

These notes are compiled from recollections of, and discussions between, the accident team members who interviewed people involved with the Yarnell Hill Fire.

Interview with Todd Abel by J Karels on 8/14/2013

Abel started getting a briefing from Shumate around 6. Good briefing from him, on resources, spot weather forecast, yesterday's fire activity, etc.

Marsh showed up sometime before 0700, talked about no fire in the area for 45 years, aviation, weather, comms, etc. This was before the 0700 briefing. They did talk tactics and the plan was to establish an anchor point.

Marsh was an active participant at the 0700 briefing

Blue Ridge was assigned to Division A. He thought he told either Frisby or True over radio. While working their way in, Cordis already had line going in so they were tying in with him. In his mind the whole corner where the dozer line tied into the ridge was Alpha.

Sent Rance in, to contact Div a and decide div break. Marsh's phone call, they talked about resources and division break between z and alpha (Marsh said somewhat heated discussion, but they worked out the break, which Abel understood to be: down off hill near the grader spot was where the break was going to be. rest of line to the east is zulu. (Believes this was last cell call, other convos were over radio).

Just after the later weather forecast (around 1530) was when Marsh mentioned the winds squirrely. The broadcast came out, he's listening on the radio if everyone got it. he thinks he might have walked over Marsh. so he calls to confirm with Marsh that he got it and he did.

the ~1555 radio conversation that we have on the video, (which includes the phrase okay, you hunker down in the black)—Abel did not recall having this conversation with Marsh.

Arizona Dispatch Center

Interviewed AZ-ADC By: Richa, Lance, Jennifer

07/07/2013

- Light activity on Friday, 6-7 new starts/smoke checks.
- There was the initial smoke report, Charlie took the call on Friday
- Resources responding were Congress, Yarnell, and Russ the DO.> and later the IC and was e/r immediately after he received the smoke report. Within minutes of responding he was asking about resources ie: engines, crews, air resources. Accessibility was very difficult to this fire. The 1st night the fire was at 2 acres.
- On Saturday they flew SEATS: T-810, T-830, T-417 and helicopters. They were competing for resources nationally and in the GACC. The T2 SHORT team Hall was ordered and in brief was Sun morning. During the day the fire was creeping and not doing much. Saturday night Russ wanted to know avail of resources: crew, engines, air...was talking about crew shuttles into the fire. Preloading... Did a 209 for 6 acres based on potential and values at risk.
- Saturday night 1800, they developed evacuation plans with local 911.They did get a slop over/run sat night and pulled everyone off the fire and watched it. Fire went from T4 to T2 incident.
- Sunday morning orders for Heavy air tankers, T1 Helo's were placed w/ SWCC and all UTF'd. Kim @ SWCC suggested the VLAT since they were competing for resources. Once the team took over, there wasn't a lot of information being relayed to dispatch. They got bits and pieces but the aviation log is where they got the bulk of the info.
- Sun 8-1000 ordered T2 short team, no T3 team ordered transitioned from T4 to T2 incident. When the team took the incident it changed to an aircraft and logistics for dispatch. Pushed against T2 long for T1 based on potential.
- Pete had a meeting between 1200-1300 w/ agency administrators. Pete stressed his strong feelings for them to go with a T1 team order. Order was placed around 14-1430. There was a problem with T1 order, redid it around 15-1600.
- ATGS informed dispatch to start evac based on trigger points.
- Around 1600 7 T1 Tankers were placed, and UTF'd. AA said the fire blew up, bad wx had moved in, trigger points had been breached and was threatening structures. The fire had been pushing down hill to the north, and then in every direction. No other fires were going on.
- Bad weather caused all aircraft to be grounded.
- 1645 Pete heard over the radio, "deployment." He grabbed Carrie the PIO and Charlie from expanded and said start documenting everything you hear. She worked with aircraft and typed

everything Alyce said as well as the aircraft. Pete had contacted the same POC for evacuations to notify burn centers, EMS, life line, any and all air craft to help out.

- B-3 and B-33 were used for this. 6AB took over the deployment site and the incident within the incident.
- AZ-ADC radios went down and they couldn't transmit/receive. The convo they heard was from AA to Prescott dispatch, she heard had lost 18. She got on national and asked him to repeat, and he said he couldn't on national.
- ATGS requested medic heli evac notices...Yarnell, People's Valley smoke was clearing ordered additional ac.
- 1800-1900 state uses DPS ship for IA, smoke cleared and started searching. Lost radio contact with DPS, there were known areas of bad com in fire area. Confirmation came from Mike on the T2 team around 1900 on losing the 19. 8 min later media questions started flooding in
- All actions of dispatchers were done in a calm, professional manner.
- AZ-ADC has an open policy of information sharing and empowerment of the employee. Worst case scenarios are played out at dispatch in preparedness for fatality incidents. Briefings throughout the day, constant info sharing, and constant communication is what helped dispatch deal with an incident of this magnitude.
- 0800-1000 switch from local radios to NIFC radios...?? Reason for only AC comms...??

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Robb Berry interview July 4th at Yarnell ICP Sit Unit room

1. Robb was the division supervisor for Foxtrot on June 30th.
2. He observed south winds most of the morning.
3. During the afternoon winds increased out of the west through the Model Creek gap. Robb said that based on his time on the fire this westerly wind push usually starts around 1200 and peaks around 1500. He said that winds will be twice as high within Model Creek compared to other area sites due to this apparent funneling effect. He noted the big elevation change from the hotter basin to the west.
4. Robb said that the fire did a U-turn on that day.
5. He said that the wind turn northerly (outflows) but didn't know exact time although compared favorably with the Stanton RAWS when he later looked at the data. He said he could feel higher humidity with the outflow wind and actually felt a couple of drops of rain.
6. Robb said that the wind was "ripping" when it hit and remained very constant for awhile. He just didn't stop. He said the duration of the stronger wind was also consistent with what the RAWS showed.
7. He said it was dark to the north all the way to the horizon and grey above.
8. Robb said to compare the Meso-west/ROMAN site Stanton RAWS weather obs to the WRCC observations. He noted some discrepancies.
9. Robb thought Mesa fire engine Type 6 (#219) was taking observations along Model Creek at a ranch house (34.277161 -112.770512 based off of Google Earth).
10. He did not know of any photos taken.
11. Robb said that when the outflow hit he took out his cell phone and use the Rainy Days App and saw an obvious outflow.
12. He couldn't see the approach of blowing dust but he also didn't think there were dirt fields.
13. Since Robb is an active LTAN/FBAN (he just was on the DOCE fire (Granite Mtn) as a LTAN) he said that the grass crop seemed normal (not major). He estimated live herbaceous between 40-50%. He said that during his time on the Doce fire he had to take grass out of the Landfire dataset (made it barren for the model to use).
14. He remembered that Eric Marsh (supervisor for Granite) was the division supervisor for Zulu.
15. Robb also noted another significant wind shift during the early am hours of July 1st. He said that he went to bed between 2200 to 2300 and the fire was "black-dead". Around 0100 strong southerly winds kicked up the fire and that lasted til 0330. He said that the fire moved around ¾ of a mile straight north during that windier period. It sort of side-sloped along the mountain and put the horses head on the northwest corner of the map. It was a pretty warm wind.

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16. Robb recalls that the Type II team was originally ordered...then they ordered a Type 1 and he thought one shift was conducted as a Type III.

Interview with Blue Ridge IHC

Supt: Brian Frisby Foreman: True Brown Squad Boss: Travis Fueller and Cory Ball

Interviewed by Godot, Jay, Jimmie, Tim, Jim, and Mike 07/10/2013

Got the order @1830 06/29/2013 nd/date: 0600 06/30/2013

Left on the 29th RON in Camp Verde left on the 30th 0600 e/r to Yarnell. Checked in @ 0800 got there radios cloned, fire is on Tac 1 A/G Tac 5 and were told to hang out in parking lot until further instruction. Stayed there 30-45 min. Then they were told to go to Yarnell FD to tie in with Gary with the Structure Group. While at FD, they saw the helicopter flying people off the fire from the night before. Brian called Eric w/ GM and Eric said go to Tac 3 and gave him a run down of the fire and what they were doing, mentioned radios were bad. Trew tied in with Justin off the Helitack crew who just got flown off the fire. Justin from the Perryville crew was very frustrated OPS had been calling him wanting him to be DIVS, the fire made a run last night, they thought they had it buttoned up the night before. Trew also talked to the Globe DOC crew member and he was very confused, said they got no real briefing, no maps, como was bad, kept asking Trew questions.

@ 1030 while at the FD, the fire activity made a push from the NE direction Brian and Trew tied in with old Dozer line. They watched Granite Mtn bring fire down the hill in the saddle dot here dot there. But the AA had the SEAT drop right on the heat, Eric got on the radio and said I want to pretreat the area and AA came back with I want you guys to go direct. The next drop the SEAT dropped again right on the heat they were putting down so Eric gave up.

Brian and Trew go down the 2 track while GM is trying to bring fire out of the saddle, it was a good plan AA told GM the fire was chewing through the retardant line there were S/W winds but wanted to go back towards 2 track. There was confusion w/ Eric and AA kept running SEATS to knock it down. AA was directing tactics said it was cold when it wasn't. It was the 1st AA up that day. They were trying to piece from where they were in the saddle to the 2 track off the right, it was workable. You can hear Eric's frustration on the radio.

There original assignment was to relieve Gary Cortes, with the Structure Group. Brian and Trew came across the Dozer, he wasn't carded Trew grabbed an extra radio/cloned it and gave it the Dozer operator, DOZP. The fire had been picking up all day, 6ft fl. Trew had Ball work with DOZP who didn't know who he was working for, he had no supervisor, no division. DOZP said he was trying to be flexible with no plan. Trew made an announcement over radio Ball was working for Trew and had them go to Tac 3 because Trew had been scanning it all day and heard nothing going on figured it wasn't really being used. They were to punch the road and open it up, the

area near the grater and go towards GM. B and T went to the explosive sign and realized they couldn't go any further.

They were not at the 0900 briefing when the incoming team came in. @ 1100 they did notice buildup from the NE they were trying to bring the dozer line towards GM with the T1 dozer but were having a real tough time. It was steep, the DOZP didn't have an angled blade, it was too hard.

B & T went on the razor to meet up with Eric and Jesse in the saddle @ 1045. They mentioned they too had a bad briefing, bad radios. Travis thinks they didn't have there squelch on and that's why they were missing stuff. Travis relayed to B & T all radio commo because they weren't getting it all. Mentioned that the squelch had to be on! Eric asked for cubies, Gatorade and BR says ok and gives it to them. Eric mentioned they have a go-to LO but lets send Brendan down and Brian says he can hop in with us. B & T bring Brendan to LO spot on the knob. Driving up to the saddle is when Eric became Alpha. Driving up to the saddle, Rance called Eric and said I'm Zulu. Just B4 rance showed up, Travis radioed B & T and said there are 2 guys flying your way. It was Rance he tied in w/ Cory w/ the dozer. Asked why they weren't doing anything, said our supt and asst are scouting. Zulu had radio problems, clone was good but didn't have squelch on. Zulu seemed frustrated. Zulu wanted a face to face with Eric. He had to use crew freqs to talk to Eric because he couldn't raise him. He wanted division breaks and after talking with Eric he still seemed confused. B & T dropped Brendan off at LO spot. B4 they left GM Jesse warned Brian about the one finger that was low that had potential. About this time 1100-1130 tankers started working.

Coming down the hill B & T hear on the radio Zulu talking with AA. AA says Alpha is going to be GM, BR and the dozer and zulu is off to the nth zulu seems upset with this. Zulu gets on and says the opposite, BR and dozer with me. Eric gets on and says hey listen we need to decide and go with it. Hes aggressive because it needed to be stated and then go with it. Then Eric says if you want I'll take the whole west side. Zulu backs off. Zulu apologizes for confusion and wants to use the corner of the dozer line, he wants to establish another anchor point. GM told AA of their location and that they were anchored in!

B & T scouted the line and they did drops here and there on the fire pushing parallel flanking down. BR was never defined as working w/ Alpha. BR has lookouts and crew is at the trucks. Coming to the junction Cory, the DOZP, and Rance are there. They small talk, Zulu mentions Division Breaks, seems scattered brained AA says the fire is active to the N N/E Zulu mentions GM and BR points to where there location is, Zulu is way off and thinks there a lot closer. When AA mentions fire is progressing to the N NE Zulu takes off, they don't see him until the next day.

When they get back to the buggies, Travis has reconnected all the radios in attempt to improve radio comms. The crew witness a near miss with the VLAT and the helitanker. B4 B & T get back to the buggies, Travis feels that AA sounds overwhelmed, the air show seemed troublesome. The helos seemed to be free lancing dropping where they want, no one directing them on tactics. This is when the helitanker splits the east flank. The tankers and helo's aren't picking up the black and establishing good black, no solid anchor point. Hit and miss, spotty, unanchored drops of water. Tankers were going indirect, this is when True says were going defensive around 1200-1215. This is when the seasonals say, this is like the Swiss cheese effect...Trew comes back with we need a piece of cheese. This is just one big hole.

1230 they realize there going defense very shortly, they've reconnected the radios, Cortes was parked. They want to push dozer line to the Shrine. This is when Cortes says Structure 1 is Tac 3 Structure 2 is Tac 2 and Tac 1 is everything else. A/G Tac 5.

1300-1430 B & T drive the road Hwy 89, its lined with random people, media. There listening on A/G of the fire crossing this road, this house is threatened, this engine compromised, it was non-stop, total chaos. They had about an hr before the fire was going to be hitting hwy 89 based on the fire behavior they were seeing. Ball was working the dozer pushing it back to the Shrine trying to establish some line. The crew was working at the Shrine/ youth camp Cortes offers an engine up to help them with the dozer line. B & T come back, tied in w/ the crew, and give Ball a lat/long with the ending pt for the dozer line. Around 1500 they want to pull the dozer out to go north for structure protection. On the nth end they hear confusion and this is before the column starts to rise. There seeing black smoke, it's dark, fl are impressive, spotting to the nth the fire is running towards ICP. Jason Clawson says, "another western day" they say they have an hour before the trigger point to start evacuating. BR knows they don't have an hr.

