

British Columbia Is Burning Fire Storms 2003

Presentations have been made to;

Mr. Gary Filmon Fire Storm Review Committee
Greater Victoria Emergency Program Coordinators
Canadian Forces CFB Esquimalt

- Rich Finley
Fire Chief View Royal
29 Years in the Fire Service

15	Years with City of Kamloops Fire Rescue
8.5	Years with City of Merritt Fire Rescue
2	Years with the District of Langford Fire Dept.
3	Years with View Royal Fire Department

KO298 – Strawberry Hill

- Arrived Kamloops August 2, 2003
Time: 23:00 hours

Provided briefing of organization and senior staff.

Assigned sleeping quarters and feeding locations.

Given the time to report back in the morning.

We have arrived in Kamloops



KO298 Strawberry Hill Fire

Fire Start Reported at 16:22 hours
August 1, 2003

- Kamloops Fire Rescue in Charge
- Marshalling Area – Number 1 Hall
(Later moved to the University College of the Cariboo dorms)
- Staging – Not Assigned
- Crew Assignments set by Kamloops Fire

Strawberry Hill – North of Kamloops on Highway # 5



looking from Aberdeen

Strawberry Growing in Size



Strawberry Hill Fire – looking over Mount Peter



Fire Creeping Down as Night approaches



Situation in Kamloops

- Heffley Creek area Evacuated
- Raleigh area Evacuated
- Parts of the Kamloops Indian Reserve Evacuated
- and most surrounding areas and lakes Evacuated

Services

- Lodging
- Restaurants
- Power to most of City
- Water Available
- Large Emergency Social Services contingent

Assignment – August 3, 2003

My Assignment:

- Set up Staging at the old Raleigh Correctional Camp

Crew of Bush 33 Assignment:

- Put out all Hot Spots along highway within 100 feet of Roadway
- Crews assignment area was patrolling Highway 5
North of Highway 5 Junction, through Raleigh to Heffley Creek.

CN Junction in Kamloops Just South of Raleigh



STAGING

What needs to be done

- Check Vehicle Equipment & Pumps
- Check Personal Protective Equipment
- Check Passport Accountability
- Assign New Vehicle Numbers
- Assign Task Force or Strike Team designation
- Assign Specialty Equipment to Task
- Service and Support to Equipment

McLure Fire in Background



Strawberry Hill

August 4, 2003 Assigned to the Town of Barriere

KO272 – McLure Fire

- Ordered to Arrive in Barriere - 10:00 hours

INSTRUCTIONS UPON DEPARTURE

- To fight our way into Barriere and secure the school and staging area at the B.C.B.C. Yard in Barriere, which we did not have to do.

We are almost there, “What are we in for?”



Here we Go.....there is no turning back





ARRIVING IN BARRIERE

Situation in Barriere - McLure

- Barriere Evacuated
- McLure Evacuated
- Louis Creek Evacuated and Devastated
- Surrounding areas and lakes Evacuated

Services

- No Lodging available – Used a local School
 - No Restaurants – Forestry looked after our needs
 - No Power to Area – everything was done by Generators
 - No Drinking Water Available – Pallets of Drinking water
 - No Emergency Social Services contingent here, just in Kamloops
 - Town was basically under Marshall Law
-
- THE EMERGENCY SERVICES WERE THE ONLY OCCUPANTS

Assignment – August 4, 2003

- Set up Staging at the old BCBC Yard in Barriere.
- Crews were assigned to suppression duties along with all other departments in the Barriere McLure areas.

Equipment

- 7 Fire Engines
- 8 Engine Tenders
- 5 Tenders
- 6 Bush Units
- 1 Command Post
- 1 Personnel Transport Unit
- 1 Mechanic
- 1 Ambulance
- 9 Support Vehicles

39 Vehicles in Total

(Not including Barriere and McLure)

Pumping Capacity of 26,800 gallons per minute.

Manpower

- 172 Personnel including support staff directly under our control

Barriere and McLure were included in these numbers.

Hired upon arrival:

1 Mechanic

1 Dispatcher included

4 Guides

Most of the Barriere Imports



APPOINTMENT to COMMAND

August 5, 2003

16:43 hours I was appointed to Structural
Suppression Branch Director KO272

Basically FIRE CHIEF of the 3rd Largest Fire Department
in British Columbia.

