

A. THE TUOLUMNE / CALAVERAS UNIT PRIORITIES

Introduction

The 2009 Tuolumne-Calaveras Unit Pre-Fire Management Plan (aka “the Plan”) is the sixth update of the Unit’s plan since the implementation of the 1996 California Fire Plan, and the first since our 2005 Plan

This year’s iteration of the Plan is focused on the activities of the Unit and makes no attempt to serve as a Community Wildfire Protection Plan (herein after referred to as CWPP) for any specific community. Included in this years Pre-Fire Management Plan is:

- A review of the Unit Chief’s priorities for the Unit
- Current description of the Unit
- A review of recent fire occurrence data
- The Battalion-specific mitigation plans
- A discussion of the fuels, weather, level of service and assets at risk

While much of the content is applicable to the CWPP concept, the goal of the update this year is to serve our “in house” needs. The Unit’s long term intentions regarding subsequent annual Plans is to include the many stakeholders in the development of a comprehensive Unit Pre-Fire Management Plan document that meets the requirements set by headquarters policy makers currently considering revisions to the Fire Plan program. (*C.W.P.P.’s are discussed further within the Unit Chief’s discussion of priorities below.*)

Unit Chief’s Priorities

During the spring of 2009 TCU Unit Chief Michael Noonan undertook a comprehensive review of Unit policy and operations. Subsequent consultation with members of the Unit management staff and discussions with the Unit P.F.E. resulted in the compilation of the following priorities.

It is the Unit Chief’s intention that the Pre-Fire Management Plan be, more than anything else, a practical reference document, usable by Unit personnel as well as by involved stakeholders. A successful plan requires content that is meaningful and applicable to those in the field charged with making decisions regarding the means by which the Unit fulfills it’s obligations to work toward the reduction of losses due to wildland fire. The Pre-Fire Management Plan must be a “living document”; evidence of which ideally will be it being seen routinely on the desks of Battalion Chiefs, displaying dog-eared corners and a profusion of post-it notes. A Plan that gets lost and dusty on the bookshelf is evidence of one that is irrelevant to the routine operations of the Unit.

It is the Unit's view that the best means of reducing loss due to wildland fire is through the safe and effective application of initial attack fire control resources, supported by a comprehensive Pre Suppression Program. As such the priorities laid out by the Unit Chief below emphasize the following:

- ❖ Maintain a detailed knowledge of the Assets at Risk within the Unit;
- ❖ Compilation, maintenance and application of a comprehensive fire history and weather database;
- ❖ Thorough preparation of the fire control resources through a variety of training tracks;
- ❖ Full engagement with community based stakeholders and agency cooperators from the local, state and federal governments; and
- ❖ A broad spectrum of community protection efforts.

Chief Noonan's priorities regarding the compilation and application of the TCU Pre-Fire Management Plan, with brief explanations of each element (*Note: for organizational clarity the following are numbered in sequence; this however, does not necessarily indicate an assignment of importance; most, if not all, of the following efforts will be undertaken concurrently*) :

1) Refresh and distribute data related to areas of concentrated Assets at Risk.

a) Utilize this data for table top training exercises to be held at the Battalion and/or Division level during the Winter Preparedness period.

(Initial compilation of Assets at Risk data happened in the early years of the Plan. As new development occurs or previously unidentified assets become known locally this database must be updated. Only through periodic reassessment will Battalion Chief's be able to maintain their awareness of what new assets are threatened by wildland fire. Training targeted at protecting specific Assets at Risk, new or existing, will increase safety and effectiveness of fire control operations and thereby contribute to a reduction of loss.)

b) Incorporate Asset information into all Battalion Pre-Attack maps.

(The Pre-Fire Engineer is currently developing plans for a series of Battalion Pre-Attack maps depicting Assets at Risk, fuel breaks and treatment areas, water supply, road, flight-hazard and utility infrastructure, and ICS operations related info.)

2) Refocus attention on fire protection systems which are interrelated and identified as critical to the goal of reducing loss. Those areas which are high in priority for the life of this plan should be reviewed at the Program and/or local Battalion Level and will include:

a) Suppression Activities.

i) Enhance fire suppression skills through training, live-fire exercises, and post-incident review sessions.