Tied in with cortis for the 1st time, at this time he didn't want to evacuate Yarnell, the trigger pt was the ridge. They needed 4 ppl to move the buggies @ 1530, they briefed the crew there 1st escape route was to the hwy and out, 2nd escape route was back to the junction burn out the grass. Meets Trew starts dropping people off with minimal prep. ½ chain in at that time call f/ ops Musser requesting dozer up to the north it's close to homes. Trew leaves with the ranger to scout north. Brian tries to contact GM several times, GM direct 3 or 4x Brian passed on to Jesse there plan of Gm securing there piece to the 2 track. Jesse says we have about another hr before we are tied into the 2 track. Eric copy's and says yes that's a good plan, head back up here let's do a face-to-face. B says ok. He comes around the corner fire behavior has shot up. The knob where Brendan is there's smoke pushing up it. He gets Brendan because the flames were active. Brian calls Eric no response. Then he gets him and lets GM know Brendan is leaving his LO post and fire activity is picking up and were moving our rigs, do you want us to move yours...affirm Eric says. Eric says we have good black. Every minute its building, fl 30+ fire is

coming off the finger. Brian tells Trew we need to move our rigs and GM. Get to the trucks Brian gets GM with only minutes before the fire would have been on them. Everyone is moving out. Trew goes in GM chase truck calls Eric can you see me? Where the dozer line took off? We are bumping the trucks to the shrine...Eric says affirm I know where that's at (Trew can tell Eric is moving and talking that he's exerting himself) Trew tells Eric we will keep your trucks and Brendan until you meet up with them...copy.

Around 1500 there's a wx update. Trew hears T-storms developing over the fire outflow winds up to 50mph. Brian hears NNE outflow winds up to 50mph, Travis hears outflow winds N NW up to 50mph all happening within 30min. Trew calls the 3 guys with the wx update. They only heard 1 wx update prior to picking Brendan up. There's a shift out of the west fire is going east and the column is starting to develop and then lays over. When the shift out of the west the column collapsed after the wx update only minutes later. When there's a wind shift from the west, it then goes SW for 10minutes and the smoke drifts off to the sth, Travis can feel the column pulling in the winds. During this time Travis is on the dozer line. That's when Travis tells Trew, I don't think this plan is going to work, this is the 3rd wind shift. B & T get in the trucks and bump them around. Cortis wants to know if the Rd to GM is an option, Eric says I copy fire is progressed to the buggies, Also going to make our way through out escape route. Brian asks are you in good black? Eric says "picking our way through the black to the rd in the bottom out towards the ranch" Brian thinks he meant towards the 2 track. To confirm Brian says, "the rd we came on w/ the ranger...affirm."

At this point the fire was coming up to the LO point earlier the finger had picked up fire activity at the LO spot. Ball w/ the dozer never heard the wx update over Tac 3.

Brian thought GM would come down the same rd him and Trew went on. B & T went to the rd travis calls and says the winds are in my face the fire is right there so they flip around. Crew heads to buggies drive out to the hwy. B & T find engines still out there and they say leave now! Over by GM, no fire activity. Column starts to lay down, smoky, the split the helicopter did earlier, is now evident. Extreme fire behavior spot fire to the NW of them. Winds are howling, embers falling, instant spot fires 10 x 10 in seconds, homes going up, fire leap frogging. Was headed directly towards Peoples Valley After 1630 NE wind shift parallel to the hwy. buggies out to the ranch house restaurant couldn't get Cortes on Tac 1 got him on Tac 3 get out! Ball got a quad from FD, and was trying to get on the dozer line to tie in w/ Justin to check it people evacuating trying to get out. At manzanita and lockwood fire was already in the subdivision. There in the buggies and the fire is pushing them out. Tie in with the crew at the ranch house and hit main rd @ 1640 they make a turn, and hear yelling on Tac 1, a little further they hear yelling on Tac 5 AA and GM7 yelling multiple times. AA says unit yelling at AA on A/G stop yelling and stand by. Marsh cuts in and says were cut off there cutting a deployment site, trying

to burn around, cutting a deployment site, there is panic in his voice. Todd gets on AA and says raise GM on A/G. Focused on that Trew tries to raise GM on crew. He hears a keyed mic. Trew gets a crew member and sits him in GM trucks and says listen for anything on the radio. 1 minute later he hears click click. Brendan was w/ BR. B-33 is on scene trying to make passes calling them. Trying to get GM and pin point their location. Fire behavior was extreme. 1 helicopter dropped at manzanita and lockwood intersection then the VLAT dropped in town. NE wind couldn't see anywhere near GM location, but no 50mph winds more like 20-30mph. 1645ish is there best guess at when it all happened. Tied in with the crew at the restaurant everyone understood what had happened a few guys snapping photos of the fire not because of the deployment Brian said put them away. Started gathering a task force of medical people, paramedics, drivers, medical equipment, but there was no real access. People coming in/out all over. B & T met w/ Ball 2 T6 engines and a WT. they were told to go in and do something. The fire was pushing hard it was passed Ball called Travis and said let no one else in. Propane tanks going off, houses burning, power lines drooping. The task force was to wk off of Tac 1 and to stand by until they got access. Then Holbert, Dowl, and Clawson drove back to youth camp and they punched through.

DPS ship was flying around near GM, then he went to the grater and BR couldn't talk to the ship. The ship went to where the bladder bags were and BR hiked to them, they relayed to B33 that wasn't the site. Then there was traffic about another site and the ship gave the lat/long and Trew copied it down. Trew started running down the ridge, and I mean running. He saw where the ship set down and then bailed off. He says it was all slicked off. There was confusion because DPS told him 18. At the ranch house restaurant Brendan gave Trew the manifest and Trew had it and counted 19. Medic said 18, Trew counted 19, Clawson got on scene and confirmed 19 and then Clawson left to the home owner. Bucky and Aaron were all pretty quiet. 5 went down then the DPS officer. 6 all together. They all walked to the house. The other 3 besides Brian and Trew were Prescott NF guys who were ordered w/ the T2 team they were sent down to help.

Went back to ICP, mentally drained. Talked with IC Roy, whom they never knew was the IC. They never heard it over the radio.

INTERVIEW

Bravo 3

7/7/2013

15:00

Interviewees:

Rusty Wartis

Paul Lenmark

Interviewers:

Brad Mayhew

Tim Foley

Jay Kurth

Jimmy Rocha

Jim Carls

Air attack contacted us to back up. Air attack leaves B 33. We replaced B33.

Dispatch calls for them to launch at 4:47.

Start of day missions: From Fort Watchuca dispatched to Dean Peak fire then cancelled to come and to report to VLAT on Yarnell Fire. – 11:00 left Fort Watchuca to VLAT, crossed over Phoenix. On scene and VLAT had been orbiting for about 25 minutes before we got there. First priority was Peoples Valley so we grabbed VLAT because the fire was pushing hard downslope. This was just before noon.

Using the DC 10 and all tankers to work.

The fire was running downhill – we turn and see Yarnell and see dozers in the middle of nowhere. Not moving for 15 minutes. See nowhere to turn and see the town up country. There was confusion as to who has what flank at priority A. In structure group Z at head in Zulu said we are seeing a lot of fire. We are going.

We saw that the fire had split and now had 2 fingers going uphill north then it switches and goes east. No way we can anchor in with retardant. So we tied in to the black and came back down.

There was a crane working back and forth. 4 SEATS. We ordered all available aircraft.

Quest was asked to the pilots: Did you talk to ops about the confusion?

Answer: Yes.

Operation stated that rt flank was A (zulu)

Left flank was A (alpha)

There was a smoke problem under the column. We had to veer off. The fire was going downhill and we mentioned that there need to be an evacuation plan for Yarnell.

What direction was A looking for? No direction was given from either A or Z.

We radioed that we need mud and aerial support.

There was a smoke problem and we had to veer off. The fire was going downhill. We decided that there needed to be an evacuation plan for Yarnell.

Helibase called and told me that I needed to call a Jeff Newman at [REDACTED]. I don't know who that is. Called him and the conversation was "Hello, I was told to call you. (JN) Ok, thank you."

My main concern was that they were looking at the main fire and another finger was popping. The structural group thought they knew the fire. We thought that they needed to get in a good place or get out. A couple of guys were lighting up in front of a house. And then they mentioned that "We are going to leave".

We grabbed the first crane (716) and started direct coverage with one. Coverage level 6 the whole way.

4 large tankers were shut down at Prescott due to thunderstorms that were traveling N-NE from the fire. Trucking towards the fire.

We went to Wickenburg for fuel around 4:40 and the fire was rolling over the hill. We ordered air attack during the initial push.

Two helos were working the column and we lost the 4 heavies out of Prescott due to weather (they were grounded). B33 relieved us. We were ordered to back up from dispatch at 1645 (43). An hour earlier than briefed.

Question: Did you hear any weather advisories:
Answer: No, I don't remember any conversation.

Command on? No air to ground.

We turned on the radio and could tell that something bad was happening. It was crowning and had crossed 89 at the rest area. I was talking to Bravo 3 (Burfiend). The windshield was covered with ash due to the rain. We had 2 VLAT on scene, 4 SEATS, 4 heavies were back in play. I was trying to come under the column but the column collapsed at the town.

We were trying to get as much water as we could on the fire because, under the column, we could see propane tanks venting. There was no 2nd air attack. The crew in Division A were in shelters.

1700 – Briefing with Burfiend and Yarnell AT. Because of the weather pattern, DC 10 couldn't get in. Tom French called and said Bravo 33 was leaving.

The first time there was an indication of deployment. I can hear people trying to make contact with Division A and Granite Mountain 7.

Burfiend leaves. I never tried to make contact with the Granite Mountain crew. Running 58. Calling A – G. Internal for a while, then "we've got packs".

Hobbs from Blue Ridge on a 4 wheeler says he sees packs. They are identified and found.

Air attack shows up and takes granite and they take ATGS handling deployment.

As soon as Bravo 3 leaves, I called life flight.....crew down. Need a flight with capacity for 25 patients. Two cranes were working the line in division Z going back and forth. It was kinda nasty and charged right on through town (Div Z).

We ran until dark, all propane tanks were venting.

Ranger 58 finds the crew and called. 18 confirmed.

Peterson reported to helibase. Peterson doesn't know if we can repel. I told him to be repel ready. I am thinking that we are still looking for 2 but don't need a lifeline. It's dark.

There was a lot of press poking around. Why was there no air tankers?

Q: Why didn't you drop retardant on them?

A: Because I didn't know where they were.

I ordered all available resources. 2 DC10's were in orbit.

Struggled a lot with communication with the Arizona Dispatch.

Relayed with dispatch 18. She hit me back that they weren't reading me to call back on the national frequency the confirmation of 18. I refused to talk on national about the 18.

Ash through the rain ruined the windshield. Bravo 33 had the same problem. They are not anywhere near the black.

1st shift – normal

2nd shift – people in trouble. Going to dozer. Thought they were in the black.

Conversation between Division assignments. Division between A & Z not sorted. First turn/early in first turn just painted the head and talking that we need to grab the flank. 12:00-12:30, maybe 13:00. Not strategy.

Q: Any communication of wind shift:

A: No. It was never communicated to me. Thunder storms/going downhill toward town.

There wasn't much we could do under the column. We shut down the fixed wing. Helo made a couple of runs. The windshield was too dirty.

Q: What was odd?

A: Confusion as to division assignment.

Structure group/rough place, nice houses/not attentive. Be in a good spot or leave. They couldn't comprehend that the fire had split and fire behavior was going down. They were on their own Tactical plan. Dozier going in direct or indirect was pushing open the two track. Pilot said the dozer was stopped.

Did not see it spotting, it was running like a grass fire.

INTERVIEW
July 9, 2013
1700

Interviewees:

Bravo 33
John Burfiend-ATS Specialist
Clint Clauson – ATS Trainee
Thomas French – AT Specialist

Interviewers:

Mike Dudley
Brad Mayhew
Tim Foley
Jay Kurth
Jimmy Rocha

We were ordered as lead air attack to relieve Bravo 3. Clint did record a few times on air tankers departing and when the frantic call was made.

Just before 14 (NM time) we got the call. Ordered to standby on the 30th. Got a call at 13:50, by the time I strapped on my knee board it was 14:05. I knew we needed to leave now, not hang around for an hour or so, and go direct to the fire. I had lat. and long. Knew air attack moved up to perform lead. It took 1 hour 10 minutes to arrive on scene. Received change out briefing from Bravo 3. It was fairly quick. Bravo 3 left after 10 minute change out brief. Immediately got with air attack and confirmed what they wanted. Confirmed an indirect return line that Bravo 3 had stared. Confirmed that we had control of helos. We were dropping close to horseshoe dip. Immediately started 910. DC10 on the scene. Jumped around a little to put in retardant lines to protect Peoples Valley. Lines were indirect when they could have gone direct with that much iron. Four SEATS showed up now. Next four SEATS used to get in grass and a couple on the house. We ended up with a gap – didn't quite make it all the way.

After this operation, we shifted to the left flank to protect Peoples Valley running retardant lines at 080. We built a pretty good line between the flank of the fire and the structures. At some point we were told to just talk to Ops. Ops wanted us on this side of the fire. There was a slop over. The drip was successful. 1 crew and 1 engine were working. We had been there about 1 ½ hours when air attack on the scene told us he had to leave. (1700 NM time). It was a strange change out. He just said "you have the fire, I'm leaving". Not sure if I was talking to structure group 1 or 2. I remember looking up. Talking to ops structural group 1, 2 and ops.

I knew there was 2 structural groups. I wrote down 2. Tom said "hey dude, you are the air attack". He also stated that his relief pilot was unable to make it and his pilot timed out. He had to leave.