I relieved Doug Angrove - Nanaimo

“Only departments that were larger at the time were:

Vancouver and Surrey”

The Group that Came Together

- Rich Finley - Branch Director – View Royal
- Randy Isfeld - Deputy – Williams Lake
- Ron French - Division Chief North– Central Saanich
- Al Kirkwood – Deputy North – Barriere FC
- Glenn Saunders – Division Chief South – Shawnigan Lake
- Tom Bradley – Deputy South – McLure FC
- Rob Chatton - Interface – Shawnigan Lake
- Kristina Bradley - Dispatch - McLure
- Larry Sampson - Safety – Campbell River
- Jerry Johnson – Logistics & Staging – Nicolson

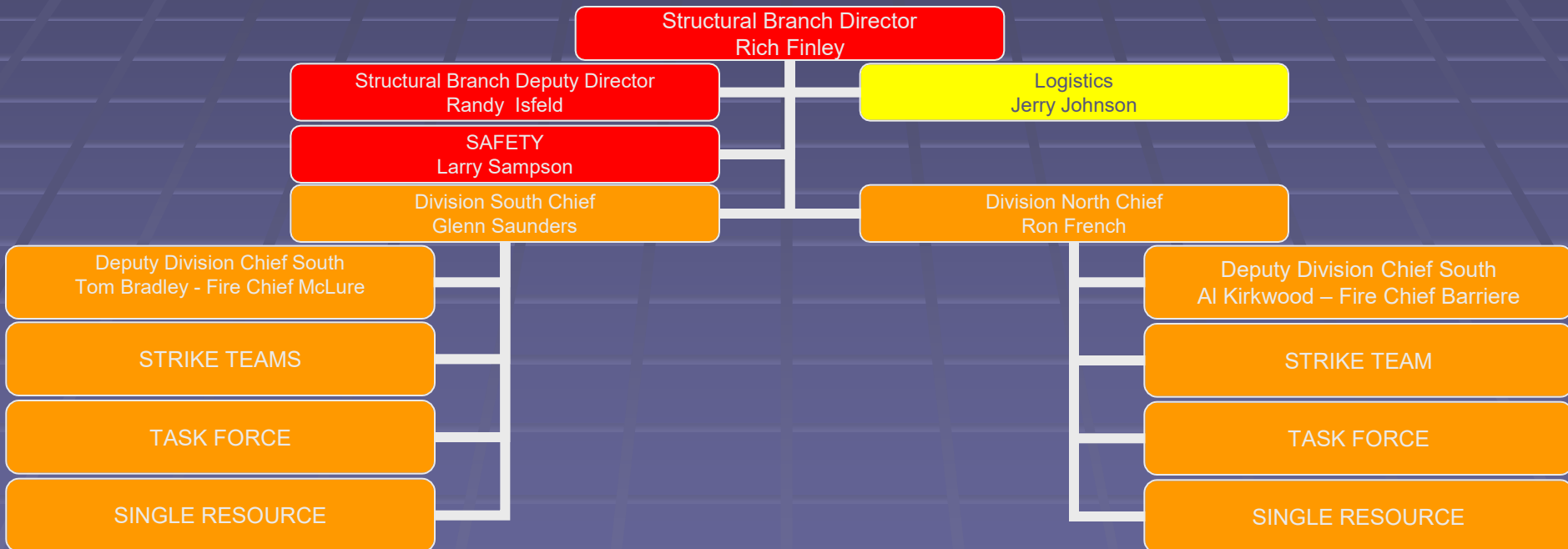
(The Island Connection for the most part)

