engines and a leader) to the incident.
0308 hours	Assigned Los Angeles County Fire Department strike team 1103A (5 engines and a leader) to the incident.
0559 hours	Fire still not reaching most northerly house in La Canada Flintridge.

Friday, August 28, 2009

Time Range	0600 hours to 0600 hours
LAC Role	Unified Command
Agency Representative	Battalion Chief 46
LAC Unified Commander(s)	AC2 (Watson – Morris Incident) – DC4 (Powers – Station Branch)
0717 hours	Assigned LAC Strike Team 1133A
1342 hours to 1800 hours	Copter 16 assigned to the incident from 1345 hours and remained on-scene until 1800 hours (then out of service, mechanical)
1723 hours	HTNK732 assigned to the Palos Verdes Incident until 1200 hours then dispatched to the Station Incident for the remainder of the day.
1800 hours to 0600 hours	Assigned as a Branch with CIIMT2
1411 hours	CIIMT5 assumes Unified Command
1800 hours to 2200 hours	La Canada Structure Protection Group is established with BC10B
1800 hours to 2200 hours	A Structure Protection Group is established and Evacuations begin in La Canada Flintridge.

Saturday, August 29, 2009

Time Range	0600 hours to 0600 hours
LAC Role	Unified Command
Agency Representative	
LAC Unified Commander(s)	Deputy Chief 4 – Deputy Chief 3.
0641 hours	HTNK732 assigned to the Station Incident.
0600 hours to 1800 hours	Copter 16 assigned to the Station Incident.
0600 hours to 1800 hours	CIIMT 5 in command of fire.
0600 hours to 1800 hours	Assistant Fire Chief 5 assigned as Deputy Branch Director.

Saturday, August 29, 2009 - continued

0600 hours to 1800 hours	"Harter" Structure Protection Group in La Canada Flintridge and La Crescenta staffed by structure protection group supervisor (Los Angeles County Fire Department battalion chief) and engine strike team 1103A (5 engines and a leader) and 1133A (5 engines and a leader).
0600 hours to 1800 hours	"Canyon Crest" Structure Protection Group in Alta Dena by structure protection group supervisor (Los Angeles County Fire Department battalion chief)
0600 hours to 1800 hours	Los Angeles County Fire Department strike team 1170G and 1180G assigned to Division "A" Los Angeles County Fire Department strike team 1191K assigned to Division "D" Los Angeles County Fire Department Water Tender 74 and 80 assigned to Division "Z" Los Angeles County Fire Department strike team 1176G assigned to Infrastructure Protection Group (preparation around communication sites.
1107 hours to 1244 hours	Fire approaches the top of Ocean View (La Canada-Flintridge) – Los Angeles County Fire Department strike teams 1141D (5 patrols and a leader), 1139A (5 engines and a leader) and 11388A (5 engines and a leader) responded to "Harter Structure Protection Group" (Los Angeles County Fire Department battalion chief assigned as group supervisor). Fire runs into La Canada Flintridge @ Starlight Crest Drive (near the golf course)
1140 hours	Fire runs into upper part of Canyon Crest (Los Angeles County Fire Department Battalion Chief 2A) assigned as "Canyon Crest" Group Supervisor. A direct attack begins with dozer and crew support up a ridge to keep fire out of Alta Dena.
1300 hours	An order is place for 10 engine strike teams and then, increased to 20 strike teams
1257 hours	Big Tujunga Structure Protection Group handled by CIIMT5 – the fire burns through Big Tujunga (3 Type III and Engine Strike Team assigned)
1730 hours	Los Angeles County Fire Department engine strike team 1109A (5 engines and a leader) and strike team 1119A (5 engines and a leader) are assigned to Branch II (Los Angeles County Fire Department Assistant Fire Chief 5 is assigned as group supervisor.
1800 hours to 0600 hours	CIIMT5 in command (Unified with Los Angeles County Fire Department). Los Angeles County Fire Department Incident Management Team 3 (Deputy Chief 3 Incident Commander) is activated and take the structure protection mission.
1900 hours	Los Angeles County Fire Department Assistant Fire Chief 5 and Battalion Chief 10B are assigned to develop a structure protection plan for the Acton area with Battalion Chief 17C.

