

2024

North Tooele Fire District Wildfire Tabletop Exercise

After Action Report



EXERCISE DATE: APRIL 19, 2024

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INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF FIRE CHIEFS: COMMUNITY WILDFIRE
PROTECTION PLAN (CWPP) ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

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Executive Summary

On April 19, 2024, the International Association of Fire Chiefs (IAFC) Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP) Program, in partnership with North Tooele Fire District, held a discussion-based tabletop exercise to prepare for a large-scale wildland fire incident that would impact multiple communities in Northern Tooele County, Utah. The tabletop exercise was designed to assist the North Tooele Fire District in the rewrite of their CWPP. The CWPP, in turn, will assist the community in preparation for wildfire events occurring within the county. The exercise was funded through an FY2021 Department of Homeland Security/Federal Emergency Management Agency/Assistance to Firefighters Grant/Fire Prevention and Safety Grant (DHS/FEMA/AFG/FPS) which was awarded to the IAFC. The exercise design team was composed of IAFC staff and contractors.

North Tooele Fire District was selected as one of six departments to receive CWPP Program assistance through the FEMA grant and was selected for additional support through a tabletop exercise. Initial planning for the exercise began in July '23 after a preliminary discussion with local stakeholders.

The exercise design team created a wildland fire scenario under Red Flag conditions. The initial wildland fire began in the Stansbury Mountain range along South Willow Creek, an east-facing canyon on the mountain range, on United States Forest Service lands. This is approximately six and a half miles Southwest of the City of Grantsville and five miles west of Tooele Army Depot. The fire would eventually impact the communities of Grantsville, Marshall, Tooele, and Erda, as well as the Army Depot. A second fire was then introduced from a multi-vehicle accident on I-80 that would eventually threaten the community of Lake Point. The exercise took participants through a progression of fire growth into multiple communities and various fire and law enforcement jurisdictions, eventually involving multiple structures and other critical values at risk. The scenario was developed in accordance with the goals and objectives outlined by the IAFC and locally involved stakeholders.

Goal: To work together as emergency response agencies and partners, dealing with a catastrophic wildland fire scenario impacting communities. Identify the roles and responsibilities of each agency that will ultimately lead to better preparation and preparedness for a real-world event.

Objectives:

- Gather emergency responders together for a tabletop exercise involving a rapidly evolving wildland incident.
- Evaluate agency roles and responsibilities in a catastrophic wildland fire scenario impacting the community and how each agency will collaborate with other organizations.
- Define and understand each agency's role in the incident and how they fit within the organization of incident command or the Emergency Operations Center.
- Identify blind spots that need to be addressed to be successful with future events.
- Document key outcomes and follow-up actions of the tabletop.

After Action Report/Recommendations for Wildfire Planning

The purpose of this report is to provide an overview of the tabletop exercise, summarize and analyze exercise findings, identify strengths that should be maintained and built upon, identify areas for further improvement, and support the development of recommendations.

After reviewing written participant feedback gathered after the tabletop exercise, the majority of the group thought it was beneficial. Most participants indicated that they strongly agreed or agreed with the assessment factors listed below.

- The exercise was well structured and organized.
- The exercise scenario was plausible and realistic.
- The multimedia presentation helped the participants understand and become engaged in the scenario.
- The facilitator was knowledgeable about the material, kept the exercise on target, and was sensitive to group dynamics.
- The PPT Scenario used during the exercise was a valuable tool throughout the exercise.
- Participation in this exercise was appropriate for someone in my position.
- The participants included the right people in terms of level and mix of disciplines.
- The exercise provided a good test of knowledge/skills.

For more details, see Appendix A.

The participating organizations will use this report, along with the exercise's recommendations, to move forward with their CWPP planning and work collaboratively to create a framework.

Major Strengths

A significant strength observed throughout the exercise was the foundation already established for relationships across the emergency services agencies in the area. Participants had working relationships and ongoing collaboration with each other, and there was a solid foundation of networking and partnerships, which was obvious.