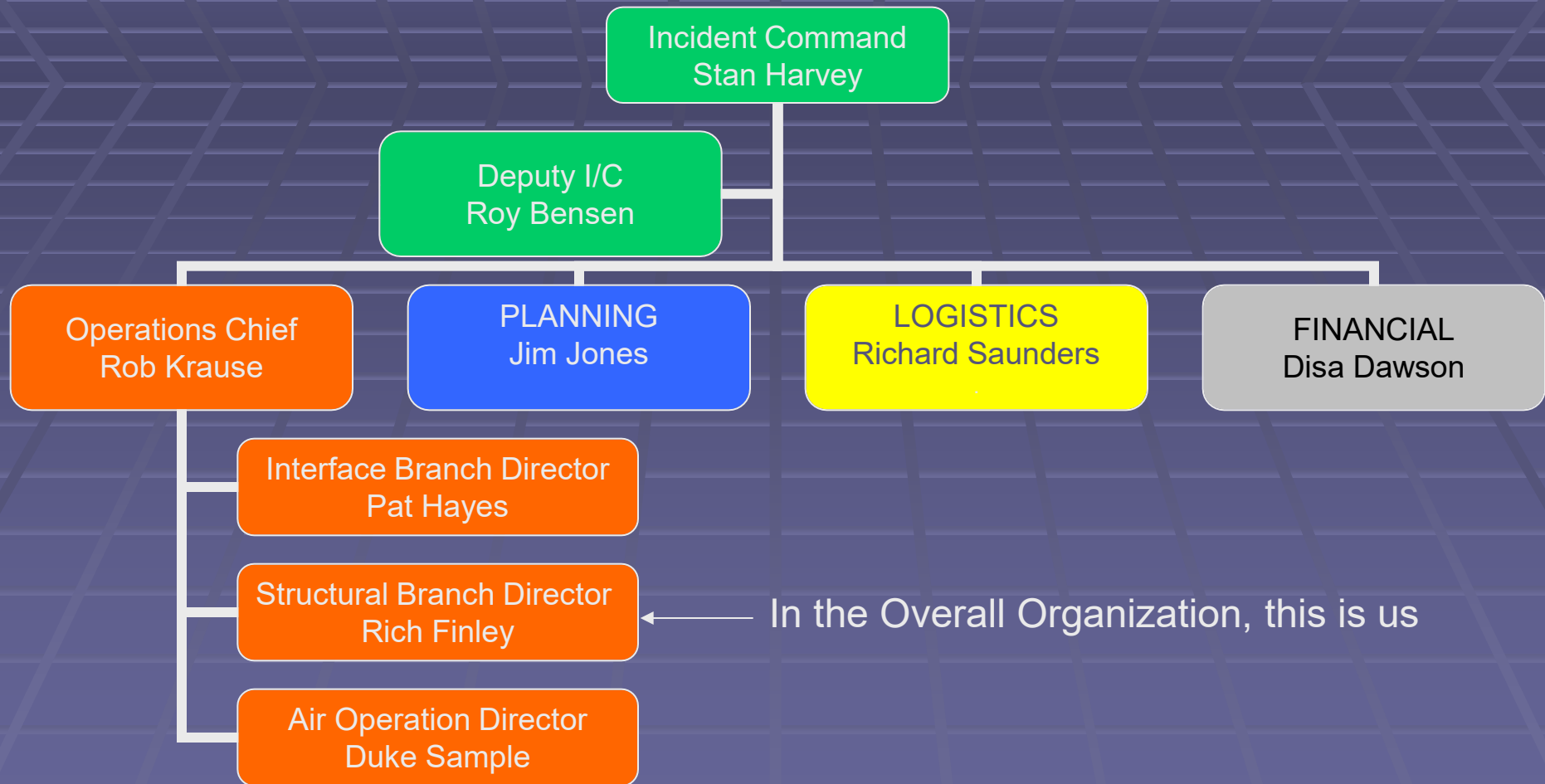
Barriere Command Staff
August 5-8, 2003



R French, R Isfeld, R Finley, G Saunders, R Chatton, K Bradley, L Sampson, J Johnson

Structural Branch







Command Unit from Surrey Fire Department

Departments Assigned to Barriere

- Island Departments
 - Shawnigan Lake
 - Mill Bay
 - Central Saanich
 - View Royal
 - Nanaimo
 - Campbell River

Departments Assigned to Barriere

- Lower Mainland Departments

Maple Ridge

Langley City

Langley Township

Mission

Abbotsford

Chilliwack

Surrey

Specialty Units: Quintec and Ontario Sprinkler Crew

Departments Assigned to Barriere

- Central Interior

Barriere

McLure

Williams Lake

Clearwater

Lower Nicola

Pilot Mountain

Nicholson

100 Mile House

Beaverly

Pine View

Buckhorn

Sicamous

Grand Forks

Keremeous

McBride

Barriere STAGING AREA



Barriere Staging Area – Daily Rotations



Barriere STAGING AREA – another view



Equipment Priorities

- Bush Units
- Tenders
- Engine Tenders
- Mini Pumpers
- Bladders
- Specialty Units
 - A Class Foam Units
 - Gell Application Units
 - Sprinkler Units
- ENGINES



