

Issues arising from Great Pine tier fire and suggestion from Brigade Chiefs David Hean & Colin Triffitt

Some of these comments listed below should and will be raised at debrief level for discussion but I will mention them here as per DH request. My issues will be raised either at debrief sessions or thru the review process. I will try and expand DH thinking on each issue and will write these in red colour. I am writing this email for the both of us but DH issues are numbered from 1 thru to 10 and mine from 11 to 19

1. Dozers pushing fire breaks thru bush with no tree guards (some dozers on fire grounds found to not have tree guards but most likely have been privately owned dozers on private land)
2. Dozers working 5-6 hours and being paid for 12-13 hours (this should have been checked by Sector commanders)
3. Dozer drivers should go strait to fire and not to briefing as too much time lost. (This does not allow operators to do their machine checks before starting work if required to go to briefings)
4. choppers with no fire radios..(maybe too many helicopters being used due to size of fire)
5. It seems like STT, Parks don't want fires to go out as most are contractors. (Doesn't appear to be any real urgency to put fires out)
6. STT sector commanders don't start till 10.00hrs then go home between 4-5pm. (sector commanders should start earlier than crews to be able to get around their sector BEFORE briefing the crews. Crews are waiting after briefings for the sector commanders to go and check their area and then report to their crews)
7. Back burns lit at wrong time, and when the time is right we was not allowed to light them. (Authority for conducting back burning is needed to be given from ROC miles away from the incident and some back burns were planned for hottest part of the day and in areas that look ok on the map/computer but on fire ground things can be totally different)
8. Central Highlands Protected Areas –Dozers.....TFS said NO, Government said Yes? Who do we take notice of? (TFS personel at ROC would not approve the use of dozers in this area but a government minister gave approval at a gathering at Bradys Lake and DH wants clarification on who to take notice of!
9. Staging areas needs 1 phone number that lost the time of fire (I am not sure what DH means with this one)
10. 12 hour time limit needs to be flexible....(Crews were being told to leave the fire ground when they are timed out even though buildings/towns are being threatened or back burns are underway)
11. a person who has local knowledge of area and years of experience should be given ultimate authority to allow/deny back burning to be conducted not someone at a ROC who is looking at a computer screen. Things sometimes are totally different on the ground than at a ROC.

12. No local BC`s or anyone with local knowledge given opportunity to view fire from helicopters and all this was done by staff from outside area and some do not know anything about the fire areas. I will also raise this at debriefing times.

13. No volunteer sector commanders were used and if they were in appliances they were just "taxi drivers" for career staff with no vols given complete authority of the role even though they have completed and achieved the correct training level. I will raise this as well at debriefing and review times.

14. Volunteers not permitted to enter helicopters as they were told we do not have the correct (or any) training although crew members from outside of TFS were allowed to ride. Again I will raise this at debriefing level.

15. TFS , STT, & Parks staff who are employed in non-operative roles prior to fires should do refresher training on bush fire operations before being used as sector commanders / divisional commanders. Some are coming strait out of offices and then being used as sector commanders although some experienced vols are in this function regularly. Again I will raise this at debriefing levels

16. Sector commanders from STT with fire pods on their vehicle are not carrying water in tanks on their vehicle....(debrief time)

17. Appliances need to be retained on fire grounds during night time instead of being removed particulary when fire first starts. (debrief)

18. Outside agencies fire crews are leaving the fire ground although TFS crews (volunteers mainly) are staying on site until they are timed out

19. The main issue we believe is that approval for back burning operations needs to be given to an approved member with local area knowledge and experience and not from a ROC.

Happy to discuss these issues with you at anytime

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