Additionally, previous regional incidents such as the Jacob City Fire and recent national wildfires created a point of reference to draw upon strengths and lessons learned across agencies and lead to a strong understanding of the potential of a Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) fire in this area. This helped many participants reference these previous incidents and bring reality to the scenario, leading to stronger and more in-depth conversations.

Having a Wildland Urban Interface Code is a huge hurdle that has already been overcome in the State and county. This code could assist in mitigating the potential of such a fire from impacting structures. It was noted that the county's code, which follows the State of Utah's WUI code, needs updating since it was last adopted in 2006 and utilizes the 2003 WUI code.

Primary Areas for Improvement

Throughout the exercise, opportunities for improvement in North Tooele County's ability to coordinate evacuation and response to an emerging WUI fire were identified. The focus areas of improvement fell into several categories:

- 1) Collaboration/Partnerships
- 2) Planning
- 3) Communications
- 4) Training

- 1) Collaboration/Partnerships

While the greater Tooele County area already has strong working partnerships, a greater understanding of the abilities of 911 Dispatch was discussed since they were not at the tabletop. More engagement with private/other sectors (schools, assisted living facilities, Rio Tinto, utility providers, large animal rescue organizations, Red Cross, etc.) on resources and collaboration during times of crises were recognized as areas for improvement. Also, the integration of Mutual Aid partners and state and federal resources was recognized as an area where more collaboration is important. Future tabletop exercises with additional organizations who were not in attendance were suggested to build upon the momentum established through this exercise.

- 2) Planning

Discussions during the exercise identified several areas requiring additional planning across organizations. Several of these areas were planning for the Emergency Operations Center (EOC), Joint Information Center (JIC), evacuation zones, management action points, and evacuation notifications and processes. Evacuation language needs to be established and publicized within the county, and a strong PIO group needs to be built so that information is not too slow to be released. The use of the county siren system as a possible tool to notify the public of an emergency was also discussed, and further discussion on using this system should occur with the appropriate jurisdictions. Management action points were discussed, and it was noted that preseason discussions and planning should occur to talk about various scenarios and actions to take. Evacuation zones should also be discussed to streamline the evacuation process and avoid having to determine evacuation areas on the fly in the heat of an incident. The International Association of Fire Chiefs offers a free program that walks jurisdictions through an evacuation planning assessment and offers a GIS tool for drawing evacuation zones.

- 3) Communications

To improve communications, both in terms of technology capabilities and processes, the participants discussed priority pre-emption, radio frequencies (the use of 800 MHz vs. VHF) interoperability or lack thereof between systems, and emergency alert notifications. While there are established communication abilities for internal and external communications, both need increased awareness for agency representatives and the public. There were discussions of the capabilities of 911 dispatch that need further follow-up on their abilities with staffing to deal with this situation and how their processes work on evacuation warnings through the TooeleAlerts and utilizing IPAWS for emergency notifications of the public.

4) Training

Several areas of training were identified as valuable for increasing preparedness for wildfire, including training focused on getting homeowners to perform mitigation of their individual properties. North Tooele Fire District identified the need to train their staff in Home Ignition Zone practices to get that information out to the public. The Utah State BLM Education and Prevention specialist offered to assist in helping with attaining some of this training. Wildfire behavior and safety training for non-fire personnel were also discussed as an area for improvement.

Section 1: Exercise Overview

Exercise Details

Exercise Name: Northern Tooele County Wildfire Tabletop Exercise

Type of Exercise: Discussion-based tabletop exercise of a wildland fire requiring the implementation of community protection, partner collaboration, and coordination.

Exercise Date and Time: April 19th from 8:30 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.

Location: North Tooele Fire District training room.

Goal: To work together as emergency response agencies and partners, dealing with a catastrophic wildland fire scenario impacting communities. Identify the roles and responsibilities of each agency that will ultimately lead to better preparation and preparedness for a real-world event.

