

THE RURAL FIREFIGHTER

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Nebraska Forest Service

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Foresters, Firefighters, Leaders?

I have a background in forestry that unfortunately I don't have much of an opportunity to maintain. One way I try to stay tied in is by maintaining my membership in the Society of American Foresters (SAF). In the most recent issue of "The Forestry Source," an article by Roger Dale Weaver caught my eye. Mr. Weaver is Fiber Operations Manager at the Glatfelter Mill in Chillicothe, Ohio. He is also the SAF Council representative for SAF District 9. His article deals with leadership and as I read it, I found parallels between forestry and fire service leadership.

I looked up "leadership" in the dictionary and the formal definition leaves a bit to be desired—"the position or function of a leader." I like Roger's much better. As he describes it, "Leadership is influence. That's it. Nothing more, nothing less." As Roger mentions, leaders of volunteer organizations have a bigger challenge in motivating followers because, unlike the business world, they don't have salary, benefits and other perks to influence their followers.

So how does a volunteer fire chief or fire officer motivate volunteers? Once again borrowing from Roger's article, SAF recently developed a strategic plan focused on five key goals that, in my opinion, can be translated very easily for use by fire service leaders.

1. Promote keeping existing forests as forests, conserve more forests, and seek cooperative efforts to achieve sustainable forestry and



natural resource management.

Fire service translation: promote fire prevention all day, every day and seek out those who may assist you in this goal (might I suggest the Nebraska Partners in Prevention?).

2. Continue to promote public and political support and coordination necessary to fulfill the SAF mission.

Fire service translation: cultivate relationships with your rural boards and local politicians to ensure they are informed of the needs of the fire department.

3. Increase communications, cooperation and coordination, and improve relationships

among state societies and working groups, and other entities that help SAF fulfill its mission.

Fire service translation: fire department leadership should be actively involved in the mutual aid association to increase communication, cooperation and coordination.

4. Assess the activities and operations of SAF and constantly strive for improvements in all facets of our organization.

Fire service translation: this one is easy. Replace "SAF" with "the fire department."

5. Provide and promote superior educational offerings and experience to help members achieve greater competency and competitiveness in the marketplace.

continued on next page

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Fire service translation: none needed. If you're wondering how "competitiveness in the marketplace" translates, just consider how many grants or other funding sources you've competed for recently (and if you haven't, why not?)

Without a doubt, most people have heard the variety of clichés dealing with leadership. "Lead, follow or get out of the way" is a popular one (and a good one). Here in our office, George Teixeira likes to say "A leader without followers is just a person out taking a walk." My personal favorite is short and sweet: "Lead by example." As musician, philosopher and physician Albert Schweitzer said, "Example is not the main thing in influencing others...it is the only thing." What kind of example are you setting?



If Only...

How many times have you returned to the fire station after having fought a serious and/or long battle with fire, only to start the tedious part of the call—cleaning up equipment, washing and re-loading hose, making repairs, fueling vehicles, filling water tanks, etc.? You're tired and worn out and the so called "machoism" of fighting fire suddenly isn't.

As you work and recall the past happening, the conversation starts to grow among the tired and worn out personnel:

- "If only they had not started that trash fire on such a windy day."
- "If only someone had taught parents to place matches in a safe place; one where children couldn't reach them."
- "If only someone had told parents of the danger of leaving children unattended."
- "If only someone had educated people about installing approved

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Tips From Tex

Summer is upon us in full force now and we must contend with the threat of wildfires. These hot, dry days make the likelihood of wildfire even greater. As of this writing, we've had a few small fires, but that could change in a lightning flash, a flick of a match or cigarette butt.



With this in mind, the Nebraska Forest Service has updated the "EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE FOR WILDFIRE CONTROL" handbook.

In February, the book was distributed to every Nebraska fire department, the Nebraska State Patrol,

the Nebraska Emergency Management Agency, every county 911 dispatch center and the Nebraska State Fire Marshal's deputies across the state.

Look around your fire station or desk and locate your copy. It has a bright yellow cover, thus the nickname "Yellow Book." There is a lot of information provided in this book which could be helpful in a wildfire emergency. Most important is a listing of aerial applicators who are cooperating with the Nebraska Forest Service to provide aerial fire suppression. Check the list to see which ones in your area are participating. Determine who is available now before you need them.

Don't forget the procedure for requesting an applicator. Your Incident Commander must request the applicator. A property owner, county emergency manager, dispatch, sheriff or fire marshal cannot. However, the Incident Commander CAN authorize these individuals to contact the nearest authorized applicator and request their assistance. If this applicator is not available, go to the next one.

Once the aerial applicator has been contacted, the Nebraska Emergency Management Agency in Lincoln must be notified and advised that there is a wildfire emergency and aerial applicators have been requested. This will allow for the use of the state emergency firefighting fund to pay for the aircraft. If you wait until after the fire is out to notify them, it is no longer an emergency and funds won't be available. You could find your fire district paying the bill. The Nebraska Forest Service must also be notified of the wildfire, but this can wait until the next normal business day.

Now, go get out your "Yellow Book," dust it off and read it before you need it. Look through it, become familiar with the procedures, and then place it where it can be found should you need it. If you need additional copies, feel free to copy it or go to our web site www.nfs.unl.edu where you can download it from the Wildland Fire Protection section. If you need any assistance, please call me and remember "fight wildfires from the black."