We decided we were going to go here (pointed to Div Z) and go direct. Took the single SEAT. I was confused as to whether it was a burnout or a spot.

Brand new pilot (830) went right between spot and the home. We brought the DC10 in and ops mentioned pretreating the road. Didn't understand that. Communicated that we could dial back to coverage level 4 if they were ready to light the match. He agreed.

17:30 (NM time) Made the run with 10,000. Had 4,000 left and had him tag and extend. Able to ??????????. Rough and steep where it pitched up. Talked with Todd and told him prevailing winds were back and forth. On those runs, detected the first wind shift. The air got really clear. Looking down there was more black smoke showing. Type brush smoke. Due to this, the fire blew through the retardant line. The bench had light fuels. Last drops are 16:30 (AZ time). They ran out of retardant at Wickenburg so we were going to shift to Gateway. About that time Prescott opened up.

The wind was pulsing north until a major wind shift about 16:30 (AZ time). There was a 90 degree variation to the pulses. We could look back and see the fire moving through the retardant line. Predominant wind was pushing the fire. There was a 2 mile long flank fire that was going to be a head fire.

I heard something about a crew being in a safety zone. Called ops and asked “do we stop and go look for the crew?” Ops said “no, they are safe, it’s Granite Mountain”. I didn’t know that Blue Ridge was there until we were home watching the news.

Q: When did you hear about Granite Mountain?

A: Before 16:30 – before the fire turned,

I didn’t remember the conversation about Granite Mountain being in the safe zone until I was shaving. This past Saturday I visited with Todd Able – he confirmed the conversation.

We needed to go back to the right flank (16:30 AZ time). Made 3 practice runs. Painted 2. We came around.

Got a call from Division A stating they were going down their escape route to the safety zone. Didn’t know Division A was the superintendent of the Granite Mountain hot shots. Asked him “is everything OK?” He replied “everything is ok, just heading to the safety zone”. We came around, made a practice run through the bowl, west to east. I was talking to Tom about the rising terrain on exit. Division A called and said “that is what we are looking for, that is exactly right”. Within 5 minutes of that, they went in shelter.

16:42 Division A radioed that they were going in shelters. Heard a frantic call from Granite Mountain 7 to Air Attack told him to calm down. 20 minutes from that call to when they deployed. There was a period of 10-15 minutes where there were no air tankers in the area. I made a right hand pattern. In my mind Granite Mountain was OK.

We made the run and exited to the left as long as we had the visibility. We never saw 3 buildings in a cleared out complex.

Q: Do you remember what the frantic call was? No answer

The supervisor was dead calm about 5 minutes before they sheltered. By the time the tanker showed up both retardant lines were compromised. I told Tom “lets fly something further down”. Did the run. I think 910 had us in sight. We were right here (pointed at map) when Granite Mountain 7 called screaming in the radio. Ops said “are you getting this? I told Granite Mountain 7 “you need to calm down. I can’t understand you”. Immediately Division A called and said “we are starting a burn out, we are getting in our shelters. I said we got people in trouble. Tanker called and said I got you in sight. I

claimed out – the DC10 swung wide. I looked at John and he did this (slash across the throat). I told Kevin to stand by copy, taking it around. We have a crew in trouble. We are going to go look. I put the DC10 in a holding pattern because we had 2 helos in the area (1735) low on fuel. Cleared them to the dip site to drop their bucket. It was just a sea of black and we needed the helos up. At first KA wanted to get the bucket but John said “no, we need to find these guys”. KA couldn’t see the rigs, there was too much smoke. “Copy, you are getting in your shelter, listen for the aircraft, we don’t know where you are”. After 1 minute he said again “we are going into shelters”. At one point 910 thought her heard him call but there was too much noise.....maybe not. I kept calling and looking.....nothing.

Never say them earlier. I didn’t know they were there. Air attack didn’t tell me there were resources in the area.

On the 3rd run, I heard the crew. There was about two minutes between runs. Smoke was the issue not the fire. I called dispatch and told them that we have multiple shelter deployments and the started asking questions. I told them “do not call me for any more information. I don’t have any”.

I also didn’t know the guys were weathered in in Prescott. Dispatch said do you want Prescott? I said yes.

At 16:45 Arizona time, I realized that we weren’t going to make it. We were running low on fuel. So we used reserves. We dropped 910 at 17:00 Arizona time. Bravo 3 saw us drop the DC10. I didn’t know that it was a shot crew. There was no more talk with ops. Rusty called, he was holding 7 miles out and asked “do you want me to hold”? Told him “no, come in”. Arizona 1724 was pulling to park and shutting down.

The weather was the weirdest shit I have ever been a part of. The last run, the air was solid. It should have been turbulent. Never any down air – no turbulence – no soft air. On the way back to Prescott, we got hammered. It was really rough air. We were under a cell. We had rain on the windshield and ash. The Jag is streaked with ashy water. The rain was coming through the ash.

The retardant line was tied into the black. I thought that was weird.

I never got divisions from the briefing. Didn’t know there were divisions. Thought it was a Type 3 incident. I didn’t recognize Todd’s voice. I didn’t know anybody was taking any action on the fire.

Division A was so calm, clear and concise. Just in a little bit of a hurry. Then 5 minutes later “we need help”.

Granite Mountain 7 was the squad boss.

There was a wind shift and it really helped it be a severe fire. Last came around side. It was lit backing when we came back around, it was a different fire. This was the busiest fire on the air to ground for some reason. It had a pace.....very busy. Pluses were occurring. The timing of the fire was hitting structures at different points. Because of the attitude, I was working hard trying to stay 3 drops in front of Tom. Working my ass off and getting it kicked.

Marty Cole
11:40 PM
July 12, 2013

Interviewers:

Randy Okon
Jimmy Rocha
Jay Kurth

I was a City of Prescott employee for 27 years. I retired 2 years ago. I have 24 years in wild land fire. Eric Marsh and I started the Granite Mountain Crew.

On July 29, at 1:30, Glen Jokie, the IC for the Type 3 teams called and asked if I could come to Yarnell as Safety Officer. I told him that when I got the order, I would go. 15 minutes later Tony Sciacca called and said he was on his way. I could see smoke.

1200-1230 While I was at home, the smoke increased – it had two heads – columns. It was 45-50 miles to Yarnell from Chino Valley. I hit a big rain storm on the way. It rained hard on the Doce fire too. South of Skull Valley the wind got 40+ mph.

I called Tony and left him a message about the weather. I also called Daryl and left him a message about the weather. I called Glen, he wasn't on the fire. The wind was howling, headed in that direction. The smoke was thick.

1600 I arrived at ICP at the school and check in. They were dropping helos at the back door of the school. There was no one to clone the radios. There was a large volume of fire coming off of the hill. Between ICP and Yarnell a little bit of raindrops were hitting the windshield.

I came across a State of Arizona guy and thought that he might be able to clone my radio. He had a ghostly look on his face. I could hear screaming in the radio and the pilot telling him to calm down. Shortly, I heard Eric say they were going to deploy and that he would call when they were in their shelters. I know Eric, he is very excitable but he was calm. About 16:40 Granite 7 called. I didn't know who it was. Heard TA try to get intel. I left there and went to the restaurant. I saw Blue Ridge and found out that Granite Mountain had deployed. Blue Ridge had Brendon. I put his gear in my truck and said I would take care of him.

17:22 A team was organized with Cougar Caruthers as medical. We ordered 4 helos and several ambulances were on standby.

Traffic was backed up north into the fire so I started getting civilians out. Got all civilians out. I never heard the location of the crew. Tied back in with Todd to get folks out because people were just standing around.

17:30-18:00 (guess) The fire was coming to the town. I off loaded Brandon and went to the Ranch House. I told Todd that the exit was going to be compromised. Told Todd that there were houses on fire and the fire had crossed the road. Everyone was trying to establish communication with Granite Mountain.

I drove back through the smoke column that was lying across the road. There was an engine sitting in the road with fire around it doing nothing. Aaron, Jayson and Buckie were going in to look for Granite Mountain. DPS had found packs but there weren't theirs.

While I was sitting along the highway, I heard Jayson had called Todd and said 19 found....no EMS needed.

Went to town and tied in with Daryl and Todd. Everyone was in shock.

I left at 14:00 the next day.

The fire behavior this year is extreme.
(NM Thompson Ridge fire, downhill crown run for 3 hrs!!)

Not unexpected though, seen it twice in last 3 weeks

Struggling to understand as to why they were there. Not generally a place they would end up.

Rory Collins
Air Attack
LDF – Roseburg
11:00 a.m. 7/13/2013

Interviewers:

Jimmy Rocha
Jay Kurth
Mike Dudley
Jim Karels

Certified ATGS
Work for Douglas Forest Service as Protection Supervisor

July 30 – Took off from Deer Valley around **7:50** to the fire. I had worked the previous day also. I got to the fire and it was 200-300 acres. When I left the evening before, it was 40-50 acres. I reported the growth to Arizona dispatch.

I contacted the crew on the ground that had worked all night. They were still in the same location as the night before. I worked the south side of the. It had started to flank down east and flipped over during the night.

I called all SEATS available. I had to leave dispatch and started working the fire again.

Type 3 helo was transporting the crew in and out. The night crew was hiking in and they were taking a crew up to take their place. The fire was backing up to the north and east. I started ordering air assets. I ordered 2 SEATS working from Wickenburg. The Type 3 helo was getting the crew out. I started ordering air resources. **10:00-10:30** I ordered a VLAT around **11:50-12:00** VLAT arrived. The VLAT was on hold at 12,700 feet about 5-7 miles from the fire. B3 was trying to chase the fire and flank it. I had to return for fuel so I left B3 as lead. B3 was also air attack. I was on with dispatch trying to find relief air attack. At Wickenburg I talked to Bob Ortland (air ops) about ordering a pilot from Ponderosa.

On the ground at Wickenburg, dispatch called and said B3(or33)?? They needed me over the fire. I left at **13:30**. Sikorsky helo 716, KA helo 749 Type 1 over the fire.
The crew was working the fire from E & N.

Landed **15:17** and started doing point protection around structures.

15:30 Experienced wind shift and the flank turned and became the head going south to Yarnell. I let B(?) know prior to the shift to move to that side and start drops.

15:30 – 15:45 The fire was headed for Yarnell moving fast to the south. They were getting retardant drops. Contacted Division A to tell them of fire condition and that they needed to move their rigs to a better location.

Q: Did he say he was in good black?

A: No, he said the other crew was in a good location in the black and they were headed back to the rigs.

16:17 Left the fire after the 2nd cycle. The lead assumed AA cropping. Landed in Deer Valley drove to Arizona dispatch. Gave all of my information to Ortland.

Heard of the burnover over the radio while in the dispatch office.

Q: Did you have any more conversations with Division A?

A: I mainly talked to Div. A in the morning. I didn't know his name or crew. It took them about two hours to get to the anchor point on the ridge.

Q: What tactics were discussed?

A: To hold the south flank of the fire – dropping SEATS. There was small burnout beyond my retardant line. He did a small burnout and I dropped on it to keep it under control. He was going to burn off the trail on the ridge to keep the fire to the east. He decided to stop the burnout and build line.

The rigs had ample time to drive out.

Q: Was there any discussion with Div. Z?

A: Yes, saw a crew from Z and A running fire north and south. No one explained the breaks. I did get a contact for the structural protection group (2) and had contact with them as well.

Q: As you got ready to leave on the second cycle, which unit were you talking to?

A: B33

Gary Cordis
1300
July 12, 2013

Interviewers:

Randy Okot
Jimmy Rocha
Jay Kurth

Got a phone call on the 29th at 22:30 from dispatch. They left a message that I was being dispatched to Yarnell for Structure Protection.

23:40 Arrived and was assigned structure protection for Yarnell.

12:00

- The fire laid down.
- Driving the roads to learn the town
- Lot of overgrown yards and undefendable houses

0100

- Met with Russ and Dean from BLM to go over the map program
- 120-300 acres
- Wasn't a lot of options
- Talked about tying the roads together and burn off of them
- No crews
- Thought in the next burn period, the fire was going to come down the hill

0215

- Ordered dozer
- Series of roads that paralleled

0440

- Hiked into within 100 yards from the fire on a lateral road to the hill. No activity.
- Lying cold and checked by slurry.
- Heel of fire had little action.
- The fire had fallen off of the ridge and might hook to Congress.
- Got to the old dozer where there was an "explosives" sign.
- The fire had poached out past the roads they were going to use for breaks.

0600

- Reported findings of fire crossing
- Todd Able, Paul Musser, Dino Fernandez, Russ Schumate and Eric discussed plans
- Dozer line to follow E flank of the hill
- Eric wanted to go direct – south heel of fire
- Russ said air support was coming in
- Took the crews in and showed them where to park the buggies

0630-0700

- 1 ½ mile hike in – went in and worked.
- Checked on the crew throughout the day. They were on Tac 1
- Identified Boulder Spring ranch as a bomb proof safety zone.
- There was a pumpkin there.

- Returned to tie in.

0800-0900

- Dozer arrived. Took dozer I to put it to work. I didn't like that it had a 12 ft. blade.

0930

- Blue Ridge showed up.
- Dozer boss (Ball) took over the dozer."
- It was ¾ of the way to the old dozer.
- Eric said he didn't want the dozer.

1000

- Resources coming in
- 4 type 6 engines and a couple of water tenders. Briefed them.
- Task force leader (t) Tyson Esquibel
- Go to Commerce to learn structures and orientate himself

1100-1200

- Walked the dozer down to the old fuel break
- Gate to NE to shrine – improved that road ¾ mile and tied into the large boulder hill
- Going to lay slurry

1200-1230

- NE side of fire active.
- Tac 2 too busy, asked Todd Able for another tac channel. Given Tac 3

1400

- Came across the YCSO officer who said they were running pre-evacuation. I didn't know about that because the fire had not hit the trigger points.
- Went to outside of town to view fire....fire working.