Objectives:

- Gather emergency responders together for a tabletop exercise involving a rapidly evolving wildland incident.
- Evaluate agency roles and responsibilities in a catastrophic wildland fire scenario impacting the community and how each agency will collaborate with other organizations.
- Define and understand each agency's role in the incident and how they fit within the organization of incident command or the Emergency Operations Center.
- Identify blind spots that need to be addressed in order to be successful with future events.
- Document key outcomes and follow-up actions of the tabletop.

Capabilities: Target capabilities addressed within the exercise include:

- Interagency wildfire response and suppression
- Communications
- Evacuation

Exercise Design Team and Support

From the IAFC

- Craig Daugherty (Facilitator and scenario development)
- Marshall Braun (ArcGIS support and StoryMap creation)
- Lauren Holtzclaw (Wildland Programs Analyst-IAFC – support)
- Derek Bullington (Program Manager-IAFC – support)

Participating Organizations

Listed below are the organizations and agencies that participated in the Northern Tooele County Wildfire Tabletop Exercise:

- North Tooele Fire District
- Utah Forestry, Fire and State Lands Fire Warden
- Rocky Mountain Power
- US Forest Service- Salt Lake Ranger District
- Bureau of Land Management-West Desert District
- Bureau of Land Management- Utah State Office
- Rio Tinto Mine
- Oquirrh Mountain Water Company

A total of 22 people were in attendance for the tabletop. All participants and organizations were actively involved in the conversations and brought value to the exercise and the problem-solving that occurred.

Section 2: Exercise Design Summary

Exercise Structure and Guidelines

The TTX was a multimedia, facilitated exercise. Each module began with a multimedia update that summarizes key events occurring within that time. After the update, the facilitator engaged the various functional response agencies on their appropriate response issues, actions, concerns, and partners with whom they will collaborate. Dialog with all the represented organizations occurred to determine assistance that could be provided to a specific situation and how an interagency approach can best be accomplished.

Guidelines:

- The TTX will be held in an open, high-energy, low-stress, no-fault environment. Varying viewpoints, even disagreements, are expected.
- Respond based on your knowledge of current plans and capabilities (utilize only your existing assets) and insights derived from your experience and training.
- Decisions are not precedent-setting and may not reflect your organization's final position on a given issue. This exercise is an opportunity to discuss and present multiple options and possible solutions. **Do what's right!**
- Issue identification is not as valuable as suggestions and recommended actions that could improve response and preparedness efforts. Critical thinking and problem-solving should be the focus.

Scenario Summary

This tabletop exercise used a major wildland fire event as the scenario to set the stage for both wildland fire response, coordination, and evacuation discussions. The agenda for the exercise included multiple discussion sets that incorporated scenarios within the fire staged at different points in time. The timeline for the scenarios starts with the initial attack and progresses with fire growth and then a second wildfire occurring within the county. All events, discussion sets, and questions asked can be found in the full Situation Manual found in Appendix B.

Members of the exercise design team recorded observations, issues, concerns, ideas, and recommendations expressed by participants during the discussions.

Section 3: Analysis of Capabilities

This section of the report reviews the performance of the exercised capabilities, activities, and tasks. In this section, observations are organized by category and the corresponding activities.

Partnerships

Participating organizations recognized early in the tabletop the importance of establishing unified command and an EOC for the incident. This echoed throughout the tabletop, and a strong level of cooperation among agencies was evident. The County Fire Warden is in a critical position and will be a go-to asset in an incident like this. However, it is noted that contingencies should be explored to train others to perform those duties in his absence. Public information was a reflective topic, and one area of improvement was identified. The Forest Service would have had the initial PIO, but as the incident grew, more organizations would have had a role in the incident with their PIOs. A discussion was held on the possibility of organizing a Public Information Officers working group, this could streamline the Joint Information Center (JIC) portion of the EOC during an incident and give capacity to all agencies in a situation such as this. Discussions were also held about the need for more cross-agency communication and training to ensure that unified command can be set up quickly at the onset of an incident. Interoperability between 800 MHz and VHF frequencies was highlighted as a concern during the exercise, and it was noted that more training needs to occur to integrate these two systems and become more streamlined in communications for all types of incidents and to train new folks and stay up on the system operations.

