

# Witch Fire October 2007



# Fire Activity Southern California

- The Witch Fire started at 1235 hours on Sunday 10/21
- 11 significant fires currently burning in Southern California
- 9 additional fires would start within the next 24 to 32 hours.
- 260 fires in South Operations during wind event and 240 suppressed at < 800 acres.
- Bottom line reduced prospects of adequate resources.

# Previous Lessons Learned

- Have a major events plan in place prior to a disaster striking.
  - Preplanned callback
  - Alternative staffing
  - DOC location established and staffed
- Activate your EOC early and with full staffing.
- Keep the public informed.
- This includes your Council or Board

# Recovery

- Make sure to start a recovery planning group in your EOC early.
- Escondido involved Chamber and others to form a private group we worked through.
- Had 16 structures down and pads cleared in less than 30 days



# Donations Management

- While Escondido had developed a donation management plan with the Salvation Army and the North County Interfaith Council, we failed to initiate it and paid a price with clogged shelters.
- All this to say implement your full plan and have someone sitting back from a distance to view your operation.

# Evacuations

- Start your re-population plan ASAP, both non-impacted areas and impacted areas.
- Pre-plan areas with County to include shape files.
- Remember to highlight areas with known businesses.
- Record all road closures, that affect your business community.

# Unified Command

- Even prior to official activation of unified command insert your personnel in the command post to project direction and timelines.
- Intel is critical for your EOC and what you cannot accomplish possibly the command team can.
- Your concerns represented early in incident and relationship is built.
- Get into the early financial agreements and monitor.
- Help set resource allocations.

# Escondido Fire Response

- Prior to EOC activation requested all available fire apparatus be staffed.
- 9 engine companies, 4 brush engines, 1 truck and 5 ambulances.
  - 1 engine already assigned to Strike Team at the Harris Fire in early morning.
- All Chief Officers activated and allocated response vehicles.

# Escondido Fire Response

- Formed 2 task forces of 3 engines and 2 brush engines & 1 Chief Officer
- 3<sup>rd</sup> task force of three engines & 1 Chief Officer formed to cover city, but used early in fire fight
- Appointed Chief Calhoun as Escondido Structure Branch
- Normally go to 2 shifts.



# Command and Control

- Control of crews is vitally important for safety reasons.
- Briefings must occur on a regular basis and make sure you have direct contact with Branch or Group and Division supervisors.
- Safety gear checks and share what you're doing to protect yourself.

# City & District Losses

## Escondido

- 36 SFD destroyed
- 21 structures damaged
- 1 structure damaged during wind event from falling tree
- \$21,895,800
  - Rough Estimates

## Rincon del Diablo

- 37 SFD recorded as total losses
- Coordination with County DPLU
- 6 structures damaged
- \$19,583,800
  - Rough Estimates

# Tactics

- Extended fire front and intense ember production requires more than a bump and run technique.
- Limited resources made on-going patrol of fire area difficult or impossible.
- Stand and Fight is critical tactic to avoid conflagrations in the structure environment. Remember safe locations and adequate water supply.

# Tactics

- Stand and Fight will limit the number of homes you're able to protect on the perimeter homes.
- Must start to use technology of foams or gels to coat ahead of fire on perimeter homes.



# PPE

- High winds made eye protection difficult.
  - Some success with SCBA masks and canisters.
- Straps on pant legs
- Fire shelter clips will break or come loose, consider zip ties.
- Hot shields did work well for some individuals.
- Out of county bags secured inside vehicle.
- New apparatus should look at adequate storage.
- Remember to not block your path to your safety in the vehicle.

# Apparatus

- Must be kept in a state of readiness.
- Make sure reserve radios don't get miss placed. Consider color coding of equipment for apparatus.
- Still had a unit suck and ember.