15:30

- Wind event – collapse of column – fire shifted from flanking fire and turned to a head fire going south.
- Place evacuation order
- Heard of storm to the north

15:40

- Trigger point was 1 mile north of town. It was 5-7 minutes before the fire the next trigger point to get my people out.
- Spot ½ mile.
- Covered a mile in 15 minutes.
- Building a column in front of us.

14:45

- Paul showed up and heard Eric had said that the fire had crossed the dozer (west end of the dozer). Heart this from Blue Ridge.
- I couldn't get in touch with Eric.
- My King radio went out and I wasn't able to transmit air to ground. I didn't hear deployment statement.

15:50

- Contacted Todd Able, told him about my radio.
- Told air attack to drop at will and to do what you can.
- I was told air attack was having problems because of the column.
- "The fire out performed our expectations".

- Advised my crews to pull out.
- Went to the restaurant and met with everybody. All of my crews got out.
- Was told to get the guys out, you have some time. Then there was a spot and I told them to get out now.
- 2 crews heard thunder

16:00

- Entered the subdivision.
- Pulled 4 individuals out (2 old people in PJ's). Moved them to the staging area.
- Had a couple of sheriff's office people pulling people out also.
- I watched the wind change directions 5 times.
- 3 engines working on the shrine area got pinched. The crews that had hiked in couldn't find their buggies when they came out because a water tender guy had moved their vehicles.
- Pumpkin was set up the day before.
- Communications dead pockets in our area.
- Eric took Division A.
- Dozer was sitting on the road staged.

Q: When was the pumpkin staged?

A: The day before

Q: Were you surprised where they were?

A: No.

Interviewed DPS Ranger

Pilot: Clifford Brunsteing

Medics: Eric, and Charles "Chip" Main

07/11/2013 Interviewed by Randy and Mike

DPS has a contract with the state that provides aircraft on state land.

They were called in for recon and bucket work on the Yarnell Hill fire.

They loaded short haul rescue, Eric and pilot were on the ship and they left @ 0824. Chip was in the fuel truck. The ship arrived and called AA made contact on command A/G channel 16. They were the 1st helo on scene and told to stand by because they wanted to do recon. They landed @ 0854 near the windmill. They set the bambi bucket up and command was busy doing briefings, there was no helibase set up at this time. 1 hr later they called and said, it was the IC and Abel they loaded them and flew the perimeter of the fire. The SE corner in the saddle was GM and they mentioned that. Off @ 0950 landed @ 1016. 24min flight. The concern was people's valley. NW of fire was the hottest

The LZ spot Chip arrived in the morning to the helibase it was to the east of the hwy and watched the SEATS. The NW corner they were in a large field across from the dip site horse shoe and sat til 1400. B4 the flight Air ops came by and said you're staying recon today we have cranes and hewi for water drops..ok we'll sit. 1400-1430ish Abel came back and wanted a recon. So pilot + Eric flew the fire east flank it was a solid wall of fire fl 30+ main concentration was the homes to the north. landed @1430 it was delayed because the tankers were standing by for drops. There were no natural barriers, nothing to stop the fire

@ 1500 we moved the ship because fire was coming. Moved to a green hay field runs east NE side drops relocated and noticed good T-storms over Prescott. Winds were SW

1600 T-storm broke, started breaking up 180 degree turn, stronger winds 30 knots the head was slowing down east flank lit up. DC10 was dropping on the east flank. Poor como. All 3 are staging @ helibase. Eric comes back and says I heard a panic call on the radio, heard an excited voice and someone saying who's ever yelling on the radio you need to stop. Eric says escape route cut off, headed to the ranch. AA B33 GM 7 this is AA come in...tried to make contact...AA went back to dropping water. Ranger 58 asks AA you want us to look for GM7? AA gave Ranger 58 stand by. Steve drove up he knew nothing...briefed him. AA gave Ranger 58 the go ahead and launch make contact w/ AA B33 and then B3. Go through the center of fire burning to the west lots of spot fires. They had seen GM earlier so they went to their last known location.

Ranger 58 lifted off at 1716. 30min into flight on the ridge they see yellow packs searched nth west and east from that. Pilot could feel the wind trying to suck him down especially when he got off the ridge. Intense heat, especially when they opened the door. 45min into flight quads come running up the trail. 1/4mi east of ship relayed to DPS those are bladder bags. Relayed to B33 to have DPS hover over packs...DPS was running low on fuel. Very smoky, then they saw the ranch, and started descending ½ mi from the ranch into the bowl. At 1812 they saw clusters of shelters. No movement. Chip did see some bodies outside of the shelters. 2-3 shelters weren't on at all. It was moon scaped. Pilot wanted to sit Eric down but had a hard time figuring out where. Landed 300-400yds north of the ranch. 1815 Eric jumped out of the ship. Loking back it was too soon, very hot had to stick my camel pack in my mouth in order to breathe. The ship was critically low on fuel so they needed to head back. Came back to helibase and put hot fuel in there that's when pilot heard A422 (Eric) say 19 confirmed fatalities. Cliff said 19 shelters, 19 confirmed fatalities. Cliff relayed to B3 we have 19 confirmed...fatalities B3 asked. Affirm. Eric was looking for 20-22 ppl he was told it would be the crew, dozer and a DIVS. So they walked the area very well.

Eric took charge of the scene and pilot checked with him and asked are you a code 4...ya. When the pilot gets to the helibase he sees 4-5 medivac ships. They landed sth side west of hwy and walked to ICP and briefed them.

1930 off with the capt from local FD don't know who he was to get photos they put yellow tape up got photos. Pilot asked Eric if he was good he said yes so ship never landed again up there.

Radio como was poor the whole time. A/A with aircraft no A/G como or ops to air no flow of info. Never heard the wx update and they were scanning all day.

During the 1st recon, talked to AA to go in but he was directing SEATS, let him know where they were going.

While Eric was away from the crew he heard on A/G...GM7 in black moving to a ranch, several times. Excited and out of breath. Other person said hold on...now go ahead with your traffic. Escape route has been cut off, deploying shelters. 1 min later AOBD drove up and he didn't know. Eric started talking about triage, loaded up medical supplies, burn injury stuff and were ready to launch. Hold on..too smoky, get ready. New AA comes on and says go ahead. They locate the packs, saw a ranch knew based on radio como they were headed to the ranch. It looked like ash not shelters, didn't see bodies couldn't land. 500yds from the house and Eric bailed out. It was very hot when Eric got out and could see bodies. 5 shelters were still intact. Log rolled each of them no signs of life rolled them back. Counted 19 tried to raise AA A/G no response from anyone got on and said if anyone who can hear me, respond...nothing. Changed to DPS channels to relay over. Trew came down w/ a roster and roll of marking tape. One left

and went to the ranch. Ordered additional help. Asked if we could use their property...yes. 3 guys showed up started getting dark. Hiked back up the hill, the helo showed up still 18 on manifest but counted 19. Got a ride to Yarnell almost every house was burning on the way out or some form of burning. Briefed YCSO, then flew back home. There was a chain saw sitting, ground was so hard it was crunching under my feet. Total moonscaped. Talked to firemen checked around the area near rocks they had their gear with them everything was incinerated even their gloves. Eric wanted to make sure there was someone there at all times, keep the media out, make a dozer line to the site to drive the bodies out.

Aircraft was a Bell 407

Dean Fernandez

Interviewed by Jim and Mike, 07/14/2013

ICT3 qual'd brought in as a Rep for BLM because the fire was a threat to BLM land as a T3 IC, Engine Captain in Phx/BLM

Dean is AA on Reinartz T1 Team

- ➔ Went to the fire station Saturday morning also because there was a BLM threat.
- ➔ Saturday morning went to Weaver Mtn Helibase and went in the helo and scouted the fire, it looked good, innocent. They landed and picked people up and took the crew members out
- ➔ Russ the IC said go down there and get 6 people and fly them to the top. SEATS were dropping on top but it didn't look to be boxed in completely and rough terrain. Dean was acting as a Rep and suggested several times to get a pumpkin set up, but it wasn't happening...later on the fire picked up which was a surprise. It jumped the line, they ordered SEATS the Moki helicopter crew couldn't catch it the night before. Working the SEATS with Bruce Olsen do you want me to take over the fire? Dean asked Rus. Rus replied, "Am I doing something wrong? No, I just wanted to make sure."
- ➔ Dean probably would have done the same thing as Rus did though. Conditions were bone dry out there, record heat, they had trigger points set up for evacuations for Peoples Valley and Yarnell for structure protection. For structure protection he tied in w/ chief Willis, Todd, and Gary Cortes and they all showed up in the morning 06/30 along with Paul.
- ➔ Dean briefed them showed them his pictures and explained the fire behavior he had observed the day before. GM also showed up that morning around 0630-0700ish. Eric is a good friend, he briefed him on the fuels that were burning, the timeline of the fire, and Eric appreciated it. He helped cloned GM radios and they took off from there. Not sure what tactical assignment was after that for them.
- ➔ 06/30 around 0800-0900 he met at the new ICP at the school for the big briefing. The fire has been active through the night and mentioned the fire behavior he had observed. Fuel type a local had mentioned to Dean that this place hasn't burned since 1967.
- ➔ After that he said his good byes.
- ➔ The next day he transitioned with AA
- ➔ Dean felt Russ could have been a little more aggressive but thought Russ overall did well.
- ➔ Transition w/ Rory (state ATGS) he thought Rory did well, seemed like a dialed individual.
- ➔ Discussion on air craft on fire and he felt the VLAT was not a good order without a lead coming in first and looking at the steep ground.

Interview with Roy Hall

7/8/2013

10:30 a.m.

Interviewers:

Jay Kurth
John Phipps
Mike Dudley
Jimmy Rocha

You understand who I am: 1985 Butte Fire training video....that is who I am. I was running the Flagstaff Hotshots. The Carson Hotshots sheltered and then disappeared. That is another thing that happened about safety zones. As soon as shelters come out, it becomes a deployment site not a safety zone.

I want to know any suggestions – any thread.

Let's start with Saturday night. When I got the first call, I was in a meeting. Div. Sup. I was surprised because it was Yarnell Hill.

7:30 – 7:48 I think we want a Type 3 team. That call was to select a few team members and go to Yarnell

8:00 – 8:30 I called back and went through the roster. I said "I'll talk, you check". We checked 12 team members. He said he thought that was too many. I said I got another report that it was now 160 acres. I ordered two safety officers Saturday night. I don't know what happened to that order. So we are critical. Byron Kimball was ordered as the fire behavior specialist. He was the most worried when it happened. Then he looked at me and said "what could I have done".

The team order was placed, don't know when. It should have been 10:00-10:30. Left Camp Verde around 5:30-6:00 a.m. and arrived here around 8:00 a.m. I could see 2 epicenters of action. One north, one south. My initial stop was Peeples Valley middle school. Tied in with Russ Schumate (T3 IC). Russ was tired, had been up for about 30 hours.

½ of the Lewis crew were helitacked in. The fire was active until 3 a.m. so not a lot got done. The Lewis crew being extra – pulled off.

At the 7 a.m. briefing - Leader intent. I asked "where are the aircraft that were ordered? because there was a long list . Defer to dispatch center. There were a boat load ordered. The comment from the Safety Officer was "Because orders got placed out of region and you violated the ordering system. I called Prescott and ordered Tony Sciacca and Marty Cole (safety officers).

My first priority was to get aircraft over the fire. Second priority, told Russ that we stand together at the briefing. You are not leaving until we brief the crews at the middle school. Shoot for transition at 10:00. Told Russ you have seen the fire, you know it. He argued because he was tired, had been up for about 30 hours but we went to the school for the briefing. The briefing was robust. Factors: Be aware we have just experience 4 of the hottest days this summer and what that does to fuels. Tremolo Oak and pinion are the fuels. Any position you get into with the fire below you is a compromising position. The fire will come up and get you. There are also thunderstorms and micro cells in the area.

Granite Mountain was not in the 10:00 briefing. I can't remember if Blue Ridge was or not.

We were in the transition, IA phase and we were not at a point where we had a written plan. No one indicated that they were not self-sufficient.

We talked about communication and cloning radios. Will Brewer was cloning. We were using state repeater Arizona tack 1 on line for the fire fighters in division A & Z. Arizona tack 2 for structure groups. Another tack was available. I asked Daryl Willis where structures were threatened. Yarnell, Yarnell Valley, Peoples Groups and Moddle Creek. 40-50 residences were at risk, about 600 people.

Deferred transition to dispatch (Russ Schumate). Received word of transfer of command at 10:24 or 10:26.

10:45 Moddle Creek and Bar AA Ranch were given and evacuation notice.

11:00 Placed a call to David Geyer to go forward with the Central West Type 2 team full blown order. Received a report that the fire was traveling at 10-15 chains and flame lengths were 10-15 ft.

11:07 Placed a call to Bea Day and asked her to send, outside of the system, 2-3 of her best logs people and any ops people.

11:10 Called Jim Downey and strongly urged him to order the type 2 team. His comment back "how do you know it's not a type one incident?" and requested that I do a complexity analysis. I responded that I was too busy to do that computer stuff and if he wanted to send it over, I would go over it with him.

11:30 Howard ?? Caterer was ordered, eta Monday at 10 a.m. He ordered 325 lunches and dinners. 200 cases of water and Gatorade.

12:05 Gathered Command in General Staff for stand up. Buckhorn evacuation had started. Asked Musser about feelings of help. Paul Musser said "still type 2, we are alright".

13:00 Received PDF of complex analysis. Went over it 8 yes, 12 no and several N/A. 5 minutes after that the Type 1 team was ordered.

13:40 There is concern from the Yarnell side. There is a push on the east end south of Moddle Creek. Bea Day called and said several ops people were on the road including Jayson Clawson. Bea Day sent a list of members that moved with no O numbers.

14:20 Received word that the structural group was retreating. 8 structures were affected. Jim Downey and Geyer were notified.

14:37 George Cummons and 4 logs folks are in route. ETA, later this evening.