Station Incident
Los Angeles County Fire Department
Appendix A

Sunday, August 30, 2009

Time Range	0600 hours to 0600 hours
LAC Role	Unified Command
Agency Representative	
LAC Unified Commander(s)	CIIMT5 and Deputy Chief 3 (with Incident management Team 3)
0600 hours to 1800 hours	HTNK732 and Los Angeles County Fire Department Copter 16 assigned to the Station Incident.
	Los Angeles County Fire Department strike team 1170G and 1180G are assigned to Division "A". Los Angeles County Fire Department strike team 1176G assigned to Division "S". Los Angeles County Fire Department strike team 1190K assigned to Division "Y". Los Angeles County Fire Department strike team 1190K assigned to Division "Z". Los Angeles County Fire Department Assistant Fire Chief 4 is assigned as "Foothill" Structure Protection Branch. • Los Angeles County Fire Department Battalion 2A is assigned as Alta Structure Protection Group with 4 Type I engine strike teams (5 engines and a leader). • Los Angeles County Fire Department Battalion 2C is assigned as Crescenta Structure Protection Group with 5 Type I engine strike teams (5 engines and a leader). • USFS Fire Captain assigned as Tujunga Structure Protection Group with 3 Type III engine strike teams (5 engines and a leader). Los Angeles County Fire Department Assistant Fire Chief 5 is assigned as Acton Structure Protection Branch • Los Angeles County Fire Department Battalion Chief 15C is assigned as Crown Structure Protection Group Supervisor with strike team 1138A (5 engines and a leader) with 2 additional Type I engine strike teams (5 engines and a leader) assigned to Crown Valley Structure Protection Group. • Los Angeles County Fire Department Battalion Chief 12A is assigned as Agua Dulce Structure Protection Group Supervisor with strike team 1133A (5 engines and a leader)

Sunday, August 30, 2009 - continued

	with 3 additional Type I engine strike teams assigned to Crown Valley Structure Protection Group. • Los Angeles County Fire Department Battalion Chief 22A is assigned as Sand Canyon Structure Protection Group Supervisor with strike team 1103A (5 engines and a leader) with 2 additional Type I engine strike teams (5 engines and a leader) assigned to Sand Canyon Structure Protection Group
	Los Angeles County Fire Department strike team 1139A (5 engines and a leader). Los Angeles County Fire Department Water Tender 74 and 80 assigned to Division "X". Los Angeles County Fire Department strike team 1140D (5 patrols and a leader) assigned to Division "L".
1415 Hours	Agency meeting between Los Angeles County Fire Chief Freeman, Chief Deputy Tripp and CALFire Representatives.
1700 hours	Camp 16 burn over.
1720 hours	Los Angeles County Fire Department strike team 1133A (5 engines and a leader) indicates that his strike team is in a "tight spot and cannot leave Aliso Canyon (n/o Forest Highway) due to fire
1800 hours	Fire burns over Aliso Canyon
1810 hours	Los Angeles County Fire Department strike team 1151A (5 engines and a leader) and Los Angeles County Fire Department strike team 1152A (5 engines and a leader) are activated to respond to the Acton area for Structure Protection Group missions.
1810 hours	Los Angeles County Fire Department Battalion Chief 17C is assigned to assist with Camp 16 effort.
1800 hours to 0600 hours	CIIMT5 and Unified Command with Los Angeles County Fire Department Incident Management Team 3 (Deputy Chief 3 Incident Commander) *"Station Incident" Incident Action Plan*
1800 hours to 0600 hours	Los Angeles County Fire Department Copter 15, LAC Copter 18 and LAC Copter 19 assigned for structure protection missions in Acton area after dark until approximately 11:00 pm

APPENDIX B
Helicopter Operations

Wednesday, August 26, 2009	**Assigned**	**Released**	**Total Hours Flown**
Copter 12 *	1550	1953	3.5
Copter 14	1743	1801**	1.4
Copter 18	1524	1937	2.9
Copter 19	1524	1926	3.9
Helitanker 732	1524	1936	3.8

* - From the Morris Fire per Morris AOBD **15.5 hrs.**
** - Released per BC 42 for EMS coverage

Thursday, August 27, 2009	**Assigned**	**Released**	**Total Hours Flown**
Copter 14 (Recon-AC3 & BC4C)	1253	1346	0.9
Copter 14 (Recon)	1600	1708	1.0
Helitanker 732	0959*	2040	7.4

* - Original dispatch at 0908, but OS mechanical until 1000 hours **9.3 hrs.**

Friday, August 28, 2009	**Assigned**	**Released**	**Total Hours Flown**
Copter 16	1342	1808*	2.5
Helitanker 732	1723	2050	1.9

* - OS mechanical at Barton **4.4 hrs.**

Saturday, August 29, 2009	**Assigned**	**Released**	**Total Hours Flown**
Copter 11(Rescue – Over Torque)	1413	1504	0.7
Helitanker 732	0800	1945	6.9

7.6 hrs.