More involvement of private sector resources in the EOC and during the response was noted as another potential gap. Conversations with utility providers, and review of master plans for updating contacts, maps, and processes need to occur more frequently. It was great to have Rocky Mountain Power, Oquirrh Mountain Water, and Rio Tinto in attendance. Rocky Mountain Power and Rio Tinto are both working on wildfire management plans that should be noted in the North Tooele CWPP. Rocky Mountain Power also has a list of medical baseline customers that could help determine at-needs populations needing extra assistance during an evacuation. Work with the various water providers in the area needs to occur to determine system capabilities, backup power sources, and contingency plans for other water sources when systems become inoperable. No gas companies were present at the tabletop, but there needs to be a conversation with them on shut-off protocols and how they would be involved in a large wildfire situation similar to this tabletop.

Future tabletops were identified as a need; these exercises would need to include the agencies who were not in attendance, and there was a suggestion to bring in mutual aid partners as well. Smaller tabletops, including the public, were also discussed as educational and functional tools. This tabletop utilized, for the first time, a Simtable that North Tooele Fire District acquired through a grant. It could be used for these future educational and functional tabletops and would be a great tool for educating the public.

Preplanning

Preplanning has occurred in some functional areas, but most of the information is held within the individual response or functional organizations. Discussions were held about establishing management action points along with identifying some evacuation zones, to assist decisions during wildfire evacuation situations and to bring partners together in a non-stressful environment, pre-season, to determine the best course of action for various situations. Again, discussions need to occur with dispatch to discuss an incident such as this and how they could support the response. Items such as staffing, notifications, transfer of information between shifts, as well as coordination with other dispatch centers, such as the federal dispatch, should be discussed. Messaging to the public was another topic of concern due to the complexities that an incident such as this can cause. The need to alert the public was discussed along with TooeleAlerts. It was noted there's a need for a public information campaign to get more buy-in from citizens to the alerting system used by the county. There was also a discussion about the siren system that is in the county, used by DOD, and the possibility of utilizing that system for all emergency alerts. It was also noted that these sirens need to be hardened and defensible space provided around them so they are not vulnerable to a wildfire.

Another area of preplanning that has been discussed in the past and needs continual attention is the evacuation and reunification of students and parents of schools in the area. Planning should be done with schools that could be threatened by wildfire. Along the same discussion was a conversation about other critical facilities and the potential to harden facilities that house at-needs populations. Once these are hardened a plan may include no evacuation but a shelter-in-place plan and protection of the facility and its occupants.

Other preplanning conversations had by participants centered around the need for more formal preplanning to identify staging areas, safety zones, or temporary points of refuge that responders and the public could utilize in the case evacuation routes were cut off, as areas of last resort to protect individuals. It was noted that work to identify which roads will be open for emergency personnel and to identify chokepoints during public evacuations need to be explored.

Work needs to be done with community planning and future development, and large wildfires must be taken into consideration as part of the development planning. This process also includes community education and individual homeowner education on Firewise principles. Also discussed was working with the Army Depot and their need to do more fuel mitigation work along their boundaries to protect the installation from fire and protect adjacent land from a fire coming off the installation.

Communications

Dispatch capacity was a concern with this scenario and discussions revolved around the need for more conversations with the 911 dispatch to discuss how an incident such as this would impact them and what contingencies they have to deal with this type situation. These discussions need to involve notifications of the public (TooeleAlerts, IPAWS), capacity, public information, internal responder communication programs, and frequency management.