(The Unit has a history of innovative in-house training programs, including S-290 Fire Behavior for all 2nd year seasonal Firefighters, a comprehensive hands-on LT-

FAE refresher program and live-fire training. To these efforts, the Unit will add and emphasize post-incident review at the Engine Company through Unit levels.)

ii) Enhance fire suppression tools and equipment utilizing the Departments replacement plan and through innovative Research and Development.

(In addition to taking full advantage of the Department's equipment replacement plan, the Unit will continue to encourage the ongoing innovation in equipment and technique development undertaken by our staff. Examples of past innovation include the development of Interior Fire Curtains for engines, the use of integrated hydration systems in fireline webgear, and the design and manufacture of unique fireground tools.)

iii) Review of historically significant fires in a training format.

(The Unit's history of significant fires provides a training opportunity that the Unit will exploit in the form of Operational Review and "Lessons Learned" training formats.)

b) Pre Suppression Activities

i) Thorough fire cause investigation and subsequent sharing of incident data between the Prevention Bureau, Pre-Fire Engineer and Battalion Chief's; accurate and timely compilation of CAIRS fire reports.

(Accurate data is critical to the determination and analysis of trends in fire cause and location, initial attack success, asset loss and training effectiveness. Starting with those company officers with initial investigation and reporting obligations, continuing through the Prevention Bureau, Pre-Fire Engineer and Battalions, all the way to the Fire Plan office in Sacramento, the collection and sharing of accurate incident data is critical to efforts locally and statewide to mitigate threats to our communities from wildland fire. Our LE-66 and CAIRS reports will be thorough, accurate and on time. An efficient means of data sharing within the Unit is under development.)

ii) Fuel Modification and Fuel Break Systems: Continued planning, implementation, maintenance and documentation.

(The Unit has a long history of planning and implementing fuel modification projects in close cooperation with our Federal cooperators and community based groups; and recognizes the importance of maintaining existing project areas, documenting our accomplishments and the need to integrate this information into training and pre-planning efforts.)

iii) Fire Roads: Identification and maintenance.

(A continuing challenge to successful initial attack in the more remote areas of the Unit is lack of access to the fire scene. A renewed effort to identify critical access routes and the subsequent improvement and maintenance will enhance initial and extended attack safety and effectiveness.)

- iv) Water Storage and Supply Systems: Increase availability and reliability of remote water storage and supply systems; identify opportunities for new systems; identify, document and maintain existing systems.**

(A renewed effort to increase water availability in the remote higher elevation areas of the Unit will improve initial attack success through increased efficiency.)

- v) Support of Stakeholders: Continued support of the Fire Safe Councils and Strategic Defense Planning groups throughout the Unit.**

(Since the local Fire Safe Council's were organized in the early 2000's, TCU has been fully engaged in cooperative efforts with these community groups to produce legitimate CWPP's, plan and implement fuel treatment projects, develop public education campaigns and otherwise reduce the threat to Unit communities.

Recently, two goals have been indentified and are in process: 1) a total revision of the Tuolumne County CWPP aimed at producing two documents, each dealing with a distinct geographic area of Tuolumne Co., 2) an effort to engage with Calaveras County officials and stakeholder groups targeting the production of a new/updated CWPP.)

- vi) Defensible Space Inspections.**

(A critical component of any effort to protect rural communities, our Defensible Space Inspection program is in operation throughout the Unit. Engine company personnel and large numbers of participants in the Volunteers In Prevention program are fully engaged, supported by Unit Law Enforcement personnel and the local courts.)

- vii) Continued Support of Public Education Programs.**

(The Unit remains fully engaged in public education programs; Smokey Bear programs in the elementary schools, road-side signage, county fair booths, media campaigns and others are in full swing throughout the year.)

3) Development and Implementation of a new TCU Fire Weather Operating Plan.

- a) Validation of Fire History and Fire Weather data spanning a range from 5 to 25 years past.**

- b) Utilization of the new F.W.O. Plan through the balance of the 2009 Season as a mirror to the existing plan, for validation and analysis, to determine the Plan's abilities, shortcomings, and successes.**

- c) Adoption of the new Fire Weather Operating Plan by Summer Preparedness 2010.**

(The Unit formed a cadre, trained them at the S-491 & S-59I level, then tasked them with analyzing fuels, weather and topography data, crunching the numbers, and compiling the results into an updated Fire Weather Operating Plan. The F.W.O. Plan will enable Unit managers to apply validated weather data tied to past fire history when confronted with the need to make operational decisions for the Unit.)