Special Unit - Sprinkler Company from Ontario

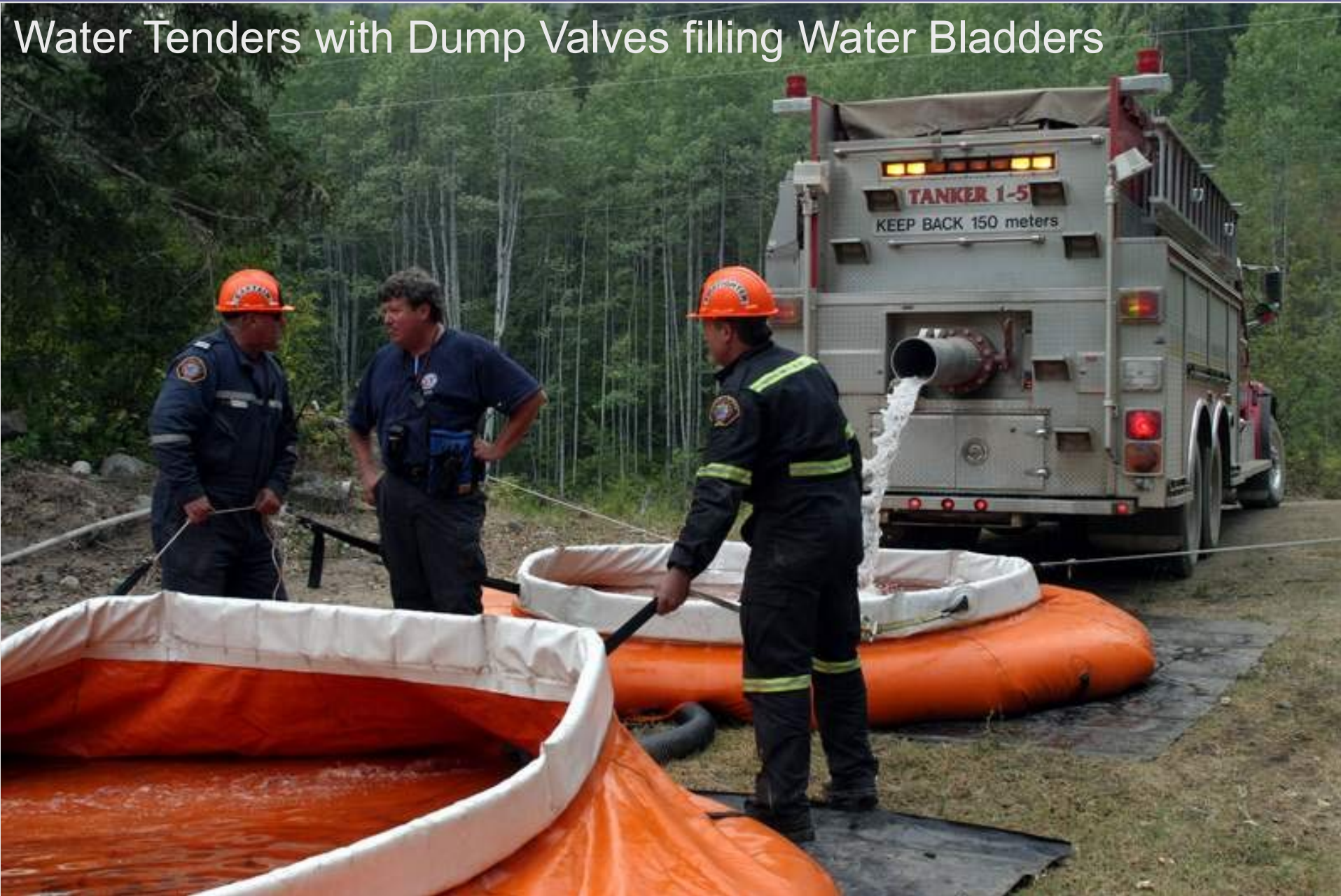
Quintec applying heat resistant GEL.