16:00 South Yarnell evacuation began with a focus around Mountainair trailer Park.

16:11 Chief Jim ? serving as Medical Unit Leader transitioned to Darrin Osborn.

16:48 Paul Musser notified me that Granite Mountain had deployed shelters.

16:50 Bar AA Ranch: 2 residences and 2 outbuildings lost.

17:00 Call from F. Barbaro – Yavapai County Sherriff Office – Central Dispatch phone calls from central disp to FF

17:11 BPS Ranger responding to Lead B3 request. Paul Musser called – all firefighters were exiting. One Granite Mountain exited with Blue Ridge Hotshots.

17:30 Paul Musser called and advised to organize and incident within an incident called Granite. Todd Able reported that the last communication with Eric Marsh was "We are on the west ridge descending a predetermined escape route." Their communication prior to between Brian Frisbee Blue Ridge and Eric Marsh "we have your one crew member. Can we use him to move vehicles? Can you see what's going on, are you in a safe area? We are alright, we are in hard black."

17:36 Air Operations chief Bobbie Ortland designated 6 AB air attack. Incident within and incident. Stated that it took too much time to get there.

17:39 LOFR Dana Schimdt working with Yavapai County Sherriff Office. Working with Scott Masher, 6 lifeline helos ordered to assist with recovery.

17:48 Report back to Geyer and Hunt. No communication with Granite Mountain Hotshot Crew and Todd Able was leading a search party.

18:28 Byron Kimble and Todd Able requested a type 2 crew at Ranch House restaurant to assist with recovery.

18:29 Musser called. Multiple structures were impacted. The fire had crossed hiway 89. 19 confirmed no medevac necessary. Scene secured.

18:34-18:41 Same confirmation from Todd Able, Byron Kimble and Willis.

18:49 Talked to Todd Able and checked on his welfare. He stated he was working on the manifest.

Suggested that a Critical Incident Management Team be ordered. Debriefing would not be in Yarnell.

Coordinated an order for the coroner.

19:16 Got Todd Able on the phone to discuss the location for the Critical Stress Management. Got a roster for family notifications. We had a hard time because Prescott Fire Department announced that there were 18 fatalities and we knew there were 19. We had to find out who the 19th was. It was John Pierson, Jr. His name was not on the manifest. Made change to 220/moved late to get air attack over fire by 0600-0630 to chase news helo off. Ordered dozer to build road to be in close proximity to the site to remove the bodies. John Russell/Scott Masher had scene specialist ordered in for scene preservation.

5:45 – 5:50 Yavapai County investigative team on dozer line and began electronic preservation of the site and capture of scene.

0800 Bodies being loaded and moved to the ranch for disposition into unmarked vans.

10:15 Granite Mountain crew with Todd Able is crossing the fire line.

10:26 Chief Darly Willis reported that the is escort moving along on 89 to the Medical Examiner's office.

13:30 Jay Cox called and said that the CISM team had been ordered. Judy Palmer (Liaison). True Brown was with the buggies on recovery.

As IC; I empower my people and don't listen to the radio. I wasn't listening to the radio.

ONGOING: Announcement that Thundercell was N-NE.

Q: On the roster you were ordered as a Type 2 short. Why reach out to Central Arizona Type 2 team when you could easily staff up to a Type 2 team?

A: I have full lack of trust in the ordering system (ROSS). I knew Bea and her ability. And Central West was close.

Q: Were you surprised by the location of where Granite Mountain was found?

A: Shocked

Q: Why were you shocked?

A: When Paul Musser called and said they are descending a predetermined escape route. I assumed it had been scouted.

Q: Were you aware that it was heard several times that he was in the black.

A: We heard "can see what's going on – we are in hard black".

Q: From your perspective – radio event announced over the radio – what was your view about what was going on?

A: Valid? There were gaps there. What I left out of the briefing was the structural groups/salvage – report was not good. Structures at Moddle Creek not defendable, same with Yarnell. Peeples Valley is different due to the change in fuels. Natural trigger points for evacuation.

These notes are compiled from recollections of, and discussions between, the accident team members who interviewed people involved with the Yarnell Hill Fire.

Date: August 13, 2013

Interviewees: Sonny "Tex" Gilligan & Joy Collura (928-245-9502)

Interviewers: Tim Foley, Brent Wachter, Tom Zimmerman, Richa Wilson

Tex:

We left about 0400, it was dark. We'd been there the day before where Joy had seen a bear. We're way off from the fire.

Went up this rocky rough canyon, dropped down above the Helms' place. The draw down the place where the hotshots died was full of brush. I wanted to go left but Joy wanted to go right. Either way was tough. Instead, we went completely around a ridge of boulders. It took us between 2-3 hours to get through it. We finally got up to an old fireline that was full of brush. I was grateful we got on to that. Probably about 0930. When we got up to the top, Marsh caught up to us at 08:07 and he asked about the best way to go up. He went on up the mountain above us. We were within about 50 yards of the fire line.

At the fire line, Marsh easily crossed over. At that point, we were going south. Joy wanted to see the other side of the mountain to see Joy's home in Congress. Eric came by and said you'll have to leave the area. Then we passed the other hotshots coming up as we were going down a ways but we were going back up just past them. Different from Marsh, they looked like they were spent. It was already pretty hot.

We went on to another mountain with a fireline. We watched from about 13:00 to a little after. Joy took about 1,500 photos. Looked up at the helicopter. The fire jumped up.

At about 12:00, we watched the fire start to take off. We timed the fire. It went to the top of the mountain in less than 14 minutes. At that point, I said let's get the hell out of here. If it changes directions, we'll be in great danger. Let's stay on the fireline. We continued up the hill. There's a level place about 1.5 mile above ranch, at the end of it, I believe that's where they left their packs. Joy wanted to go along the rim by the basin. He didn't want to go down the basin. On Congress side there's not much fuel. I understand why they went to Helms' place – it looks easy to get to.

We dropped off Congress side, then to Candy Lane. We didn't know it had traveled so fast so we were surprised about evacuation.

Joy:

The helos were dropping water and hovering to observe

13:10 dropped off Congress side but could still see fire for one hour.

They dropped packs off on the dirt rim – 1960s fire line(?)

These notes are compiled from recollections of, and discussions between, the accident team members who interviewed people involved with the Yarnell Hill Fire.

In AM: We started by Susan MacCreary's Sunday morning. Went on state land, walked through deployment site(?). Tex wanted to go up the saddle but I didn't.

Saw Eric for first time at 0807 to 0808. She asked what he was doing with pink ribbons [flagging]

We're taking left rim towards Glen Ilah.

Next time we saw him, it was 0909-0911 we were at the top of the mountain. He said soon the plane will start dropping retardant so they should probably leave. That's when we headed down and saw hotshots at 0918.

It was 104 degrees. I wanted to go the way the hotshots had gone but over toward the cattle pond of the Helm Ranch.

We were on Yarnell side when we took 37 mph wind reading. It was 12:38. Wind was coming from NE. The air up there was thicker than normal. Thickness of smoke near fireline was dense. Better on the ridge. Wind in that country always come from W and suddenly it was coming from N and NE.

He wanted to go over the mountain at 12:38 but we didn't until 13:10.

We found a pack in the black – gave it to Joanne the reporter who gave it to the investigators.

I understand why they wanted to go the easy way but it was a high fuel area. They could have walked the rim to the cattle pond.

It's not a hard terrain. It's just time-consuming. You might head in one direction – it's like a maze though with the big boulders and manzanita – you might have to switch directions, which takes more time. If they've never been in the area, they wouldn't know it. Brush was 5.5 to 6 feet tall but maybe 10 feet wide – intertwined, very dense. "A bear wouldn't even roll through it."

We have more photos we'll put on Google Drive. We're doing this for Marshall Krotenberg – safety officer with DOSHA. We'll send you the link.

We're missing an SD card; we left it on the bed. We were looted.

Time stamps: see the time stamp of the Reporter's photo of Joy's phone to see difference in time

Joy: yes, you have permission to use our photos.

Yarnell Fire Accident Investigation

July 12, 2013

Jim Karels, Mike Dudley, John Phipps

Shawn Jackson, BLM – Arizona

- Shawn got call on 6/28 and was detailed in and met engine 3665 in Uma (BLM engine). Arrived on Yarnell Hill fire on night of 6/28. Only a few acres at that time. Was briefed in Wickenburg. State Jurisdiction fire with unified command with BLM. Tied in with state IC Russ Shumate another engine 1660 and Moki Helitack.
- First thing engine 3665 did was to drive the streets of the People Valley area and get familiar with the area for structure protection. Not much smoke on Yarnell fire. Afternoon fire activity started to pick, thought heavy helicopter was turned down. (actually was weathered in Prescott). Fire now starting to make runs.
- Worked for Structure Protection Willis on north end of fire in Double A Bar Ranch. Set structure protection plan. Heard Granite Mtn say they were good and in the black. Did not hear weather alert. They were on Tac 2.
- When they did leave he felt they had waited a little too long and were too close to the fire just before they pulled out.
- Fire weather was extreme, worst he has seen in his career since 2006 in this area.

Interviewed Shawn Jackson, Phx BLM w/ E3665

Interviewed by Mike

07/12/2013

- ➔ Called Friday night 06/28 for assignment
- ➔ Sat @ 0600 proceeded to incident, e/r doing some scouting, told it was small. Check into Weaver Mountain helibase, will be supporting the state.
- ➔ Tied in w/ IC (Russ) others E1660, Moki Helitack, Tonto E58 was there.
- ➔ Hardly anything visible of fire, started more active mid-afternoon.
- ➔ Thought turn down of a heavy helitanker, IC didn't want extensive amount of people there. Late afternoon they do want the heavy but it's grounded due to wx. Fire really starts moving.
- ➔ Was released and went to Wickenburg called back and in that hr fire activity really changed.
- ➔ Chief Willis showed up around 10-1100 as structure
- ➔ He and E58 started triage @ A-S Ranch.
- ➔ AA came on about GM being in good black. Did not hear a wx alert. They were on Tac 2.

Fire weather was extreme from his level of experience.

Interview with Byron Kimbell, FBAN: 07/08/2013

Done by Lance Carbone, WTF, Jennifer Plumb

@ 0928 06/30/2013 Wx obs: Dry 99 rh12 W 2-4 G9

There was a conversation with Paul prior to Byron seeing build up from the east.

- ➔ Byron submitted spot wx w/ his name/#
- ➔ At 1402 there was a call from the NWS that called for T-storms from the east and outflow of G35-45mph
- ➔ At 1526 the NWS called and said T-storms from N/NE 40-50mph (he remembers it being a step above the previous weather alert) He called ops with wx info ops relayed to Willis, Structure Protection guy
- ➔ Both calls from NWS were then relayed over the radio on Tac1 that's how Granite got it.
 - Tac 5 was A/G, Tac 2 was Structure
 - Everthing was transmitted on Tac1, no command.
- ➔ As the fire was coming north, behind it on the edge was very calm/quiet. During the push to the north, flank was not very active. 5min later the edge had flared up to 8ft flame lengths. Then the column went straight up, 20-30 chains/hr 15-25ft flame lengths until it turned to the South. Steady aggressive fire behavior, side slope down hill and feels due to terrain driven winds, and continuous 4-6ft brush. Grass crop was minimal 1/4ton/acre. As dry as it was out there, thinking FM 6.
- ➔ At 1209 the VLAT dropped attempting to protect the homes and he has a picture of it.
- ➔ Picture South of homes is the head of the fire @ 1335 Sickles Rd 2nd Rd east of ICP
- ➔ 1516 picture behind the homes
- ➔ During the push to the north, flank was not very active when wind went S S/W flanks developed
- ➔ 1703- 1707 pic of column laying on the rd south of Yarnell
- ➔ 1652 phone call from Roy the IC, he had been following radio convo earlier and had just heard traffic about shelter deployment. Byron went south to Blue Ridge and they were in the parking lot @ Ranch House. Hit 4x with flame front moving S & E when it went through the neighborhood.
- ➔ In the draws the brush was much thicker
- ➔ 1829 call from someone...
- ➔ 1831 no need for medical attention, they had lost 19, call came from Todd.
- ➔ 3 FBANs met, Stewart, Byron, WTF. Very productive got a good idea on perimeter. Fire wx getting to field.

Lance met with Daniel Kight, DPS officer

07/08/2013

He was at Yav County SO across from FD 2030 reverse 911 advised 1hr evac on the next call.

Potential evacs...the am briefing was 0700. 0930 going to Peoples valley fire going ne wind

driven 1012 volunteer Fire Department for potential evacuations, 1100 volunteers start at AA Ranch not long after crossed the rd. Fire was w/ in 1000ft from school. Over that ridge 1115-1130 very close to school. 1130-1145 fire at peoples valley school, when VLAT shows up. Moved motor home command form school to helibase. 1430-1500 there was large cell over spruce mtn, to the nth wind shifted wall of flames headed to Yarnell. Predicted winds, pant legs were Whipping. 1550 call to supt Yarnell was going to burn all hell is braking lose. 1630 he was at ICP AA Prescott fire truck hit that rd sideways 1900 notified of fatalities. "Eric being into the helm ranch...Cortez pat was talking to individual. Crew was wking towards us Eric heard on crew net and left.

INTERVIEW
RANCE MARQUEZ
July 11, 2013
0900

Interviewers:

Jimmy Rocha
Jay Kurth
Tim Foley
John Phipps

Q from Rance: How far back are you going:

A: Initial Attack

I was ordered as Division for the Type 3 team. I got the call on the 29th but I missed it because it came in about 2200 and I was asleep. Early next morning I got the message that they needed a task force leader for division. I left Phoenix and arrived at ICP about 10:30 a.m. on the 30th. I could see the fire from Congress.

I was committed to the Doce Fire so I asked if I could go, was told no. But I told him that it wouldn't be very long because I heard that they had ordered Bea Day's team so he said OK.