Sunday, August 30, 2009	**Assigned**	**Released**	**Total Hours Flown**
Copter 10 (Fire Chief)	1809	2031	2.2
Copter 10 (Recon)	2200	2300	1.0
Copter 15*	1924	2306	1.3
Copter 16	1348	1946	4.8
Copter 18	1721	1907	0.8
Copter 19	1924	2254	3.0
Helitanker 732	0649	2009	5.1

* - Copter 15 assigned to assist at Camp 16 at 1733 hours **18.2 hrs.**

Station Incident
Los Angeles County Fire Department
Appendix B

Monday, August 31, 2009	**Assigned**	**Released**	**Total Hours Flown**
Copter 10 (Recon – Barley)	1601	1650	0.9
Copter 10 (Recon – Mt Wilson)	1915	2049	1.3
Copter 16	0922	2005	5.4
Copter 17			3.0
Helitanker 732	0820		7.5

18.1 hrs.

Tuesday, September 1, 2009	**Assigned**	**Released**	**Total Hours Flown**
Copter 10 (Recon - OSC)	1221	1403	1.5
Copter 10 (Recon – Barley)	1649	1900	2.2
Copter 12	1139	1800	5.3
Copter 16	0800	2000	4.5
Helitanker 732	0649	2000	5.9

19.4 hrs.

Wednesday, September 2, 2009	**Assigned**	**Released**	**Total Hours Flown**
Copter 10 (Recon – Fire Chief & NBC)	1123	1719	5.1
Copter 10 (Assist Copt 19)	2228	2330	1.0
Copter 15	1547	2000	2.9
Copter 19 (Barley Flats) *	1632	1938	4.0
Helitanker 732	0800	1933	5.5

* - Also Copter 19 hoist rescue at 2216 for a injured fire fighter; avail at 0012

18.5 hrs.

Thursday, September 3, 2009	**Assigned**	**Released**	**Total Hours Flown**
Copter 16	1006	1807	6.0
Helitanker 732	0815	1715	7.7

13.7 hrs.

Friday, September 4, 2009	**Assigned**	**Released**	**Total Hours Flown**
Copter 10 (Admin Flight – DC4)	1139	1248	1.5
Helitanker 732	0846	2030	5.2

6.7 hrs.

Station Incident
Los Angeles County Fire Department
Appendix B

Saturday, September 5, 2009	**Assigned**	**Released**	**Total Hours Flown**
Copter 10 (Recon w/SG Valley Fire Chiefs)	1356	1511	1.8
Helitanker 732	1325	2000	5.2
			7.0 hrs.

Sunday, September 6, 2009	**Assigned**	**Released**	**Total Hours Flown**
Copter 19 (rescue)	2129	2356	.9
Helitanker 732	0800	2000	5.6
			6.5 hrs.

Monday, September 7, 2009	**Assigned**	**Released**	**Total Hours Flown**
Copter 17 (rescue)	1537	1720	1.0
Helitanker 732	1126	1916	5.6
			6.6 hrs.

Tuesday, September 8, 2009	**Assigned**	**Released**	**Total Hours Flown**
Helitanker 732	0727	1937	4.0
			4.0 hrs.

Wednesday, September 9, 2009	**Assigned**	**Released**	**Total Hours Flown**
Helitanker 732	0800	2000	0.0
			0.0 hrs.

Total Hours flown by LAC Helicopters **155.5 hrs.**

155.5 flight hours equals **19.4 days** flying 8 hours per day

STATION FIRE OBSERVATIONS

COMMAND DECISIONS

Given the location of the Station Fire, the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) was in command of the fire, and Los Angeles County Fire Department (LACoFD) command staff, suppression personnel and equipment performed in an "assisting agency role."

This means that until the fire threatened LACoFD's jurisdiction, command decisions remained solely with the USFS. The USFS was in command from the initial report of the fire at 3:24 p.m., on Wednesday, August 26, 2009, until LACoFD joined "unified command" at 1:10 p.m., on Thursday, August 27, 2009.

During the time that the fire was under USFS command, their policies and procedures were followed. This means that command decisions for resource levels, equipment assigned, assistance from State and local fire agencies, tactics and strategies were theirs to make. The USFS Station Fire Review has been released; they have concluded that USFS policies and procedures, and best professional practices, were used in trying to contain the fire.