Equipment Specialty Abilities

- QUICK DUMPS
- WATER BLADDERS
- RADIOS MULTI CHANNEL CAPABLE
 - Crest System doesn't work there
- PASSPORT ACCOUNTABILITY
- DRAFTING ABILITY
- FORESTRY COMPATABLE EQUIPMENT

Water Tenders with Dump Valves filling Water Bladders



Action Plan

- To become operational as soon as possible with Safety and Fairness of responsibilities as the focus.
- Communication Plan
- Evacuation Plan
- Set up Staging
- Set up Feeding
- Set up Lodging
- Hazard and Risk Assessment
- Safety Briefings
- Radio Procedures
- Movements
- Shifting of Staff
- Manning of Fire Stations in Barriere and McLure

Forms Required

ICS Forms

Dispatch Response Forms

Structural Assessment Forms

Wage Tracking Form

Staging Assignment Forms

Purchase Order Forms

- WCB Form 7 - Injuries

SUPPLIES REQUIRED

- **Personal**

- Baby Powder
- Calling Cards for everyone
- Lip Balm
- Aspirin or Tylenol
- Antihistamine
- Sun Tan Lotion
- Bug Repellent
- Hand Cream
- Moleskin for feet
- Foot Powder
- Band Aids

- **Operational**

- Foam
- Charging for Radio Batteries
- Power for Operational Areas
- Food and Lodging
- Showers and toilets
- Barrier Tape
- Surveyor Tape – Multi Colour
- MAPPING of Area and Town
- Community Contact List
- Vehicle needs; light bulbs, air filters, oil, etc...

SAFETY BRIEFINGS

- LACES – Covered by Forestry
Lookout, Awareness, Communications
Escape Routes, Safety Zone
- Personal Protective Equipment
- Radio Procedures
- Movements of Vehicles ours and others
- Safety around Trees and other Hazards
- Reporting Procedures

Morning Briefings

- Radio Procedural Changes or Same
- Security
- General Overview of the Day ahead
- Forestry Briefing
- Operational Changes
- Day to Day Notices
- Weather Briefings
- Safety Issues

Morning Briefings, Con't

- What Went Right
- What Went Wrong
- **Media** – important issues rising
- Return of Services to Town
- Downsizing Assignments
- Critical Incident Stress Debriefing
- General Public Issues or Problems
- Hazardous Areas or Items

Safety First: You never knew what could be burning

No Pre-fire Plans



Fight Fires from the Black Areas



Smoke Impaired Vision and Driving



Fire Behavior experienced in the early evening



This is what happened over night with the winds – the fire would grow in size and threat.



Westside Road – North of Barriere

STATS on KO272

- Largest Fire in British Columbia 18,083 Hectares on our departure. (26,420 presently)
- 60 + Homes Lost
- 7,635 Persons Evacuated
- 1 Mill Lost
- 1 Service Station Lost
- Several Large Buildings in Industrial Park Lost
- Wild Animal Loss cannot be calculated