Until next time, stay safe.
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Nugget of the Day

Do something for somebody everyday
for which you do not get paid.
- Albert Schweitzer -

Take Charge

During this year's Annual Fireline Safety Refresher classes, climate change and its effect on wildland fire operations was a topic of discussion. Briefly, the class pointed out something that shouldn't be news, that hot, dry weather is leading to more active, earlier and longer fire seasons and more extreme fire behavior.

Regardless of your opinion on climate change, it does seem that the trend is toward increased fire behavior. Even though firefighters can't control fire behavior, there are numerous things we can completely control.

- **Fitness**—heart attacks remain the leading cause of line-of-duty deaths. It doesn't take an Olympian effort to maintain fitness! The key to exercise is to find a balance between three components: frequency (how many times per week), duration (how long) and intensity (how hard you work).

- **Seat belts**—according to the U.S. Fire Administration, vehicle accidents have accounted for 20-25 percent of firefighter fatalities annually since 1984. One quarter of firefighters who died were killed in personally owned vehicles (POVs). Following POVs, the apparatus most often involved in fatal collisions were tankers, engines/pumpers, and airplanes. More firefighters are killed in tanker collisions than in engines and ladders combined. About 27 percent of fatalities killed were ejected from the vehicle at the time of the collision; **only 21 percent of firefighters were reportedly wearing their seat belts prior to the collision.** Obviously, the moral of this story is WEAR YOUR SEAT BELT! They are in the truck for a reason!

- **LCES**—lookouts, communications, escape routes and safety zones. Post a qualified, experienced lookout who has communications with everyone they are looking out for and make sure everyone—EVERYONE—knows where the safety zone is and how to get there. Every time, every fire.

- **Weather**—you can't control the weather, but you can control how often you monitor it. Your senses are a good start, but actual weather observations are better. Make sure the firefighters on the line have a way to take weather observations—a belt weather kit or electronic weather meter.

How's your Situational Awareness for Critical Fire Weather?

Lenticular
Warm, gusty winds

Virga
Erratic, gusty winds

Cumulonimbus
Lightning and unpredictable winds

Look to the sky
It could save your life!

There are a number of other things within your control: condition of your PPE, truck maintenance, training level, etc. The point is to take charge of the things within your control to be better prepared to deal with what the fire throws at us.

Everyone goes home.

"If Only..." continued from previous page metal covers on burn barrels!"

IF ONLY! Two words with so much meaning but **TOO LATE!** (Firefighters fought the blaze and extinguished it, but the community suffered a loss—time, property, energy, tax dollars, maybe a life or a business.) This is being reactive!

"FIRE PREVENTION" Two words which could have meant so much more to everyone involved! (They could have prevented the tragedy. This is being proactive!)

ONE WORD—"SOMEONE" Why didn't someone inform the people of the dangers?

ONE WORD—"YOU" Why didn't you, Mr. or Mrs. Firefighter, inform your community about the perils of fire and how to prevent them?

ONE MORE WORD—"WHY?" You vowed as a firefighter to save lives and property!

Bob E. Vogltance
Prevention-Public Fire Education



Happy Birthday Smokey!



August 9, 2009

Sandy's Corner

Where is the summer going? It is mid-July already; the flowers are in bloom, tomatoes are turning red and for me right now—life is good. My mind then reminds me that it won't be long before the weatherman/woman will be forecasting frost. Living in a state that has a longer growing season is looking better and better with each day.

Online reporting is going well as we



continue each month to add fire chiefs and departments willing to report online. We've had

very few problems with the on-line reporting and what began several years ago as a major change for all of you (and me) has now become run of the mill. You've adapted really well to this "new way of doing things," and I want to say thank you. You are all great to work with and your willingness to do reporting via the Internet has really been appreciated!

I've been on the phone quite a bit lately in an attempt to get officers' (Fire Chief, RFD President and Secre./Treas.) list updated. Periodically, when

I call, I discover an officer has been deceased for a number of years and no one has notified us. Not only is this embarrassing, but it means that all the newsletters, correspondence, etc., during those years has been going to the wrong place. So, please help me out by calling and letting me know when someone has passed away. Not only does this help me get my files updated, but it also gives us the opportunity to send a note of condolences to the family thanking them for this person's service to the community.

During the past several years, rural addresses throughout the state are being converted to the new 911 addresses, and we are now down to just a few areas. Some postmasters/mistresses are nice and will let us know when an address has changed, but not all do this. I'm asking each of you to please check your address on the outside of this newsletter, and if it is not correct, please let me know either by e-mail (slineberry1@unl.edu) or phone 402.472.6623.

We've been very fortunate this year to have had lots of rain, so hopefully, your fire calls will be down. Have a nice, pleasant summer and most importantly—stay safe!

50/50 Grants Update



Funding for the 2009 Volunteer Fire Assistance Grants was finally received in late May. Award letters were sent out shortly following this. As a reminder, the due date for completion of approved projects is September 18, 2009. If you have any problems meeting that deadline or if you are no longer able to utilize the funding, please contact Don Westover, Fire Program Leader, as early as you can at 402.472.6629 or dwestover1@unl.edu. "Leftover" or returned grants are awarded to additional fire departments who applied but may not have received funding in the first round.



Calendar of Events

- Aug 8 Nebraska Fire Chiefs Association Seminar, Lexington
- Oct 15-17 NSVFA Annual Conf., Norfolk
- Feb 19-21 NSFSI Les Lukert Winter Conf., Grand Island

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