When I got there, ICP was chaotic. Paul Musser and Todd Able were checking folks in and briefing them at the same time. Just writing things down on pieces of paper and giving it to them.

I grabbed a lunch and, at the last minute, paired up with Cogan Carothers. Got orders to go to the area – Division A (Eric) with vague instructions on how to access the area (off of Sesame street). I left ICP 11:30 ish and tied in with A (Eric) to try to figure out a logical division break and resources for the next day. It turned out to be Lakewood Rd. that I needed to turn down. I stopped at the restaurant and Cordis gave me directions and intel. Cordis was the structural group 1 division super. I started making my way in, got there 12-12:15??? We passed the crew buggies. The Blue Ridge crew was there with the buggies. One of their members was a dozer boss and was using the dozer to opening of the road. Went past the buggies about a quarter of a mile and tied in with the dozer.

I was trying to contact Eric but he couldn't hear me. The dozer told me he was told to open access to get close to the fire. The fire was running the ridge. I could see Granite Mountain working on the ridge in the black.

I couldn't see the flaming front. Granite Mountain was working on the edge of the black. I bumped all the way in around 1300. I asked the dozer boss to improve the road on the way out. Vegetation was 6-8 feet tall. It was rocky, a bad place for fire. I bumped out. I hadn't talked to Division A yet.

I got in touch with Eric and had a discussion about who was in charge and where the division breaks were. He wanted me to take Division A. Stated that he "had the heel of the fire and was working it". Suggested the dozer line as the division break. I asked for a face to face but Eric couldn't meet because he was way up the line.

The fire activity = flare/settle. They were checking it with retardant, going up and down. There was a SEAT and a couple of heavies on the right flank.

1400-1415: I got back on the horn with Eric to iron out the plan. Eric suggested and I agreed to go back and find another way in; possibly the Shrine Rd. He mentioned, the we need to consider point protection. No division breaks were decided on. I found that a lot of the roads on the maps aren't actually there. My conversation with Eric led me to believe that he felt he wasn't going to be effective where they were. I didn't have any resources to assign. Very initial attacky. It was very fluid and chaotic.

I hiked back down and got to ICP around 1500-1530. I sent Cougan out to get a head start.

1530-1600 I heard traffic between AA and Granite Mountain asking Granite Mountain if they were okay. They replied "yes we are hunkered down in the black".

Eric couldn't find a way to get to the fire. Blue Ridge was scouting around and asked what I was doing there. I told them I was here to find the division break. The Blue Ridge supps were going down washes etc on the ATV trying to find a way to get to the fire.

I went back to ICP around 1430-1500 to tie in with Musser. No division was made at this time. Communication was worst on attack right around Yarnell. I couldn't talk to ICP or helicase. At ICP things were very busy. Cougan said Eric tried to contact me but I didn't hear him. Cougan said Eric felt the division break should be further east (down lower). I found Paul and told him what I had seen, came to no conclusion about the division break. I asked if I could place an order. I need 3-5 shot crews, and a type 1 – IA type. He told me they were on order. Cougan called and said that structures were threatened at Sickles Rd. 2 or 3 were in harm's way. He asked if there were any engines available.

15:30 – 15:40 It was a flanking fire ½ mile away from the structures. I went back – no resources were available for structure protection. I ran into Dan Philben who said he had some stuff (type 6 engine).

1600 – The fire turned into a head fire and was coming direct at us. A little bit after that it got a hard - push. People were spraying water on their houses. After about 15-20 minutes, it got real dark under the column.

1630 – By the time fire front had passed and we were mopping up. I could see the VLAT orbiting s from my position. I didn't hear anyone say they were going to deploy. Dan could hear Eric asking Granite Mountain if they could see the helo.

1615 – Came on ATV's Casey, Jayson Clausen and Bea were at the ICP and were worried that the pickups would burn.

1630-1645 - I then asked GM if they could hear the helo. There was no response. I did hear the mike keyed and a loud sound. I heard air attack say "whoever is screaming in the mike, you need to stop". The column was still laying over. I walked out to the pickup to get some air.

1700-1730 – After that, things got pretty bad. Cougan created a medical group. I became part of it. We were order to Yarnell and rally at the restaurant. Cougan was working with Todd. I didn't hear a lot of chatter. Triage groups were ordered. A recovery group was organized. I didn't know where they were.

It was never decided who had division boundaries. Eric thought earlier that I had taken the division but nothing was agreed on.

Q: Did Eric ever say what their plans were?

A: He said they were working the heel of the fire. He never asked what the overall plan was.

Context:

- Find another way in.
- Think about point protection.
- I didn't ask him to elaborate on that fire flanking, I should have while I was talking to him.
- Only divisions A and Z and structural.

Q: Who did Blue Ridge and the dozer thing they were working for?

A: Don't know if Eric didn't separate the duties of Division & Sup.

They had to be in there long enough for the dozer to work the trail.

Q: Did you attend the 10:20 briefing?

A: No, I arrived at 10:30. I knew Hall and Musser were in command and that it was probably going to a type 3. I was briefed by Paul and Todd.

Q: Did they say anything about the weather or fuels?

A: Told them I was on the Doce fire and it was the same thing. I was never told about thunder cells or wind.

There was no weather alert from F band. I was concerned with communications. We had the same issue with the Doce Fire.

Q: Did you have any interaction with air attack?

A: Just when scouting. I asked him what they were doing.

Blue Ridge was doing nothing. Eric was on the ridge. Air attack was dropping retardant.

Q: What fuels were there?

A: Manzanita, Terbinella Oak, pinion, pine, chaparral, cat claw. 7 light understory. It was hard to walk through. It had to be tough for the crew to walk through.

SWCC Meteorologist Chuck Maxwell Timeline

(Times listed in MST)

1. Products issued:
 - a. 7 day: 0906 June30th
 - i. Predictive Service Area (PSA 2) West Central AZ High Risk Lightning Event
 1. LAL 3 or higher with RH less than 20% and Haines 5+ preceded by several days of hot temperatures and followed by steady or lowering humidity and/or increased winds
 - ii. Bolded Text "Weather" section
 1. "Areas near/south of the Mogollon Rim and near/west of the divide will see dry/drier storm impacts for much of the outlook period...with storms forming over the mountains and moving SW towards lower terrain"
 - iii. Bolded Text "Fuels/Fire Potential"
 1. "Otherwise, conditions will be ripe for significant fire growth on any new or ongoing fires, with new ignition potential and extended burning periods over multiple consecutive days focused along/west of the divide"
 - iv. This product is meant for situational awareness at all levels including within the Southwest Coordination Center as well as coordination system outside of the center and field personal.
 - a. At 1138, Chuck used NWS chat to provide this information: "Sounds like a Type II team may be ordered for the Yarnell fire SW of Prescott..."
 1. Make office aware there was an emerging incident and that a team would be coming to their area.
 - b. Between 1230 to 1430 as the storms were initially firing up over the Mogollon Rim and moving southwest towards the fire area Chuck had various dialogue with the SWCC Coordinator on Duty (COD/Dugger Hughes) and Aircraft Desk Coordinator (Kim Owczarzak). The information being shared was a two way street with field confirmation. The two-way communication occurred several times during this period with the main exchange coming through Dugger.
 - i. "I informed them that this was going to be mainly an outflow wind reversal issue on the Yarnell fire and not a rainfall issue. I pulled up the updated radar images and showed the gust front and explained its implications."
 - ii. "Dugger checked in again with the Incident Commander Roy Hall who said they could see it coming"

- iii. "All the communication Chuck heard between the SWCC aircraft and COD desks and the resources working the incident (including the IC) indicated a generally high degree of situational awareness existed with regard to the approaching thunderstorm and impacts."
- c. At 1224, Chuck used NWS chat to provide this information: "This is not for public distribution...but Yarnell Hill fire is imminently threatening about 100 homes and evacuations are ongoing. That tanker shortage mentioned earlier is a factor. Air resources are being diverted now from other fires to this one. We'll see what happens to the other fires! FGZ also mentioned dry lightning ongoing on the west side of the Coconino."
- d. At 1225, Chuck used NWS chat to provide this information: "Sorry, I meant FDC...our mnemonic for Flag Dispatch"
- e. At 1232, Chuck used NWS chat to provide this information: "Dean Peak...10 SE Kingman...also reported as lining up to make runs towards to commo site on top. They just pulled air tankers from this fire to send to Yarnell."
- f. At 1523, Chuck used NWS chat to provide this information: "Type 1 team going to Yarnell..."
- g. At 1545, Chuck used NWS chat to provide this information: "SWCC phones ringing out of control....Yarnell and Dean Peak fires being subjected to tstm winds..."
- h. At 1550, Chuck used NWS chat to provide this information: "Yarnell line lost on the south side of the fire...fire spreading S/SW now apparently with outflow winds..."
- i. At 1709, Chuck used NWS chat to provide this information: "SWCC out, Yarnell and Dean Peak are the problem fires o' the day"

3. Special Relationship

- a. Chuck Maxwell is the lead Predictive Service's Meteorologist for the Southwest Coordination Center. Chuck has worked there since 2001. His desk sits within 10 feet of the Coordinator on Duty (COD) and Aircraft Coordinator desks.
- b. The COD on that day was his former center manager of 3 or 4 years so they have an outstanding working relationship.
- c. Chuck was privy to a constant information stream that the coordinators were having with the fire resources managing Yarnell. He wanted to make sure NWS-FGZ was aware of the fire situation and he used NWS chat as the primary tool. Based on the Annual Operating Plan for Region III (Southwest area) NWS chat serves as the primary communication vehicle between SWCC meteorologists and the NWS offices that serve the region.
- d. Chuck served as a former IMET between 1997 and 2001 with National Weather Service ABQ.

Yarnell Hill Fire Investigation

Interview with Brendan McDonough

7/5/2013

- Crew reported to Yarnell Fire station morning of 6/30
- Briefed-Bad Road Access
- Briefed on fire where parked
- 45 min hike in to Fire activity low
- Going to go direct fire hung up mid-slope
- Eric-Supt to be Div A
- Supt needs a squad to go back securing edge to cold black
- Brendan volunteers his squad for assignment
- Eric out scouting ahead in front of Brendan's squad
- Steed serving as lookout and has the crew
- Fire activity picking up crew burning to stay up with it towards saddle
- Using two track as line to burn off of
- At this time Blue Ridge Supt and Assistant Supt show up on Razer meet up and talk with Eric and Steed
- Brandon states that he was back from tying into cold black with his squad and volunteers to be lookout down low where he can see fire around corner
- Rides down to area of old grader with Blue Ridge in there razor and dropped off at lookout spot. Blue Ridge Supt says if you need a ride call me on Tac and I will come and pick you up
- About lunch time hears Eric talking to crew to go back over line and make sure line is secure. Worried about air coverage and over committing
- Hears weather update from Steed about winds and thunderstorms. Eric says he can feel winds on ridge above Brendan's lookout spot
- 1445 starts to take weather for top of the hour first reading wrong does it a second time good but to make sure does it a third time turns back towards fire and notices that fire has made it to his trigger point to leave

- On his way down to old grader looks at a spot that he might use as a deployment site to his right decides it's too small continues to area of old grader
- Advises Steed he is there Steed says he can see him decides at this time if he needs to deploy this is the spot. Looks at a possible new lookout spot up hill at about this time Blue Ridge Supt shows up and says he will give him a ride out. Not in any rush to load up asks the Blue Ridge Supt if wants to talk to Crew on his radio.
- Blue Ridge Supt advised to Steed fire conditions and asks if they have good black. Steed says yes they have good black and can see the fire. Blue Ridge says they will move there trucks and have Brendan with them.
- They got back to trucks seem a little more hurried at this point. Blue Ridge supt is going to get some drivers. I started the truck turned on the AC and made sure the truck radios were on the right Channel and volume up
- Blue Ridge back with drivers drive out

Yarnell Hill Fire Investigation

July 13, 2013

Interviewed by Mike Dudley and Jim Karels

Seth Monroe, Engine Forman, BLM-AZ, Eng 1660

- Engine 1660 was on patrol on the afternoon of July 28th in the Yarnell area when they spotted the Yarnell fire and called Arizona Dispatch to report fire location.
- They then did initial attack on another different fire in the area, after that was completed (or fire was not found), Engine 1660 came back to Yarnell and met up with IC Russ Shumate. Did not go up to fire in the dark on the first night, little to any smoke or fire and very steep
- Briefed on morning of 29th at fire department in Yarnell. Went to look for another fire that morning and early afternoon, couldn't find it and came back to Yarnell around 1600. Went down to Helms ranch to locate where water tank that was set up and flagged road to the ranch location around 2000. Fire was now active and making runs.
- Met at fire station again and was sent to school ICP to do structure assessments. Met up with Chief Willis around 2300, Willis was in charge of structure protection for the north end of the fire. Eng 1660 pulled the night shift for the north structure protection in Model Creek area.
- Around 0500 to 0600 Seth said fire seemed to have gone out, very little smoke or fire activity.
- Briefed new team at ICP and left at about 1130 as they had been on fire all night. Radios not getting good coverage also had programming issues. Did hear Eric Marsh, Division A have radio communication with air attack and discuss air drops and flanking fire.
- Dispatch had them on scene but in reality they were never officially assigned to the fire.

Interview with Pilot David Morgan 215QA

Interviewed by Brad, Tim, and Mike

07/14/2013 he heard GM trying to contact AA prior to deployment

Price Valley crew/ they were pre-pos in Taos, had been doing IA's previously for 5 days when they got the order.