Louis Creek - Tolko Mill Hog Fuel Fire



Louis Creek – Tolko Mill



Planer Side of Tolko Mill in Louis Creek Total Destruction



Service Station – Louis Creek



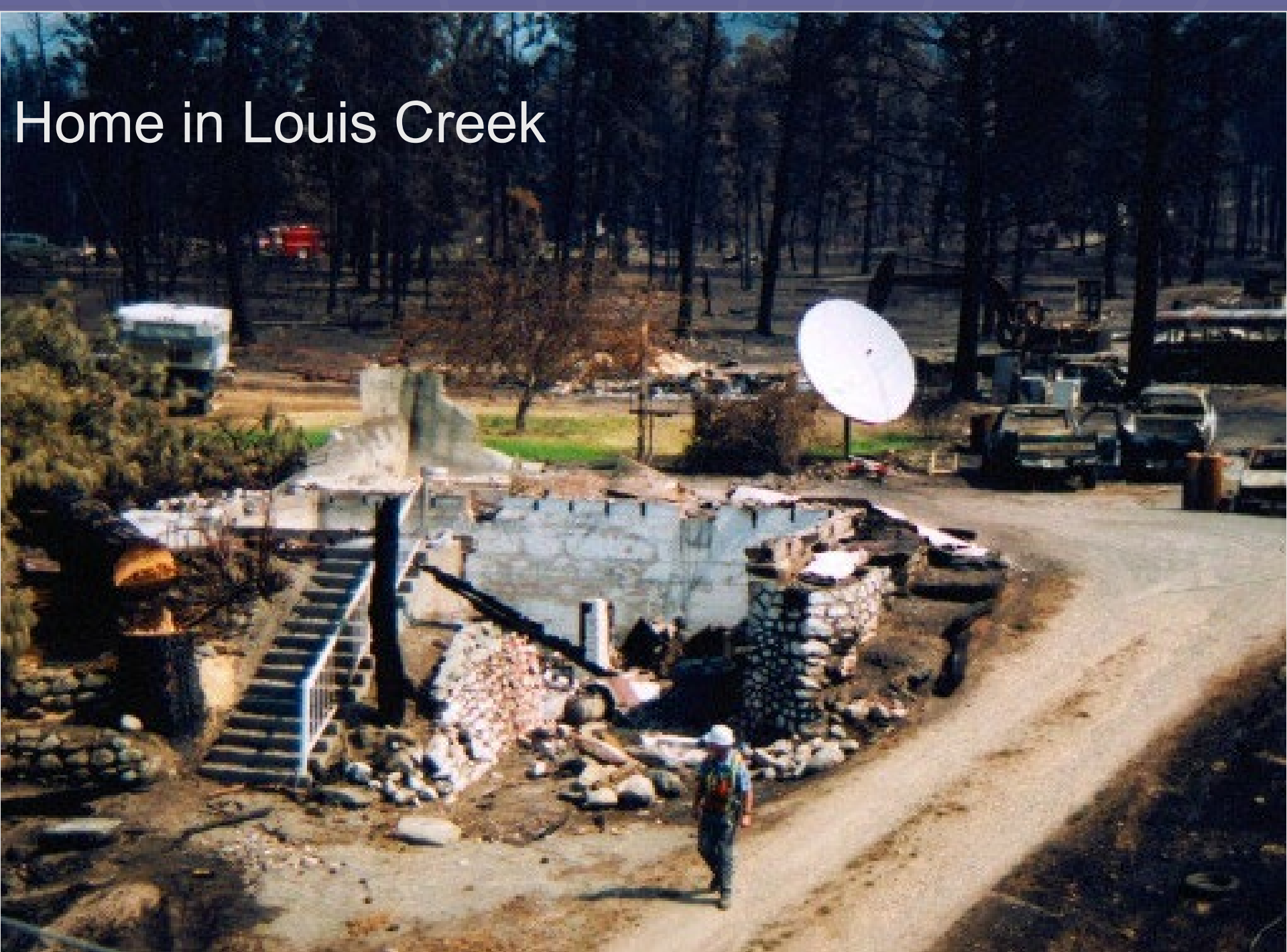
Farm in Louis Creek/Barriere area



Late evening flare ups were common



Home in Louis Creek



By August 8th
we had the upper hand

DOWN SIZING

On August 8th, 2003, down sized the entire operation to the following equipment.

Turned over Command

- 4 Engines
- 4 Engine Tenders
- 4 Tenders
- 4 Bush Units

Fire Characteristics of this Rank 6 Fire

- Touch an open flame to brush and the fire will travel 40 feet in one second and be a Rank 4 Fire.
- At the fires worst, the fire was traveling at over 300 metres per minute and Rank 6.
- Wildlife could not out run the fires.