Concerns were raised about the inability to communicate across 800 MHz and VHF without having a trunking system. Further discussions will be had and further training on how to overcome communication challenges with various agencies who are responding to incidents with different radio systems. This should be a priority as communication is vital during these types of incidents. One workaround that was discussed was to have an 800 MHz radio cache that could be brought to an incident and distributed to the partners, particularly federal agencies who did not have 800 MHz radios.

Equipment and Infrastructure

As the participants followed the scenario and completed an after-action review (AAR) there were several equipment and infrastructure needs identified that could increase preparedness, capacity, and firefighter and public safety. As previously mentioned, being able to utilize the siren system, set up across the county, for all emergency notifications would be a huge benefit and an option that many communities would beg to have and should be explored further. The group also discussed setting up a structure protection kit or trailer that could be mobilized as needed around the county for wildland-urban interface fires.

PPE for non-fire personnel was another area of conversation; if funding arises, it should be considered for these types of responders. Also discussed was the ability of utility providers to access emergency areas with some form of identification to allow them through roadblocks and also give them access to radio frequencies which would allow them to have situational awareness. Training was also discussed for these non-fire personnel in wildland fire behavior and safety considerations when working around wildfires.

Communication is a concern in these types of events and most of the agencies involved had some form of priority preemption for their agencies, however, some did not and some of the key partners had not heard of this. It is in the county's interest to make sure that some of the key partners (gas, water, electric, and public works) are included in these services. Starlink was also noted as a possible tool to overcome some of the communication shortfalls and is a tool that should be explored by agencies that are not currently utilizing this technology. Finally, as mentioned above the communication shortfalls that occur when agencies are on different radio systems 800MHz vs VHF needs to be explored and solutions sought. Radio caches with various banded radios were discussed as a possible solution.

Section 4: Action Items and Conclusion

This tabletop exercise was a valuable step in building capacity for the completion of the North Tooele Fire District's CWPP, planning and bringing light to the concerns a fast-spreading wildfire could have in this region. It helped capture the strengths already in place in the community and identify critical action items that will allow organizations to prepare for wildland fires and any other hazard that may require large-scale evacuations.

Participants in this exercise identified several action items to move forward with. This includes:

Collaboration/Partnerships

1. Continue to build upon the face-to-face relationships that have been built with the various agencies, neighboring departments, and interagency partners, as well as continue the positive collaboration that has been built over time.
2. Establish a county-wide public information officers' PIO working group.
3. Assess the role the private sector plays in wildland fires and periodically update the contact list for these types of resources (electric utilities, mines, water utilities, etc).
4. Continue to have tabletops with expanded participation to test capabilities. Consider inviting the public so they can understand the limitations of emergency response in these wildfire situations and for further public information sharing and education.

Preplanning

1. Consider establishing some management action points (trigger points) and establish evacuation zones, utilizing GIS, in areas of the county that are at the highest risk of a wildland fire event.
2. Continuity of operations plans should be reassessed to consider a significant wildfire event. Conversations with dispatch need to occur to determine their capabilities (notifications, IPAWS) and where they may have shortfalls for an event like this tabletop.
3. Work with schools and assisted living facilities to establish plans for evacuation, shelter-in-place, and reunification plans.
4. Formally identify safety zones and/or temporary refuge points for areas where evacuation points could be compromised for both responders and the public.
5. Explore evacuation routes, determine areas with choke points, and devise plans to mitigate these areas.
6. Explore updates to the outdated state and county WUI Code. Plans are underway to host a State-wide planning conference where the WUI Code will be topic. This will be tied to a Community Wildfire Defense Grant (CWDG) the North Tooele Fire District received.

Communications

1. Consider a public information campaign to increase the number of county residents utilizing the TooeleAlert system for receiving evacuation information.
2. Consider discussing using their county-wide siren system for all emergency alerts.
3. Continue to work on interoperability between 800 MHz and VHF systems and find workarounds to gain vital communication links between various response organizations.
4. Increase wildfire evacuation public information during the pre-season.
5. Educate the public on defensible space and Firewise principles to give responders a chance to defend more communities.

