

# Command Corner: Fire not scouted and sized up!

By Chief Tim Murphy, US Forest Service Africa Disaster Management Technical Advisor

**W**atch out situation #1: Fire is not scouted and sized. Before taking action on the fire, the following considerations must be addressed:

- Can you personally observe the fire or must you use scouts? Describe ways you can scout and size up.
- Do you know the location of the fire perimeter? Discuss situations in which the fire perimeter may not be obvious ie spotty fires, etc.
- Do you know the direction of fire spread? When isn't the direction of fire spread obvious? (Wind shifts, spotty fires, etc.)
- Does the direction of fire spread increase risk? Talk about situations where you may have to approach the head of the fire. (Hiking down from a helispot, approaching from an existing road, switching winds, etc.)
- Do you know the fuels and their condition? What kind of information will you assume from what you already know about fuel types? (Spot fires, extreme fire potential in flashy fuels, etc.)
- Are there aerial resources that can act as lookouts?
- Do topographic hazards exist? What can you assume from what kind of terrain the fire covers? (Slope, chimneys, aspect, etc.)
- Does enough information exist to establish a plan of attack? When do you have enough information to begin fighting fire? What do you need to know?
- Do other dangers exist? Have you talked about factors specific to the area you are working in? (People in the forest, drought, snag patches, etc.). ▲

- To reduce the risks: post lookouts until the fire is sized up and escape routes and safety zones are established.
- Retreat if the situation is too complex. Review fires where you had to wait until the area in which you were assigned to work was scouted and sized up before you were allow on to the fireline.

Reference Inside Cover of Incident Response and Fireline Safety Pocket Guide for Size up Reminders.



Chief Tim Murphy