RANK 6 Fire



Further RANK 6 Fire



Late evening Rank 6 Fire Action



As Close as you want to get RANK 6 Fire

MAJOR DECISIONS MADE

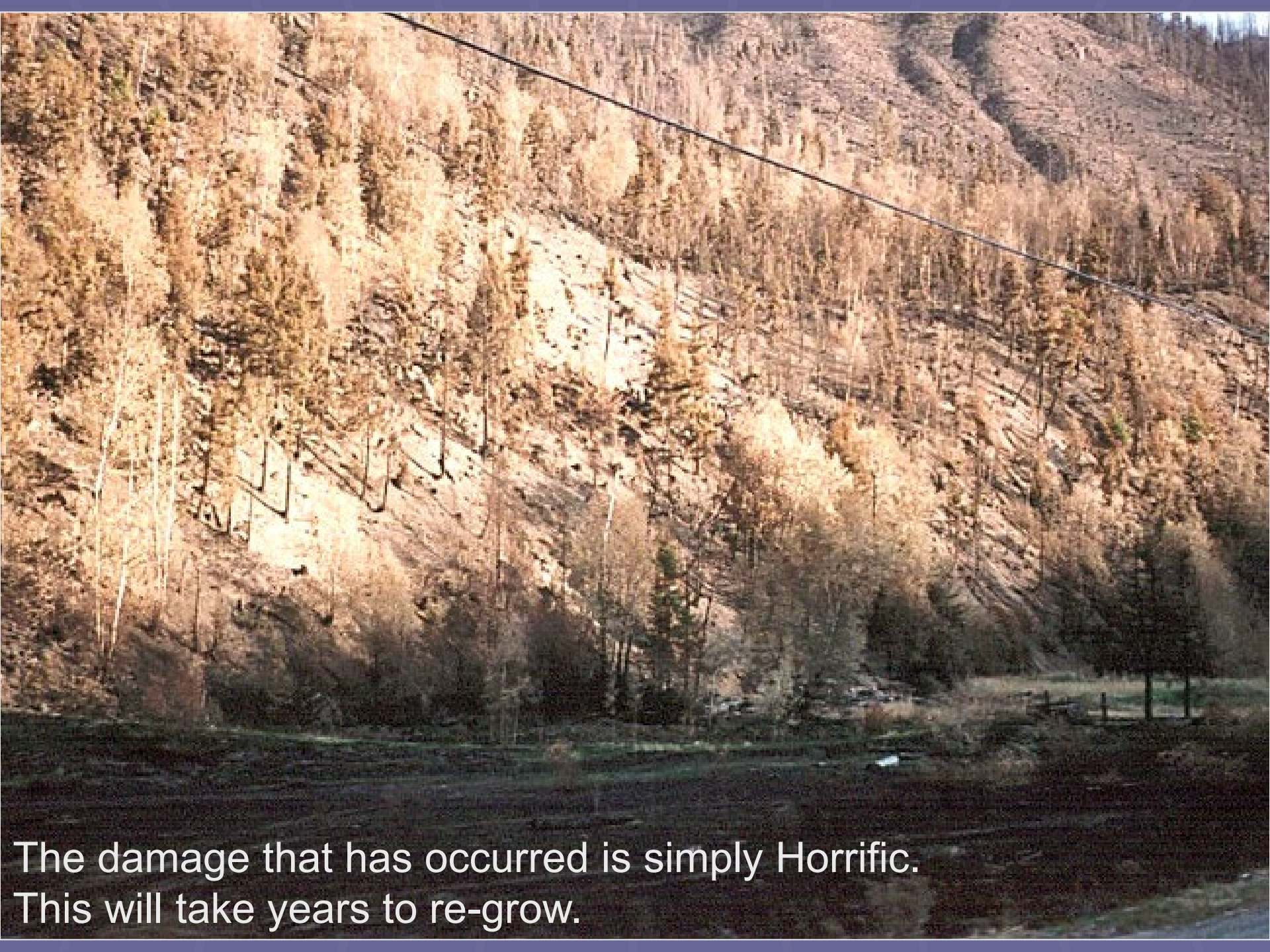
- Took over BCBC Building for Staging
- Took over a Fueling Station for our sole use
- Rented Portable Toilets for Staging
- Accomplished the Take over of the Barriere and McLure Fire Halls
- Secured Generators for Power
- Hired a Full-time Dispatcher
- Hired a Full-time Mechanic
- Hired 4 Guides
- Put in Two new Roads in Barriere
 - View Royal Avenue and Finley Way
- Rented vehicles
- Provide Telephones (Digital to Analog)

MAJOR DECISIONS MADE, Con't

- Authorize Drafting Pits in Fish Waterways
- Re-assign some specialty units to Forestry
- Release of Staff
- Dealing with un-cooperative Staff
- Logistics and Supplies
- Sleeping Quarters and Material
- Select filling hydrants
- Radio Frequency change-outs and work orders
- Approving all Expenditures
- The Media – Information flow through system

Dealing with the Media – Assign a Information Officer as soon as you can.