RESTROPECTIVE ASSESSMENT

Now that the tragic Station Fire has taken the lives of two LACoFD firefighters, destroyed scores of homes, and incinerated nearly 250 square miles of forest, the "Monday morning quarterbacking" is rampant. Second guessing is always 20-20 and hindsight qualifies everyone as an expert.

Despite abundant speculation, the truth is that no one, no fire chief, no firefighter, resident or reporter can provide definitive evidence that anything would have made a difference in the outcome. Still, we must look hard at every action. We must question and we must make changes where we can. We must challenge old paradigms and bring about new ones.

WHAT WAS NOT DONE

What can be affirmatively stated, though, is what was not tried and why. Although a particular action or tool may not have changed the outcome of the Station Fire, its absence raises a valid question for the future. There is no debate that a critical time period existed from initial dispatch on August 26, 2009, until approximately 8:00 a.m. on August 27, 2009, when the fire crossed the Angeles Crest Highway. What was not used were LACoFD firefighting helicopters during the hours of darkness on August 26, 2009, until dawn on August 27, 2009.

COUNTY HELICOPTER/AIRCRAFT USE

County pilots are qualified and experienced in night firefighting operations. As the fire spilled burning embers from above the Angeles Crest Highway into the Arroyo below, spot fires flared up. County helicopters could have dropped water as needed throughout the night, attempting to control these spots. Such action was not taken because the USFS policy prohibits night flying. Would night flying have made a difference? No one can say for sure, but night flying is a policy change that is needed.

A robust air attack at first daylight is another tactic that can make a difference on a wildland fire that has slowed during the night before heating from the sun takes effect. LACoFD experience demonstrates that daybreak attacks using helicopters have brought successes. Would such an attack have made a difference in the outcome? No one can say for sure, but such a tactical practice should be the norm for wildland fires in the forest.

To say that LACoFD fire helicopters could have been better utilized in the Station Fire is a fair and accurate assertion. Even with USFS policies prohibiting night flying, LACoFD commanders should have been more assertive by inserting LACoFD helicopters on the fire at first light, even though the fire was four miles away from LACoFD jurisdiction. (Such action was taken last year to protect homes in Diamond Bar during the Freeway Complex Fire when State aircraft was delayed from a daybreak air attack).

Nevertheless, the actual use of LACoFD helicopters at the Station Fire was extensive and the equivalent of 19.4, eight-hour days of flying. (See Executive Review Appendix).

Given the magnitude of the Station Fire, numerous rotary and fixed-wing aircraft were deployed exclusive of LACoFD helicopters. This was appropriate, consistent with needs of the Station Fire from Thursday, August 27, 2009, until its conclusion. This selective use enabled LACoFD to continue its mission for protecting the County. It should be noted that after August 27, 2009, at critical times during the Station Fire, County helicopters were used to support structure protection efforts.

FIRE SUPPRESSION PARADIGMS AND POLICIES

Fire service agency policies and budgets frame practices which become paradigms or ways of doing things. Local government fire agencies cover a wide spectrum of service delivery, with LACoFD being unique in its service to 58 cities, all unincorporated areas of the County, and State lands within the County.

Situated across the center of the County is the Angeles National Forest (ANF), which is managed and protected by the USFS, a division of the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Fire prevention and suppression policies and paradigms for the ANF are guided from Washington, D.C., and have not mirrored changes made by LACoFD.

Since the early 90's, LACoFD has slowly shifted its paradigm for wildland firefighting. With public welfare and firefighter safety as the top priority, changes have been made. More personnel and equipment and aircraft are dispatched on reported widlland fires today than years ago.

Rapid air and ground attack is coordinated, making every effort to knock down the fire and keep it small. Engine firefighters support hand crews with progressive hose lays. Leased SuperScooper airplanes make direct attacks on the fires, in conjunction with helicopters from LACoFD and L.A. City Fire and leased helitankers.

Nighttime air attack is a standard. Helicopters are dispatched on all nighttime wildland fires. Also, air attack scheduled for first daylight is an operational norm.

Such elements of strategy and tactics constitute a new paradigm. This has been possible because of Board support, funding sources, and a vision supported by a flexible environment.

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE POLICY CHANGES NEEDED

There is a need for a paradigm shift in wildland fire suppression. Public welfare and firefighter safety must remain number one, but the Department of Agriculture must embrace change in the ANF, where large population centers are nearby or adjacent. The fire suppression philosophy must move from "taking what the fire will give us," to "hitting the fire early and hard."

