



"Providing leadership and direction to all members
of the Los Angeles County Fire Department"

OVERVIEW – DIVISION 8 / TONNER CANYON BRUSH SCRIMMAGE

*By Ron Watson, Battalion Chief
Battalion 19, Division 8*

In June 2004, Division 8 conducted its First Annual Wildland/Brush Scrimmage in the Tonner Canyon area of Diamond Bar. Focusing on multi-agency interaction, cooperation and participation, the three-day scrimmage brought together members from Los Angeles County Fire Department Battalions 19, 12, 15, Air & Wildland Division (Camps Section and Air Operations), Command and Control Division and members of Orange County Fire Authority, Brea Fire Department and Chino Valley Independent Fire District.

As the 2004 Wildland/Brush season has rapidly approached, Assistant Fire Chief John Nieto provided the motivation and direction for his subordinate Battalion Chiefs in Battalion 19 to design and develop the Scrimmage. Chief Nieto's routine dialogue and strong relationships with the landowners and occupants (to include the Boy Scout's of America and the City of Industry) of Tonner Canyon allowed for a perfect venue at which the Scrimmage could be conducted.

To build and ultimately conduct a fruitful exercise, Battalion 19 Battalion Chiefs Jack Rumfola and Ron Watson first prepared their subordinate personnel by conducting a series of "Context Training" review sessions during the month of May. The Context Training Program manual found in each of the Department's administrative sites provided the foundation for material used by Battalion 19 in building their preparatory training sessions. The emphasis of Context Training and therefore the Scrimmage would be aimed at enhancing functional user skills in all areas of wildland and brush response.

CONTEXT TRAINING EMPHASIS

- ✂✂LCES*
- ✂✂Personal Protection/
Personal Protective Equipment*
- ✂✂Progressive Hose Lays*
- ✂✂Fire Shelters*
- ✂✂Incident Response and
Reporting Procedures*
- ✂✂Structure Protection*
- ✂✂Helispot Operations*
- ✂✂Eductor Operations*
- ✂✂Multi-Agency Interoperability*



*Battalion 19-A Jack Rumfola confers
with Chief Officers from Brea and*

Beyond the skills/expectations outlined in Context Training, the Battalion 19 Battalion Chiefs also established a list of goals and objectives. Those included:

1. *Foster multi-agency relationships between fire agencies who share common geographic and functional responsibilities*
2. *Conduct a physical training exercise specific to addressing a dynamic wildland/ brush fire incident*
3. *Establish and exercise a common organization for addressing a multi-agency response*
4. *Identify and employ tactics and strategies specific to addressing a wildland/ brush fire incident*
5. *Exercise proper LCES skills*
6. *Perform safely at all times*

As might be encountered in any wildland or brush incident, steep canyons, saddles, draws, flashy fuels, unpredictable winds, high-tension wires and an expectation of poor radio communications set the tone for continual challenge to those participating in the Scrimmage. Although mild temperatures prevailed during the 3-day event, the steep terrain that was chosen for the Scrimmage site proved physically challenging for some participants, causing some personnel to reflect upon their personal need for enhanced physical fitness.

In each of the Scrimmage sessions, Company Officers and their crew were dispatched in to Tonner Canyon to address the notional incident. With tremendous on-site assistance from members of Command & Control, “real” dialogue between Officers and Dispatch personnel allowed for the Scrimmage to unfold without scripting. Appropriate radio reports, apt tactical assignments and complete command transfer were expected of the Scrimmage Incident Commander. Camps Section BC Vince Pena acted in the capacity of



Division Chief John Nieto provides direction to Battalion Chief Larry Zardeneta during the Division 8 Brush Scrimmage

Scrimmage proctor, insisting Company Officers maintained strict company unity, proper hose deployment technique, and proper communication and radio discipline.

Scrimmage designers added a sense of realism to the event by including the efforts of Copter 11. The aircraft provided several water drops on each of the flanks, communicating and complying with requests from Division Supervisors for appropriate air support. To conclude the Scrimmage, proctors announced that personnel had become entrapped which required fire

shelter deployment. Copter 11 hovered near and above the deployment site creating an incredible amount of rotor wash simulating the expected ‘real life’ fire turbulence one may expect during a true deployment.

As expressed in the Scrimmage debriefing session held immediately after the Scrimmage concluded, participants in three-day event found the experience to be useful, beneficial, valuable and job-specific. Chief Officers, specifically those from Chino Valley, Brea and Orange County were overwhelmed by the number of participants, the expertise and skillfulness of LACoFD personnel and simply the opportunity to “practice and play” in such a tremendous learning environment with other firefighting professionals.

Along with Assistant Chief John Nieto, East Regional Operations Bureau Deputy Fire Chief, Daryl Osby, also attended the Scrimmage offering his expertise and thoughts to those in attendance. Among the any themes professed by Chief Osby, he emphasized the need for company unity and personnel safety. Further, he expressed his insistence that appropriate “independent action” not be confused with “freelancing” and that the latter is not only an unsafe practice, it could and would be detrimental to the efforts of the Incident Commander and the Incident Action Plan.

Battalion Chief Ron Watson is a Battalion Chief in Battalion 19, Diamond Bar. Any questions regarding the Division 8 Brush Scrimmage can be directed to him at:

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Special thanks for Scrimmage development and participation is offered to Battalion Chief's Vince Pena (BC46), Don DeYoung (BC17-A), Jim Enriquez (BC15-B), Larry Zardeneta (BC15-A), Jack Rumfola (BC19-A), Bob Valdillez (BC12-C), John DeMonaco (ORCO BC2-C), Mike McCoy (ORCO BC2-A), Jorge Camargo (ORCO Spec Ops), Ruben Guerrero (CVIFD BC1516-A), Jeff Gaul (CVIFD BC1516-B), Rick Parpan (CVIFD BC1516-C), Steve Wood (BREA BC1-A), Paul Christman (BREA BC1-B)

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