The damage that has occurred is simply Horrific.
This will take years to re-grow.



The damage is so incredible, you simply can't imagine without seeing it for yourself.....



Simple Clean up will take Months.

Lessons Learned

- We didn't have a repeat of Salmon Arm
- Safety First as highest priority
- Command and Control must be seen & felt
- Fair to all the Crews with assignments
- Care for the personal well being and happiness
- Communications
- Need Maps and Guides ASAP
- Box of all supplies and documentation to ICS
this is a big Lesson.....
- ICS Works and needs to be followed

Lessons Learned

Subordinate Staff Need to Know

- You care about their concerns.
- You're going to do something about their concerns.
- You get what they get, except you're prepared to work harder and longer.
- Lead by example.
- You'll eat last to ensure quality of food.

Incident Command System

- Must be put into place from the beginning
 - All Command Staff must have 400 Level
 - All Support Senior Level Staff 300 Level
 - All vehicle Commanders 200 Level
 - All work staff must have their 100 Level

The BCERM System works, lets get on with it, for all levels of Government including Municipal.

MEMORABLE STATS

- Largest Fire in British Columbia 2003
- Responsible for spending approximately 4.8 Million Dollars
- Third Largest Fire Department in BC.
- No loss of structures under our command.
- No injuries under our command.
- No vehicles lost.
- Approximately 10 hours sleep in 5 days.

Re-Assignments

- View Royal

Went on to the Kelowna Fire

- Other Departments went onto Kelowna, Narramata, Cranbook, Ashcroft, or the many other fires in British Columbia

THANKS

- Mayor and Council of View Royal and all the other community's Councils for authorizing the response of all the Crews to the Interior.
- To the members of all departments that covered our communities during our absence.
- To those who had faith in our abilities to protect a community from harms way.
- To the Citizens of Barriere and McLure for whom we were sent to help in a serious time of need.

Special THANKS

- Forestry (specific mention to Pat Hayes & Tom Lacey)
- All the other Emergency Volunteers
- Specially our Emergency Social Services Volunteers
- Our Canadian Military
- All the Private Contractors
- The neighboring departments that covered our back doors during our absence
- And all those Civilians that gave of themselves or provided items to make a very serious situation better

My Favorite Saying:

- HAVE YOU EVER DANCED WITH THE DEVIL IN THE PALE MOON LIGHT.....

(After July 17, 2000 – Trans Canada Highway)

- IN 2003 I HAVE BEEN TO HIS HOUSE....

(After KO272 – McLure Barriere Fire 2003)



Barriere Fire	26,420 Hectares
Kelowna Fire	25,600 Hectares
McGillivray Fire	11,400 Hectares
Cranbrook Fire	10,979 Hectares
Venables Fire	7,635 Hectares

Total Hectares burned in the Kamloops area 104,995
Total for British Columbia 249,769 Hectares
(as of September 14, 2003)

and the Fires kept burning on.....

It Ended with Mixed Emotions

- We are so proud of what we were able to do
- We felt the extreme pride to serve our Province and those neighboring communities in definite need
- It was and probably will be the largest fires in our careers
- Likely most firefighters would say, “we had the time of our lives,” yet on the other side of everyone is this burning question....
- How can we feel so good about working on someone else’s tragic loss and leave them after with nothing except for devastation and hurt as we safely return to..... our own warm beds and safe communities?

These are the Types of Simple Thanks from the people that meant so much.
These were from Kelowna



PRAY 4 RAIN

we
love
you!



So My DADDY AND ALL

THE OTHER **FIREFIGHTERS** WILL
COME HOME TO THEIR FAMILIES!

LOVE

I LOVE YOU DADDY

BE HARD,
CAREFUL,
BE HOME!
I MISS YOU!
WE HOPELY "Come"

U ARE MY HERO! LOVE

LOVE YOU
(After all)

Thank you for
the rain! Love you!



U PICK

3443

THANKYOU!
FIREFIGHTER'S
AND VOLUNTEERS

TAKE A BOW

- The Canadian Military should be extremely proud of your participation, in my opinion I would again wish to work with the military because of your positive work ethics and dedication to get the job done right.
- From all of us – A "Bravo Zulu"

THE END

Thank you for listening today.

I trust that you have gained some insight to consider from this presentation to help better protect other communities in Canada.