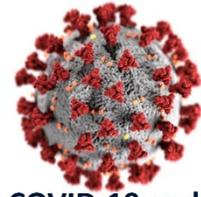


# Rapid Lesson Sharing

**Event Type:** COVID-19 Mitigations  
**Date:** May 10-14, 2020  
**Location:** Basin Fire, Arizona Strip District, BLM



**COVID-19 and Fire Season 2020 Lessons**  
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[CDC.gov/COVID19](https://www.cdc.gov/COVID19)



## COVID-19 Mitigations and Lessons on the Basin Fire

*“Be prepared to change on the fly this year, this is not a normal fire season.”*

The Basin Fire on the Arizona Strip started on May 10, 2020, at 2 p.m. An ad hoc Type 3 Incident Management Team was assembled. By the time the team demobed four days later the fire had grown to more than 38,800 acres in size. This was the largest fire ever to burn in the month of May on the Bureau of Land Management’s Arizona Strip District.

The overwhelming message put out by the IMT was: *Be prepared to change on the fly this year, this is not a normal fire season.*

### Briefings and Face Coverings

The IC and IC Trainee decided they wanted to have in-person briefings. They had plenty of space, instituted social distancing at the briefing site, and only allowed module leaders to attend. They considered radio briefings or trying to institute virtual briefings, but ultimately decided face-to-face briefings were the best fit for their situation. They relied on ensuring everyone staying six feet apart and decided to make face coverings optional at the briefings.

The IC Trainee stated that if he had it to do over again, he would have made face coverings mandatory at briefings. He strongly recommended procuring a microphone and speaker system for in-person briefings so everyone can hear.



Aviation resources on the Basin Fire. (BLM Photo.)

*The IC Trainee stated that if he had it to do over again, he would have made face coverings mandatory at briefings.*

The IC and Trainee were worried about people not being able to hear. The fact that they invited fewer people to briefings meant that the module leaders did not have other people from their modules there to help capture the information being presented. They did feel strongly that having a more normal face-to-face briefing had a beneficial psychological affect.

### Old Habits

Old habits die hard. The IMT noticed much more intermingling at the beginning of the incident. Over time, with consistent messaging, heavy signage around camp, and regular briefings, COVID-19 mitigations

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were more regularly implemented.

### Local Considerations to be Aware of

- Handwashing stations are not available in the southern Utah area. Vendors have already rented out their entire inventory.
- Ordered a Conex trailer with operator and generator. Took two days to get on site and up and running.
- Food will be an issue. Need to check with vendors to make sure they can meet the new demands of providing meals in fire camp. Basin Fire logistics personnel were able to find a caterer without much trouble. But wondered how often that would be the case.
- Cleaning products like Clorox Wipes and Lysol aerosol sprays are not available anywhere. Forced to buy bleach and spray bottles in bulk and create own cleaning solutions.
- St. George area has a local brewery that produces hand sanitizer in personal-sized bottles. No problem providing that locally. Other places may not be so lucky. Logistics folks also found a source for gallon-sized bottles of hand sanitizer. Don't foresee this item to be hard to supply.

### Key COVID-19 Mitigations this IMT Instituted

- Fewer people invited to briefings.
- Enforced social distancing guidelines in camp.
- Having a Safety Officer, Medical Unit Leader, and associated personnel is key.
  - Instruct those positions to peruse specific agency guidance for COVID-19 mitigations. Have them boil the guidance down to 10 to 12 bullet points that are specific to current incident. Share those bullets in IAP. Be consistent in your message. Keep your message brief, but touch on it often.
  - Posted signs around camp reminding personnel of COVID-19 mitigations and screening questions.
- They were glad they had access to thermometers and face coverings. ICs recommend ordering that stuff to have on hand before the incident starts.
- Cache vehicles were sanitized between deliveries to the fire. Different drivers using same vehicle, so they were required to wear masks and gloves for deliveries.
- Camped as "Modules as One".
  - They camped along an airstrip. Each module clustered together along the airstrip, leaving quite a bit of space between modules.
  - Caterer was on site. One person from each module was permitted to come pick up individually packaged meals. (A potential innovation discussed was to ask the caterer to deliver meals to drop points near modules' campsites.)
  - Vendor provided a coffee server to dispense coffee in camp.
  - Individual hand sanitizer bottles were provided in lunches.
  - Mealtimes were lengthened to ensure no food lines formed.



The Basin Fire burning on May 10 in Pakoon Basin of the BLM's Arizona Strip District. (BLM Photo.)

- Porta Potties were dispersed along the airstrip so modules would go to the ones closest to their individual camps.
  - Hand sanitizer was provided at all the Porta Potty stations.
  - Porta Potty vendor had personnel on site to sanitize and disinfect the Porta Potties every day.
  - Team ordered a 30-yard dumpster. Did not provide trash cans in camp. Provided modules with trash bags and asked them to dispose of their own trash in the dumpster.
  - The Team noted there was a much higher workload for camp crews. Camp sanitation was very labor intensive.
  - Did not have access to showers, but had a large cache of “bath-in-a-bag” type products on hand to hand out to personnel.
  - Created a closed cache. Base Camp Manager was the only person in camp who was allowed access.
  - Had biohazard kits on hand.
- Finance section and GIS shop operated out of the District Office in St. George.
  - Federal employees checked in at the incident via a drive through check-in station. Modules drove past a building at ICP, the status check-in recorder sat behind a closed window and opened the window only when needed.
  - Contractors checked in at the office in St. George, and then again at the drive-through check-in station.
  - Daily online “Microsoft Teams” calls were conducted between the ICP and the St. George Office. This worked well, discussed GIS needs, supply orders, and other topics.
- Had to ask pilot if he would be willing to provide crew shuttle service. Pilot agreed to do that.
- Helitack did provide overhead with flight helmets. Carried disinfectant spray to sanitize helmets between use.
  - IC and Trainee recommends that overhead purchase their own flight helmets.
- All agreed COVID-19 mitigations would have been much tougher if ICP were located in a town.
- Focused on sending the message that COVID-19 mitigations took priority in camp, fire hazards took priority out on the line.
- Lots of worries about COVID-19 overshadowing more traditional fire assignment hazards. Decided it was best to be consistent with the message, but keep the message short. Were worried that constantly harping on COVID-19 mitigations would become a distraction and source of irritation with assigned resources.

### **Questions that Arose During Incident**

- How often do things need to be disinfected/how long does a specific treatment last?
- What environments have a positive/negative affect on the virus?
- Lots of “what if” questions. Leadership was constantly playing the “what if” game, which created a lot more mental stress than previous fire assignments.

### **Ideas for Future Innovation and Capacity**

- Have an Equipment Time Recorder on site at the fire so contractors would not have to come back to the office to check out.
- Have PDF scanning capacity available on site.
- Create a system that can support universal digital signatures. This would make having a remote Finance Section much more efficient and feasible.

- Ensure contracts are available digitally instead of hard copy only. That would make contractor check-in/check-out go much more smoothly.
- Create an electronic shift ticket system.
- Create an electronic performance evaluation system.
- Create a system centered on electronic doc boxes instead of hard copy.

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