- When they got on scene, it was a quick in brief. The crew off loaded and they hooked up the bucket and contacted B-33 as the AA. They worked the north end of the fire, the head. The priority was the northwest end, Peeples Valley. He returned to Wickenburg for fuel.
- When he returned, fire intensity had increased, winds increased and the fire and air ops were working good with ground crews.
- B-33 was working all the aircraft, T1 helo's, Tankers, and the VLAT they were making good headway.
- He was low on fuel, in the process of dropping his bucket, he met his HMGB in the field to disconnect the bucket. He heard a crew trying to contact AA you could tell by the intensity in their voice.
- AA was talking to the DC10 briefing them on what he wanted at the same time the wind shifted and a radio call came in wanting support from AA. There was a wind shift and fire intensity increased dramatically. When he landed, his HMGB takes only minutes to remove his bucket. 2-3 minutes after that he hears repeated calls trying to raise AA. In a span of 1 ½ - 2min probably ½ a dozen times. It sounded like different people trying to contact AA. He tried to make contact but he was at the nth end and was probably 4-5miles away. The first call came in, and I would be really estimating: 1630 give or take 10-15 minutes. A lot of stress came over the radio. He was trying to communicate and he couldn't contact GM due to the yelling on the frequency. The intensity of the calls were first calmer and then less and less. At the end of 1-2min lot of yelling and screaming, hysterical.
- David breaks in and says B-33 you need to switch over to A/G.
- AA didn't know where they were, the head of the fire had gone into Yarnell it did a 180 degree turn. B33 was trying to find GM but there was no hope of getting in and searching for GM, because the smoke was bad, it was too hot to go anywhere near where they were. They were still trying to locate them but the screams had stopped.
- B33 was heavily engaged in aircraft. They did a phenomenal job with keeping aircraft separated. An amazing job for B33, it was incredibly hard flying for me. There was a 5min window where they were in a safe area..5min later, they were in trouble. I haven't seen fire behavior like that and I've been doing this for 15 years.
- The wind shifted as we were getting the upper hand because we were flying a lot of mud on the north/west end and that makes sense because we had the wind shift out of the north.
- We were working the helicopters on the NE flank.
- When the wind did shift fire behavior increased dramatically, straight out of the northwest 40mph and the switch happened less than 5min.

- ➔ David now realizes he had stayed on a bit too long. Tom w/ B33 had to remind him not to push anything because he was low on fuel, his caution alerts had been going off. B33 really helped me keep my situational awareness, they said don't push it, come back. They had my back and I can't thank them enough.
- ➔ Went to Wickenburg to refuel, the wind event had stopped. The Ranger unit had located the hotshots and he had started rigging for repel over at the helibase for a rescue mission.

Yarnell Hill Fire Accident Investigation

Interviews with Paul Musser OSC and Todd Abel OSC

7/6/13

- Paul Musser and Todd Abel were first called for Type 3 (unclear as type 3 or type 2 short team) assignment on evening of June 29, (6 acres at call time)
- T. Abel arrived 0600 at Yarnell Fire Station
- Abel began resource tracking
- 0700 Paul Musser arrived
- Discussion with Type 4 IC
- Granite MTN on scene, in briefed with Abel and E. Marsh. Talked about spot weather forecast, current monsoon weather, frequencies, and tactics with OSC Abel. Abel and Marsh discussed and agreed that Marsh would take Division Supervisor on Division A. J. Steed would be the Granite Mountain crew boss. Establish an anchor point was their first mission.
- Gary Cordis was doing structure protection at time.
- Gary led Granite Mtn. up through dozer line up mtn
- T. Abel staged Blue Ridge at Yarnell Fire Station and then assigned Blue Ridge crew to E. March in Division A.
- T. Abel set up two Structure Protection task forces for structure protection
- Dozer worked road down in the flats.
- At about 10:20 am team was assumed command of the fire. OSC Abel and Musser flew fire at 1045-1100 am and at that time fire was moving to the N – NE. SEATS were working on fire. Around 1200 first of large air tankers and VLAT arrived.
- T. Abel flew fire for the second time, around 1230-1300. At that time, fire was active on east flank and head of fire was pushing to the north with a horseshoe shape. Fire was pushing towards Model Creek and threatening structures.
- Rance Marquez was assigned Division Z and briefed by OSC Abel. He was informed to contact Div A and decide on a division break.
- Radio communication with E. Marsh, Division A, on anchor point. Marsh stated that he had a good anchor point. T Abel asked Marsh if he could see the thunder storms to the south and north of the fire's location, Marsh said yes he could see both of them and said he would watch their movement. Marsh called Abel on the cell phone and mentioned there was some intense communication between himself and Marquez on the Division break between Alpha and Zula. They worked it out and the Blue Ridge hotshot crew was assigned to Division Alpha. Marsh described Division break to Abel.
- Paul Musser spoke with the IC about the fire threatening the ICP. They moved vehicle to the back of the school to better protect the school. The fire was slowed Model Creek road and held at that location.
- Eric Marsh, Division A, calls Abel on radio and informed OSC that winds were starting to get squirrely on top of the ridge. At about this same time a Weather Warning was broadcast on Tach 1 from Byron Kimball of wind shifts and strong winds .

- Abel contacted Marsh by radio and asked him if got weather warning information and was he in a good spot. Eric responded by saying everyone was in the black, Granite and everything was good. At this time Abel held up on any further ignition around structures along model creek. Bravo 33 is working air tankers and SEATS including a VLAT.
- Abel requests Bravo 33 to check on Granite Mountain crew. Bravo 33 confirms that Granite Mountain crew is in the black. Time????
- Paul Musser states that fire has now turned and running due east, acquired a type 6 engine to protect structures, fire now running south. Air attack asked about evacuation of Yarnell. Checked on Blue Ridge crew, they were on dozer line. Blue Ridge crews and equipment and Granite Mountain equipment were evacuated off the fire.
- Musser hears radio traffic from Eric Marsh, Granite Mountain, that said **“they were going to pre-determined route to the structures”**. Musser was not sure who that radio traffic was sent to?
- LB33 to Todd Abel:
 - LB33: Do we need to stop operations and check on guys [GM] in black
 - Todd: Yes, they’re in black
 - LB-33: Confirm they are good
 - Todd: Yes
- Both Abel and Musser hear very excited radio traffic that was not understandable from Granite 7 or a Granite Mountain member on air to ground radio frequency. Eric Marsh then came on the radio saying **“our escape route is compromised and we are deploying shelters”** on air to ground radio frequencies.
- Structures were burning in Yarnell, heavy smoke, fire crossed highway 89, propane tanks exploding all as search began for the Granite Mountain crew.
- Abel moved from north end of fire to Yarnell where and incident within an incident was set up at the restaurant with Abel acting as IC for the burn-over response and set up a medical group with triage, treatment and transport. Bravo 33 and other aircraft made attempts to get into area of last reported locations of Granite mountain crew on high ridge anchor point. Blue Ridge and Prescott NF personnel began looking for Granite Mountain crew by ground search. Department of Public Safety helicopter first located Granite Mountain crew deployment site lower on the mountain and helped direct crews on the ground into the site. OSC Abel estimated the deployment site was 1 mile from where he thought the Granite Mountain Crew was holding up in the black high on the ridge.
- OSC Musser or Abel did not know of the predetermined route mentioned by Marsh to the ranch structures of the Granite Mountain crew.
- Some trouble with Command channel radio equipment after incident occurred when the resources assembled at restaurant below repeater tower. Did not have radio communication problems on fire
- A dust storm warning came again about 2400 that evening after the deployments and at 0300 to 0300 winds again shifted and pushed the fire to the northeast again burning a few additional structures.

Interviewed **Nate Peck**, ICT4 and FFT1 with Moki Helitack NE Washington;

Coleville NF assistant Engine Operator

Interviewed by Mike and Jim 07/13/2013

On the morning of the 29th we were up in Payson for severity. 1st thing he heard the assignment was coming. Flew to Weaver Mountain helibase. Plan was heli for overhead recon. Fire at the time was very minor. Cloned cables were not available so had to load frequencies.

- Approaching Yarnell Hill, working fire with SEATS.
- Making contact w/ IC in Yarnell, requests placement of firefighters on the fire. He gets dropped off at helispot around 1000.
- Informed of 3 loads of firefighters coming up and he was to stay w/ the crew to assist. By 1030 everyone on the hill. Little to no activity on the fire. Perfect fire for an ICT5 trainee. Safety zone was the black. Using Tac 1 channel.
- Working on flank, he was contacted by helicopter that IC was concerned with gusty winds. Difficult ground to cover. About 1230 reached bottom SE corner he was over the ridge and communications were routed to IC through his crew boss. IC was expressing concern with having people on the hill wanted an 1430 removal of personal.
- About 1330/1345 picked up a little spot
- Spot is building rapidly around 1445 no more shuttles. Crew boss states that he will act as DIVS because of activity. FL of 10-20ft hoping that jeep trail will hold the fire. AA comes with SEATS as 1st load of Moki Helitack arrive. Fire is just walking down the slope, very intense burning SE winds, trying to hold SE corner.
- More discussion of aviation resources, may need Heavy tanker, talk of VLAT but too big.
- Name of IC? Yarnell Hill IC, no name never knew the IC's name. (Must have been Russ) this is around 1630.
- Phone call to IC, answered by IC trainee. Still fussing about air tankers, go by title of DIVS A to talk to AA. Size 10-20 acres. Winds still out of SE, fire backing.
- Lots of radio traffic, lookout helping him w/ communication. IC trainee show up, wants him to cover Ops. Nate said no, keep process simple.
- Lewis Crew (con-crew) by this time its around 1800 fire is really moving at this time. Fire moving north, SEATS are continuing their work. Trying to secure the south line while fire is moving north.
- Right before dark, called IC and asked for intent. He was asked for his order for resources as intent. By this pt, fire is moving, SEAT dropped missed still need to tie in but no saw gas and not going to happen. Focus now is to secure the anchor point for the next morning's work.
- I have felt that things were poor at this time and little faith in IC and process. Stayed on the clock with crew all night. I have struggled with the IC and process
- Around 2300 he was told a structure group was in place. Fire remained very active late into the night. At 0500 came back up w/ IC.
- 0700, contacted his helo.

- ➔ AA on scene @ 0730, helo on @ 0800 config for back haul. Shuttles started soon after. Started running retardant on SE corner. He and IC trainee to go out on last load.
- ➔ Heard conversation of GM hiking in, saw someone standing by sling location. Thought he spoke w/ Eric Marsh at that time he was asking excellent questions about conditions. Someone made the comment that he's really on it. Mentioned that the fire had really blown up yesterday afternoon.
- ➔ Original start of fire around 0930-1000 was the briefing. At briefing with EM, he thought it was around 500 acres, covered a mile of ridgeline.
- ➔ The question asked by EM were well thought out, he was painting a picture for himself.

Interviewed **Peoples Valley, Jacob Moder, Ronald Smith, Bob Brandon Matthew Keehner** on E54 and T64 FD units, structure protection working under Tyson TFLD (t)

Interviewed by Randy and Jim, 07/08/2013

40+ yrs of country untouched by fire. –Deer hunter.

Area of ops, Shrine, old youth camp. Harper Canyon

Up at ICP 0700 w/ Granite Mtn Yarnell FD. They remember seeing Eric and Granite Mtn buggies, working off of Tac3 there was confusion about radios, lots of traffic, it was nuts all day long, com shop was bare bones.

Do an assessment not enough man power to do prep. Dozer shows up then leaves. Heavy fuels (12' plus) new pics looking over fire f/ ridge.

Retardant line had lots of holes in it. BR up @ 1530 remembers seeing them and worked with them, the plan go from house get line to the ridge line to the NE, Blue Ridge (BR) and sun valley and central Yavapai engine. Indirect line fire is north side of ridge their working south side of the ridge.

Central Yavapai + BR discuss prep and burn out to house to dozer line back to Shrine area , however they did not initiate the burn. Peoples discussion was they didn't want to do it because they don't have those skills to do any kind of burning, around 1500. That morning the fire was just black ground (little smokes) . Weather came over command 2 @ 1500 Motorola hand held, 1 BK from com shop, limited radio knowledge. No wind switch mentioned in weather report. Approaching cell and high winds they got it but didn't listen real well, vague memory.

1500 hear breached trigger pt you have 1hr from Jacob who was scouting ahead, turned out to be 20min. Jacob sees flames on top of ridge, grabs his guys tells central Yavapai, makes 2 points to them to leave then leaves. Sun Valley tells them to leave too. He never sees BR. He bailed out b4 they came out. But their water tender did see BR. At 1632 fire is near shrine 1636 pull out to Ranch house restaurant. Take pics of fire rolling towards them.

Trigger pt; 1500 they hear you have 1hr. minutes later Eric with GM says were good. They thought it was Granite Mtn because they know Eric's voice.. About 10min later Eric says were leaving the area. 1630 he hears go in shelter go in shelter.

1hr prior to leaving area significant ash fall out. Embers but no spotting watching fire come towards them column stands straight up ash falls then comes over, hectic 2 rigs 5 guys trying to get everyone out. Meet at shrine go out to Ranch

They describe fire as 2 runs, one fire flanks them and the other goes the other way. Too smoky to tell if fire was in front of them. Jacob said 2 distinct fires coming at them.

They can't hear Siren going on high/low only when there 30-40ft away, winds, fire, dark, noisy confusion.

Report ash fall out one hour prior to leaving youth ranch

Good mtg w/ chief and staff,

Tony Sciacca
Line Safety Office
N. end (1 hr), E. end (1hr)
9:10 a.m. July 12

Interviewers: Randy, Jimmy Rocha, Jay Kurth

I was only on scene 2 hours. I got a call from Peyson dispatch at 13:55 for a Safety Officer. Arrived at the middle school 50-55 minutes later and tied in with RH and Paul Musser there. Divison Chief, Daryl Willis painted the picture about what was going on.

I suggested that the didn't have an SO on the N so how about I go there and start the process.

There was a lot of communications between sp groups. Byron of F band said there was a big thunderstorm and we could get outflow. Marty Cole also verified.

About an hour into it, the previous SW wind changed and gave us some relief. It was slow changing at first and I thought "we got this". Then I got word that Yarnell was threatened again.

There was a line of fire with 8-10 mph winds. The fire was flanking then turned ¼ turn to the NE. Paul called and said it was past the trigger point and to start moving people out.

