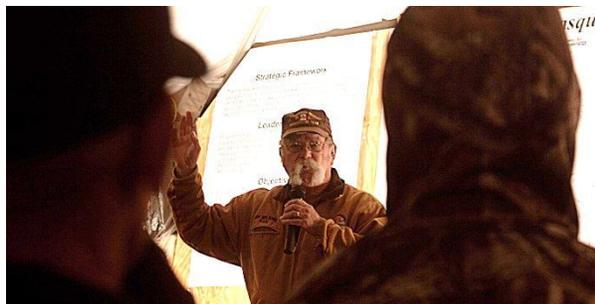


A Glimpse Into the Unsung at Gasquet Complex, Incident Command Post

Gasquet, Cali. - Fighting wildfire is a complex endeavor. For every firefighter on the ground digging hand line and mopping up, there are multiple individuals assisting firefighting efforts in many supporting capacities. This is a snapshot of life at the Gasquet Complex Incident Command Post.



Fire Information Lead, Jim Wilkins, addresses firefighting crews at the 6 a.m. briefing. Wilkins asks team leaders to emphasize the importance of calling their loved ones. Gasquet Complex Fire, Sept. 3, 2015

The firefighting day begins at 6 a.m. with a morning brief. Senior members in the Incident Command System brief team leads, crew boss', and anyone else that needs to understand the day's plan.

Crews huddled together spend about 15 minutes learning about the prior day's success, challenges, weather, and fire behavior. Maps present lines of



Austin Hackman, 19, of California Conservation Corps creates a trench for Gasquet Fire Camp IT infrastructure, Sept. 3, 2015

containment and fire advance. Weather forecasters attempt to give valuable advice on what Mother Nature plans to bring.

Crews leave the briefing and start on their day. As firefighters head out to the fire lines, teams of support staff begin the work of keeping the Incident Command Post operational. This is a glimpse into the business of keeping Incident Command running.

There is logistics to coordinate, equipment to order and vehicles to keep moving. So connectivity is a huge issue. It is easy to forget about the wires and phone lines needed to keep a place like this running. Phone and power lines must be buried to avoid dangerous tripping hazards. The evidence of such burial disappears in nearly a day as the camp starts to feel a bit more normal and like home.

Crews working on the fire move hoses off the lines and those hoses return to base in a seemingly endless maze of tangled spaghetti. There's little time and space to take care of the tangled mess in the field, so the crews bundle the hose and send it to the command post. Crews then sort the hose, inspect, and organize.

Sorting hose is a monotonous task that takes time and lots of space. Crews from California Conservation Corps and a small sampling of others sort the hoses, stretching them out and roll them into neatly stackable rolls.



According to the National Interagency Fire Center, more than 6,000 miles of hose were issued to date during the 2015 fire season. Bundle of hose at Gasquet Complex Incident Command Post, Gasquet, California Sept 2, 2015



California Conservation Corps employee, Daniel Farfan, 25, of Pleasant Hill, California rolls hoses returned from fire operations. Sept. 3, 2015.



U.S. Forest Service Volunteer, Janice Wyatt, 83, of Gasquet, California works alongside California Conservation Corps workers 60 years her junior. According to CCC crews, Wyatt is a hard worker and a huge motivator. Sept. 3, 2015.

There are those jobs that people never think of until something goes wrong. The Incident Command Post is full of those types of thankless jobs. The one that hovers above them all is porta-potty cleaning and maintenance.

Posted in each porta-potty is a notice that each portable toilet can sustain approximately 10 individuals per day if properly maintained. The, "if properly maintained," note is the part that really stands out at the Gasquet Complex. "I've never seen such nice and frequently cleaned porta-potty's on any fire," said Cole Wiessgerber a firefighter from the Cleveland National Forest.



Jose Montoya, 44, of Riverside, California cleans a fire camp porta-potty, Sept. 3, 2015.



San Luis Obispo Paramedics, Gary Hale, 45, right and Alec Flatos, 31, left review checklists and conduct sensitive inventory as daylight fades in the west. Sept. 3, 2015.

Another of the many thankless tasks is the constantly ready paramedics that provide medical care at a moment's notice. When someone is injured on a fire quick and effective care may mean the difference between life and death. Gary Hale and Alec Flatos, both of San Luis Obispo patrol and remain ready for the call that everyone hopes never comes. In the event the unexpected happens, these two Paramedics are always ready to move out at a moment's notice.

Wildfire teams rely on training firefighters for the future. Many firefighters get their start in firefighting through groups such as the California Conservation Corps.

The Incident Command Post works to recognize the hard work these young men and women give to keep the fire mission going forward. On Sept. 3, 2015, many of these future leaders were recognized by the Command Staff. The young adults were presented a glimpse of their impact to fire operations with a chance to see how their daily monotony impacts the entire mission.





A partial look at the Incident Command Post, 200 feet in the air above Gasquet, California.

As the day starts to fade, a warm meal awaits. Contracted meals provide a hot and ready plate of home cooking that would rival a meal at Grandma's house. On this particular evening firefighters are treated to pulled pork, cream potatoes, gravy, and green beans. For dessert, there's cheese cake and mixed fruit medley.

Everyone retreats to the dining tent as a light cool breeze reminds us all of the approaching fall. Just over the hill, smoke still trickles into the valley and the smell of burning furs also keeps us aware, that the fight isn't over.



Kurt Scalp, 45, of Weiser, Idaho serves up pulled pork to firefighters and camp crews hungry from a long day's work. Sept. 3, 2015.