



Appendix F

This material is available as a separate pdf handout called Appendix F.

Safety Journey Background

The Forest Service has always been visibly committed to the health and safety of its employees. However, beginning in 2006 the agency began a more intense look at safety issues behind the agency's fatality rate that was consistently three to four times higher than its sister federal land management agencies—the National Park Service and the Bureau of Land Management. The synopsis below includes events leading up to current Safety Journey efforts to ensure safety is a Forest Service core value rather than a program.

In 2006 then-Forest Service Chief Dale Bosworth charged the National Safety Council with examining the ingrained habits, expectations, and “ways of doing business or culture” that contribute to death and injury despite visible commitment to the health and safety of Forest Service employees.

In response to the charge, in April 2007 consultant Dialogos International prepared a response called “Safety Culture for the 21st Century” describing Forest Service safety challenges in terms of a much broader set of issues and dynamics.

- After interviewing over 400 people at every level of the organization and analyzing their responses, Dialogos determined the Forest Service safety record and operational challenges were embedded in the following actions or norms:
 - Mission confusion caused by not making hard strategic choices.
 - Straight talk avoided or discouraged, including reporting near misses.
 - Energy diverted from mission work, overtaxing people and diminishing capacity.
 - Time not taken to detect, learn from, and act on errors.
 - Energy lost to a proliferation of short-lived piecemeal initiatives.
 - Support of a common attitude that deviating from safety protocols is acceptable.

In response to the report, in June 2007 then-Chief Abigail Kimbell wrote a letter asking senior leaders in the Forest Service to accomplish the following:

- Distribute her letter and report summary for further discussion.





- Host and promote regional change dialogues and report results to her.

Since one of the critical places where disconnect was being felt was between “fire” and “line,” a core working team met during late 2007-2008 to discuss key dynamics. These discussions developed into a series of simulations in 2009 led by National Incident Management Organization (NIMO) teams on National Forest units. These drew ground, line, dispatch, and other EMS partners together to practice and learn.

In July 2008 then-Chief Kimbell released another Dialogos product entitled “Taking Steps toward Change, a Follow-Up to Initial Diagnostic Memo to the US Forest Service.”

- This memo provided the following:
 - An update on Forest Service actions being taken in response to the previous year’s report.
 - Dialogos’ view of elements necessary to transform Forest Service culture as well as further examination of human factors around safety.
- Then-Chief Kimbell asked Forest Service leaders to give the memo wide distribution and encourage employees to read and discuss it.

In 2010, NLC members toured seven other organizations (ConEdison, Los Alamos National Laboratory, Louisiana Pacific, Region 10 Aviation, United Parcel Service, URS, and US Coast Guard) in a series of “Learning Journeys” to study organizations recognized for their outstanding safety records. These visits informed further discussions and actions, including reviewing the agency’s response to accidents. Reports are available on the Safety Learning Journey Web site at <http://fsweb.wo.fs.fed.us/chief/safety/learning-journeys.shtml>.

In 2011, Forest Service employees across the nation participated in Safety Engagement sessions, which effectively launched the agency’s collective effort across all levels of the agency to create a safety culture in the Forest Service.

- During these candid conversations, employees illuminated both the challenges and opportunities needed to improve work processes and safety outcomes.
- Employee feedback informed next steps on the journey toward becoming a world-class safety organization.

In 2012 the National Leadership Council initiated Safety Engagement Two.





- The basic engagement design was for leaders to conduct and cascade “leader-to-leader” meetings through the entire organization followed by “leader-to-employee” meetings.
 - Each of the sessions followed a recommended meeting facilitation guide. Over 150 leadership meetings and more than 85 employee meetings were reported as completed.
 - These leader-led work improvement sessions convened employees to tackle challenges and improve safety on their own units.

Additionally, the Forest Service made investments to improve safety outcomes:

- A corporate check-in, check-out process.
- Emergency locator devices to ensure employees can remain in contact from remote locations.
- Unit-hosted special welcome sessions for new employees that focus on safety as a core value.

In late 2014 and early 2015 the National Leadership Council initiated Leader-Employee Engagement Three.

- A meeting facilitation conversation guide supported nationwide message uniformity.
- Two major focus areas included personal and organizational resilience and the workload-safety balance.
- Leaders were asked to synthesize engagement feedback and share with their Regional Leadership Team (RLT) or Station Leadership Team (SLT); in turn, Regional Foresters and Station Directors consolidated report outs and summarized local actions taken in response to feedback for the NLC. In this manner, employee input "cascaded up" the organization to the NLC.