1600-1615 While driving to Yarnell, there was a lot of people and traffic. I felt we needed to close the road. The intensity of the flank was building. The wind was building. I thought all houses were were evacuated and I parked on Shrine rd and followed it back. There was a big wind at 20-25 mph and the column was laying over deep. There was a line of fire from Shrine to 89.

Got a call from J. Claus on and tied in with them.

Blue Ridge was milling around and then loaded in the buggies. The fire clearly was coming into town.

I didn't hear Eric's cry for help. Hear later about the deployment.

Jayson Clawson, Yowls went looking for Granit Mountain on the two razors.

On the fatalities were confirmed, I stood by Chief Willis – spent the night with him. He was having a really hard time.

My general feeling about the communications on the fire on the north end was that they were good. There was lots of chatter.

I didn't know Blue Ridge and Granite Mountain were there.

15:30 There was a weather advisory

Historically chaparral only burns for one operating period. I had not seen fire fun downhill during the daytime in the this country.

Fire is usually predictable. There is no predictability this year.

Russ Shumate
7/7/13

Been in Fire Local since 95.
Type 3 IC since 09
Area fires predominately lightning
Went to the fire center to coordinate due to amount of fires.
While at home, I was starting to get multiple reports of smokes. Drives down toward Yarnell
1660 BLM Eng – Bruce Olsen (Duty Officer), Fuels guy.
Yarnell/Congress both hike in fires on most smokes – 4 confirmed fires.
Two crews ordered for next morning.
Inmates – planned for day shift
At dark – flame seen again, moved crews to Yarnell.
Spot showing – bad RH recovery
0700 (Saturday) Back in Yarnell – no smoke showing. No smoke from FS.
BLM moved engine and helicopter to Wickenburg to stage.
AA to recon fires/stage helo in Yarnell.
Crew rep – recon fire from SUV
AA from Tonto – Sized up fire, no smoke
Order SEATS – About 2 acres still
Balefire fly crews in
Aviation didn't want to have guys caught there – due to monsoons – aviation commitments
To fire
1 helitack type 4
2 AFS crew boss, crew boss(t)
4 inmates
Size up – not much heat – can cold trail
SEATS finished box but didn't line road due to steepness holding road
About 1400 – getting creep on the west side
Can handle – moving that way
Helicopter could only get about 50 gals to the fire. Asked "do we want retardant?"
More creep moving – do we need retardant or water:
Plan to fly six helitacks/12 bladder bags to fire.
Pocket to eastside spreading possible spot hiking
Six helitack to fire
Reorder – AA, SEATS
Resupply – water, MRE's Dolmar, Siggs
Guy on spot picked up by helo
13 guys spent night on fire
1 SEAT diverted to Dean Fire
Ordering- Heavy AT, Helios, SEATS, crews, etc.
Approximately 10-15 acres at sunset
Didn't get helicopter from Prescott due to weather.
About 2-3 fires spots across the road
0301 SW winds – about dies
Causing run backup
0300 Acreage 150-200
Ordering for next day – 1900-2030

State has what kind of type 3 team. All risk

Complex analysis – showed type 2

Core guys

Ordering heavy for morning for structure protection. Good structure setup.

Type 4 IC on fire, Type 4 trainee on fire.

There was some confusion of organization with guys on the fire – What were the divisions?

There was some confusion between BLM/State. Are we in Unified or coordinated?

0800 (Sunday) Insert IC, OPS meet Russ Yarnell FD. 3 type 1 HC – 2 type 2 (Granite) ordered for morning. Eric was at this briefing.

Smokes, heel fire. Down in second drainage. (Plan) to anchor flank.

Plan – hike Granite from new team and Eric start handing over fire – left Yarnell FD

Aviation kicked us in – lead. Lack of it showing up

Good buildup of resources for day shift. Went to school to pass off IC.

900 – 0930 Asked to give bulk of crews day briefing. Transition to be done after briefing

- 1) Briefing points
- 2) Severity Fire behavior – burn during night
- 3) Stressed Doce fire behavior/terrain
- 4) Stressed evacuation/structure protection
- 5) Comm. plan staying the same
- 6) 10:20 transfer of command
- 7) Russ made notification over radio

11:00 started home to meet up with night resources

*impressed by column already showing – moving north, northeast

12:00 Double column

*what impressed him – the compressed time – fire behavior went from nothing to something.

These notes are compiled from recollections of, and discussions between, the accident team members who interviewed people involved with the Yarnell Hill Fire.

Follow-up call to Russ Shumate

Called Russ at his office around 1330 MST August 14th to clear up some questions about what forecast they used during the earlier morning operational briefing (between 0600 to 0700).

He recalls requesting at least 3 spot weather forecasts through Arizona dispatch. Arizona dispatch may have requested the first one on the 28th. He is sure he used the evening (29th/2033) spot forecast for that earlier morning briefing on the 30th. The spot forecast during the morning of June 30th was requested by the incoming team and after the transition.

Darby Starr (B103 Type 6 Captain)
Tyson Esquibel (Task Force Leader (t))
10:00 a.m.
7/14/2013

Interviewers:
Godot Appuzo
Randy Okon

Also present: Deputy Chief Rick Pickard, Ops Chief (Peoria Fire Department)
Gary Bernard

Tyson

Thunderstorms hit in the Shrine area.

Dispatched as the Task Force leader(t) under Todd Foster. We got split when we got here at the 7:00-7:30 briefing because they were short of personnel. Saw two smokes from the peak area. Expected the fire to run one burn cycle.

8:00

- Briefing from IC
- Previous IC and air attack from the day before were in the briefing
- Todd – task force 1, structure protection 2
- Tyson – structure 1, task force 2
- 6 engines, 2 water tenders
- Sent local engine to get maps
- Eric and division couldn't hear clearly so Tyson relayed information. Having trouble with communications.
- Eric on tac 2.

10:30

- Division wanted to send in a dozer but Eric thought it was too rocky for the dozer....would tie in later.
- Got maps.
- Division requested we go to where the buggies are. Sent 2 engines. Sent Darby.

Darby

- Blue Ridge just arrived
- No protection needed for the buggies.
- Knee high grass – sparse shrubs

Tyson

- Temperatures were 101-104 degrees, RH 10, southwest winds 10-20 (wx briefing in AM)
- All wind driven out of the south at the top ¼ of the ridge
- At noon dropped into flats

13:30-14:00

- The trigger points for town evacuation were the white vinyl fence along 89.

14:30

- Fire still wind driven with horizontal movement and the column was standing up more.
- Estimate it was going to take a run at Peoples Valley
- Winds moving S-SW

- Estimated the fire was 4 hours from the trigger point to Yarnell.
- However, soon after, evacuations started.
- Engine 131 spinning weather (Mike Godleski) (tracked down later and no obs available RO)

14:00-14:30

- By this time, the tac had gotten overloaded and we switched from tac 2 to tac 3.
- Chose to go to the Shrine area. Going to clear brush from the dozer line to the outcropping.
- Granite Mountain was on top on the other side of the dozer line.
- Blue Ridge in the middle getting prepped
- They were planning a burn out for that night.
- Wind shifted to the north and the fire started moving to Yarnell.

Tyson

- To Shrine to brief the crew

15:30

- Winds were calm out of the southeast, terrain driven. Threw dirt up to see the wind direction.

Darby

- Someone came over the radio on the command channel: Thunderstorms at Prescott with rain and hail.

14:30

- Tyson called him to go to the Shrine from Glen Ilen
- “No rules that applied to what burned here”
- Heard thunder
- Biggest thing: more advanced warning on the weather
- Got rushed off of the mountain at Sunflower Fire and Poco Fire. Wind came in waves.
- Residents told him they were told to evacuate
- Remember thinking that the residents hadn’t done anything for defensible space.
- Fire making heavy push to Peoples Valley.
- Not getting any fallout or ash in Glen Ilen
- All knew what had happened with Granite Mountain and felt a little bit of helplessness.
- At the Shrine, knew things were getting active. No hard push to the north.
- Briefed at entrance to Shrine.

Tyson

- Both buggies were here with the crews
- Did not interact with the crews
- At briefing: Central Yavapai 59, 103, WT 64, eng 54, eng. 156
- Nothing changed from a.m. briefing except that the wind was pushing to the north.
- Planning for an evening burnout around 1600-1800
- Understood GM at the top of the dozer line.
- By 1500 fire was moving back this way – not fast.
- Had not hit the ridge line.
- Could see the wind shifts out of the north.

Q: Anything over the radio concerning the weather?

A: Wind shift identified. (Tyson)

A: No (Darby)

Darby

- When at the Shrine, no sense of urgency.

- Hillside burning

Tyson

16:22

- Pulled out and met with Darby.
- Fire on the ridge getting ready to spill over.
- Spotting in and catching up.
- Fire was hitting the trigger points, got in touch with Darby

Darby

- Told my crew, if need be, take the dozer trail out.
- Last to leave with the hot shots
- Shots frantic, one screaming to get out
- Lookout hearing saws below them and thought it was Blue Ridge
- Could see the flow coming from the other side of the hill.
- About the time to pull out, got hit with a wind gust
- 8 minutes to load
- 8 minutes to café

16:38

- Deployment

17:02

- Met Blue Ridge at trucks.

Tyson

- Felt like we needed to get out quick.
- Spots at the corral area
- Visibility decreased

Darby

- Another engine was here and we leap frogged with him. My guy bumped too far and I told him to come back.

Tyson

- When the push happened, we got a spritz of rain and the wind started circling.
- Fuel load too heavy to hike through
- Too much time to organize the burnout on the way out
- No place to tie in
- Thought about laying fire on the way out but decided against it.
- Didn't know where the other crew was
- We were there to cut line only
- No torches

16:20 – 16:22 was the big change point. Went from 4 hrs trigger pt. to minutes...

Prescott N.F Interview about green-up dates July 10th 2013

I talked to Barry Wallace (RAWS man and assistant center manager/been there since 2001) who is an employee for the Prescott N.F.

Greenup is bi-modal or occurs during 2 parts of the year. Mimic's rest of the Southwest.

Spring:

Typically one would look for the initial greenup across the lower elevations starting the second week of April (grasses/forbs) and would continue (based on elevation/fuels) for around one month or through mid May.

By the 2nd or 3rd week of May the final brush (Mesquite and Cat Paw) would have leafed out.

Summer:

The Summer greenup is tied to significant rain and if there is enough that would typically start up mid July and typically last into a few weeks of August (get a flush of green). Not uncommon for moisture to last into first part of September.

I asked him which range of months were critical for this greenup as it concerns precipitation and temperature.

Precipitation: January-April for spring greenup and July-August summer greenup

Temperature: April-May for spring greenup and July-August summer greenup

They own 4 weather stations: Verde, Cherry (I-17), Iron Springs (just north of Prescott/Williamson Valley) and Crown King (timber) but doesn't believe they would be as representative for the Yarnell area which is their "backside" as the high country slopes down into the Phoenix basin.

He thought this year was more of a normal green-up (certainly not a strong greenup).

AZ state forestry has a fuels program but they would also be a good resource for that area.

Interview With Chief Darrell Willis - July 6, 2013 - Yarnell, AZ - ICP

Chief Willis's Position: Structure Protection Group 2

Area of Responsibility: Modal Creek and Double Bar A Ranch

- Russ Shumat (sp) (ICT3) called Chief Willis at about 9pm on 6/29 to come help with the Yarnell fire
- 2230 on the 29th he arrives at the fire
- Willis does recon
- Told IC that the fire was going to be a real problem the next day and therefore, the IC did some heavy ordering of resources
- 0600 Eric calls and advises chief of dispatch, Chief Willis does remember telling Eric Marsh, the Granite Mtn IC: "this thing is not anchored - we got to get an anchor on this thing" , quick SA on fire and freqs. (he seemed to have some minor "guilt about having made this comment to Eric) this was the last conversation he had with Eric or anyone else on Granite Mtn. Hotshots.
- Fire active all night, but not much movement
- 0930 - 6/30 fire activity picked up significantly
- [Gary Cortis (sp) was Structure Protection on the south side of the fire]
- 0900 - 6/30 good briefing, particularly good weather briefing - Byron from the state gave an excellent briefing and was spot on - Granite Mountain was not present for the briefing
- BLM _____? spent the night on the fire and was pulled off early in the morning in 30th
- 0930 made assignments
- Fire moving north at 0930 and is a concern, 1.5 mile line down from toe of slope
- They had a lot of fire established before any wind shift
- Fire is starting to flank "double bar A" ranch at about 1200 and Chief Willis evacuated his suppression forces and the ranch people (close to too late??)
- Chief Willis was depending on Engine 58 from the Tonto NF to accomplish burnout operations on the north part of the fire
- Chief Willis got a call from Todd Abbel informing him of the Granite Mtn. shelter deployment (4:40- 4:45).
- Next thing he does is drive around to Yarnell side of the fire and pray for the crew
- The meaning of the wind shift was interpreted as good news on the north side of the fire because the wind would blow the fire back onto itself in that area
- This fire was not plume dominated
- Fire still moved north in the Peoples valley area during deployment
- The winds that occurred were a common daily occurrence
- Russ Shumay was the type III IC and he was spent and wanted to transfer the fire to someone else
- Roy Hall was not that much in the loop after the deployment -he was only getting bits and pieces of information
- Eric was designated as division (Chief Willis heard this over the radio)
- There was some "confusion" going on between adjacent divisions
- Eric seemed angry at division zulu

- Granite Mt. crew was assigned to Prescott NF on 6/29 and the forest had 8 lightening starts
- On Sunday morning 6/30, Granite Mt. is assigned to Yarnell Fire
- Prior to 29th, crew was at home for +/- 1 week
- Darrell described this as a “good chaparral fire”
- Good cell over Wilhoh (sp) thought they might get rain
- He assumed tx of command was @ morning briefing, not sure officially announced, but good conversation with team
- 0930 found fire lower than thought
- Russ said they thought fire was done deal, then fire got out and he was unsure where it was
- Heard rumor that the crew fired about on mile of line??