

Command Corner: Frontal assault on a wildfire

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

Attempting a frontal assault on a wildfire is recognised as Watchout Situation #10 and is a potentially dangerous tactic. If your tactics include a frontal assault, the following checklist must be adequately addressed before engaging the wildfire:

- Has the fire been scouted and sized up? Who will scout and size up a fire and what are they looking for?
- Is your position defensible? List what makes a fire fighter's position defensible ie anchor points, safety zones, escape routes, etc.
- Are escape routes and safety zones adequate? Review what constitutes an adequate safety zone and escape route.
- Do you have an anchor point? How would you establish an anchor point for a frontal assault on a fire?
- Do you have adequate resources to complete the

assault? Discuss things you need to consider, for example, if the frontal assault fails, do you have backup?

- Are you informed on strategy, tactics and hazards? Consider what could happen if someone has a different approach than you ie, the incident commander has a burnout operation planned while you are attempting frontal assault.
- Is the terrain favourable to holding the fire? Discuss ways the terrain will influence where you will make a stand.
- Are you relying on aircraft for support operation? Any operation, especially frontal assault, should not need air resources to be safe.

In order to reduce the risks, reassess your tactics, post lookouts, identify situations in which fire fighters may be enticed to attempt frontal assault on a fire. Review why this may or may not be a good idea. 🔥

- ▶ FireWeb has an integrated mapping solution, bringing the power of own GIS systems into the dispatch and reporting function. This allows for the grouping of all incident information on a single record, multi-day fires included. Occurrence book entries, media such as photos, videos and voice notes as well as polygons and attachments all archived with the incident for audit purpose. FireWeb serves as a powerful statistics database allowing for a wide variety of reports ranging from incident hotspot reports through to trend analysis reports.

LEFPA manages all different resources, either owned or contracted, from an aerial and ground resource

perspective and generate performance reports on resources and associated drivers and/or pilots. Log book entries can be exported for a period or resource and analysed per incident, per region, per dispatcher, per dispatch centre, per season etc. Tariffs can be allocated and real-time cost estimates performed for incidents from a manpower, aviation and vehicle perspective and FPA responses linked to a member fire, saving time in populating that data a second time (for the member).

The FireWeb Live Chat assists service providers, other dispatch centres and other services using the same product as well as members. FireWeb has a mobile reporting application that enables foresters and other members to capture their incidents/fire (emergency and controlled) with information such as: description, location, time, photos, videos, voice notes, polygons with estimated hectares/metres and additional reporting meta required.

The FireWeb system offers major time saving in collecting captain's logs, route forms and other FPA supporting documentation as the incident is simply linked and allows for the uploading of all supporting evidence for inclusion in reporting or for audit queries ie insurance etc.

Scheepers concluded, "LEFPA has a very successful awareness programme in the farming community and the old 'Bokkie' has now become a super hero". 🔥