Further national investments emerged, including the establishing the Safety Boot Reimbursement Program and the Office of Human Performance, Innovation, and Organizational Learning (HPIOL), which is intended to support workplace innovation.

In spring 2015, the Forest Service Health and Wellness Program was notified of its ranking in the Office of Personnel Management’s (OPM) Top Ten. Of the 291 worksites OPM reviewed, representing 36 different Federal agencies, the Forest Service Health and Wellness Program was ranked number five throughout the federal government for fiscal year 2014. The rankings are based on results of the OPM WellCheck surveys conducted in 2014. The Forest Service scored 97.5 percent compared to the “average”





agency score of 62 percent. For additional information, see OPM's complete report entitled, "The Status of Worksite Health and Wellness Programs in the Federal Government—A Report of WellCheck 2014."

Also in 2015, at the direction of the NLC, an Emergency Medical Services (EMS) Assessment Working Group was formed to assess the status of agency EMS needs, and this working group completed a programmatic safety impact analysis for Forest Service EMS. Later in the year another EMS Working Group—this one focused on Programmatic Implementation—was stood up to recommend EMS implementation actions to increase the chances of survival and rapid recovery of Forest Service employees who become seriously ill or injured during the performance of work. The EMS Implementation Working Group was created to continue to assess the hazards and mitigation measures identified in the programmatic safety impact analysis for EMS and make risk-based implementation recommendations for delivery of Basic Life Support EMS to Forest Service employees.

In fall 2015, national leadership decided to make Safety Journey work part of the agency's normal business operations, with bi-annual sessions planned to coincide with the arrival and departure of seasonal and temporary employees.

In early 2016, the first bi-annual gatherings were the Life First engagements held in spring 2016 that focused on wildland firefighting. At the December 2015 National Leadership Council (NLC) meeting, members left with an intention and commitment to do everything possible to increase the odds that everyone comes home in 2016 (and beyond) and initiated Life First sessions. While the specific focus addressed eliminating unnecessary exposure in the wildland fire environment, the concepts can be applied to other work environments.

- Over 900 employees and stakeholders were engaged in exploratory and pilot dialogues over a six-week period, providing helpful feedback that enabled considerable improvements for the Life First effort.
- Life First conversations were intended to continue to improve the wildland fire system to one that more reliably protects responders and the public, sustains communities, and conserves the land.
- NLC members were responsible for planning and organizing for an effective cascading of this engagement throughout their organizations during April, May, and June 2016.
- Agency administrators, wildland fire responders, wildland fire leaders, and key wildland fire partners and community leaders were engaged.





- Dialogue included an invitation to *Stop, Think, and Talk before Acting* in situations that may involve unnecessary exposure.
- The Life First Engagements resulted in an agreement among leaders and participants on actions to eliminate unnecessary exposure this fire season.

Also in early to mid-2016, further work was done to assess various evolved software solutions for an electronic check-in/check-out system to ensure every field employee is accounted for and returns home safely on a daily basis. The new solutions are cloud-based and mobile-device compatible, offering significant advantages over earlier tools. We are continuing to conduct pilots on the software and are focused on finding an affordable enterprise solution for the Forest Service.

So has the Safety Journey been effective? For the past 40 years prior to 2009, the Forest Service averaged about eight work-related fatalities per year. Since the onset of the Safety Journey, the five-year running average has dropped significantly to 3.2 work-related fatalities per year (as of June 16, 2016). In addition, serious injuries have significantly dropped as reflected by the 39 percent decrease in the initiation of new workers compensation claims since 2010 (as of June 2016). We are delighted that our employee work-related fatalities have significantly dropped, but we also realize how much work we must do to ensure every employee returns home safely every night.

More background is included in the following safety document links and Web sites:

Correspondence Database Letter dated June 15, 2007 concerning the Safety Culture Report and Broader Implications at <http://fsweb.wo.fs.fed.us/dialogos/safety-culture.pdf>

Correspondence Database Letter dated July 18, 2008 concerning a Follow-Up Dialogos Diagnostic Memo, "Taking Steps toward Change" at <http://fsweb.wo.fs.fed.us/dialogos/dialogos-followup-memo.pdf>

Forest Service Intranet Dialogos Index at <http://fsweb.wo.fs.fed.us/dialogos/>

Forest Service Internal Safety Engagement SharePoint Site at <http://fsprograms.fs.fed.us/sp-ese/default.aspx>

National Leadership Council Safety Intranet 2010 Learning Journey at <http://fsweb.wo.fs.fed.us/chief/safety/>