Specifically, nighttime rotary wing air attack (when safe) must be employed on a regular basis. Coordinated air attack at first light must also become part of the new paradigm for USFS fire suppression in the ANF. Such changes must be seriously evaluated and implemented as policy changes, beginning with the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Costs associated with these changes will likely be minimal when compared to the huge costs of suppressing a small fire that was contained in its early stages and at night, when humidity is higher and fire progress is generally slower.

Although the Station Fire threatened thousands of homes and other structures outside of the ANF boundaries and required the response from various local government and State agencies, the command of the fire followed USFS policies. These policies, while in place for many years, require immediate review and change, both for fire prevention and fire suppression consideration.

USDA changes will likely require Congressional support and legislative direction to the Department for implementation. With that in mind, attached is a document that outlines specific "problems" and "solutions."

COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES

FIRE DEPARTMENT

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FIRE CHIEF
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LACoFD RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPROVED FIRE SUPPRESSION IN THE ANGELES NATIONAL FOREST (MOUNT WILSON)

The recent massive and destructive Station Fire within and adjacent to the Angeles National Forest (ANF) graphically spotlights significant problems which need to be addressed for improved fire and life safety. We believe that, although the ANF is one of many national forests, its proximity to highly populated urban areas that adjoin its boundaries calls for a vastly different approach to fire prevention and fire response than is applicable to other forests. Since the ANF is the responsibility of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, changes to current policies which govern the ANF and its local officials will require Congressional intervention, support, and direction. Therefore, your concurrence in presenting these "problems" and recommended "solutions" to Congress will be both appreciated and greatly instrumental in bringing about needed policy changes.

Background

Historical records clearly indicate that vegetation in Southern California will burn readily. This fact is intensified because of climatic conditions, steep inaccessible terrain and seasonal low relative humidity. History also shows that fire behavior does not respect improved properties or jurisdictional boundaries. The different fire prevention and fire suppression policies between the LACoFD and the ANF complicate the provision of fire and life safety in and adjacent to the ANF.

These differences directly impact brush clearances and fire suppression methodologies. They create a greater wildfire threat to structures within and outside of the forest, and contribute to confusion among responding fire agencies in the event of a fire. These differences also contribute to prolonged fire suppression times and increased costs of suppression.

PROBLEMS AND SOLUTIONS

Brush Clearance

- Problem:
  a) Within ANF brush clearance, the distance of cleared land from the structure to natural vegetation is limited to 30 feet. By contrast, clearance should be 200 feet from the structure to natural vegetation.

- Solution:
  a) Direct ANF to enact and enforce brush clearance distance of 200 feet from all structures within and adjacent to the forest where such clearance encroaches on the forest.

- Problem:
  a) Various ridge top communication sites (towers and structures) are extremely vulnerable to a wildland fire because of 30-foot clearance and steep terrain. This vulnerability includes Mt. Wilson, Mt. Disappointment, Mt. Lukens and others.

- Solutions:
  a) Expand clearance to at least 200 feet as recommended above.
  b) Engage fire protection engineers to develop and apply a fire-resistive ground cover material, creating a buffer zone surrounding such installations to protect them from flames, heat, and flying embers.
  c) Provide incentives for communication/observatory/museum owners to "harden" existing structures to make them fire-resistive (per Los Angeles County Fire Department codes and regulations applicable to the Santa Monica Mountain area).

Fire Suppression Methodologies

- Problem:
  a) U.S. Forest Service fire suppression policies limit timing and scope in the use of State and local government personnel, equipment and aircraft for early attack and suppression of fires within the ANF. These policies have created a fire suppression paradigm that must be changed, especially in forests near major population areas such as the ANF.

- Solutions:
  a) Allow ANF to enter into operating agreements that provide for seamless, as needed, utilization of all federal, State and local fire suppression personnel, equipment and aircraft for any and all fires occurring within the ANF (not just Initial Action Zone). This would include night flying, use of Super Scoopers and all other equipment and techniques most readily available to affect rapid knockdown and control of all fires.
  b) Modify all existing Wilderness Area legislation to assure that any and all fire suppression equipment and techniques can be applied at the discretion of fire incident commander without a telephone call seeking permission first.
  c) Direct the creation of an equitable cost apportionment formula between U.S. Forest Service, State, and local government to assure best available fire suppression resources are utilized to effect rapid knockdown and control of fires occurring within ANF.