Equipment and Infrastructure

1. Pursue equipment for other evacuation notification systems as mentioned.
2. Consider wildland PPE for all responders, not just fire.
3. Build a structure protection kit or trailer that could be deployed around the county during wildland-urban interface fires.

4. Explore opportunities to improve communications by utilizing priority preemption with all involved in the emergency response, including key non-governmental stakeholders. Build a radio cache of 800 MHz and VHF radios to pass to responders.

These steps can be undertaken by the respective agencies and organizations in the county and should be re-evaluated at the end of every fire season. Several planning items should be incorporated into 2025 pre-planning efforts, and the community can determine if an annual or semi-annual tabletop exercise will be beneficial to continue enhancing preparedness.

In conclusion, this group has well-established relationships and the communication and planning to develop valuable partnerships. Still, these should be expanded and strengthened moving forward to improve large-scale response success for wildland fires. It is necessary to continue to capture lessons learned from any incidents or drills and re-evaluate the resources and capacities of all partners. North Tooele Fire District has an opportunity to build a strong CWPP and be a leader in wildfire preparedness in the greater Salt Lake region and across the State of Utah.

Appendix A: Participant Feedback Summary

Exercise Feedback Form Results

Assessment of Exercise Design and Conduct

Assessment Factor	Strongly Disagree				Strongly Agree
a. The exercise was well structured and organized. <i>Responses</i>	1	2	3	4	5
				1	13
b. The exercise scenario was plausible and realistic. <i>Responses</i>	1	2	3	4	5
				4	10
c. The multimedia presentation helped the participants understand and become engaged in the scenario. <i>Responses</i>	1	2	3	4	5
				1	13
d. The facilitator was knowledgeable about the material, kept the exercise on target, and was sensitive to group dynamics. <i>Responses</i>	1	2	3	4	5
				2	12
e. The PPT Scenario used during the exercise was a valuable tool throughout the exercise. <i>Responses</i>	1	2	3	4	5
					14
f. Participation in this exercise was appropriate for someone in my position. <i>Responses</i>	1	2	3	4	5
			1	4	9
g. The participants included the right people in terms of level and mix of disciplines. <i>Responses</i>	1	2	3	4	5
		1	1	4	8
h. The exercise provided a good test of knowledge/skills. <i>Responses</i>	1	2	3	4	5
			1	2	11

What changes would you make to improve this exercise?

Please provide any recommendations on how the exercise could be improved or enhanced to better prepare emergency responders to safely and effectively respond to these types of incidents.

- Wish additional resources had attendance – hard to identify all the participating agencies that should be here.
- Great job. It could have been better if some more partners showed up, but you did great with including those that did.

- The exercise was good. Unfortunately, a few folks didn't attend the very well-put-together scenario!
- Excellent presentation and group activity.
- It was great, life link and very well presented.
- Expand to LEPC, politicians, and additional stakeholders.
- Great presentation.
- Good exercise for the participants, would like to see the scenario involve private industry/ participants more (possible impacts/ involvement).
- Hold meetings 2-4 times per year to keep current.
- The scenario was focused on an unrealistic fuel load for our area. This scenario is possible but not possible.
- More partners.
- Add police, political more non-fire, army depot, other partners.

Any closing thoughts to help improve future exercises?

- Great use of resources. I was glad the SIM Table was able to do what it was intended to do. Thanks for putting it all together.
- Thought the program was excellent.
- Great job!
- You did your homework! This was amazing and glad I was able to attend.
- This was a thought-provoking exercise. Good stuff.
- This was a great training opportunity.

Appendix B: Exercise Situation Manual

"For Official Use Only"

Northern Tooele County Wildfire Tabletop Exercise

Situation Manual



Facilitator: Craig Daugherty- (505) 634-6516- fire.edge.cd@gmail.com
April 18, 2024

"For Official Use Only"

North Tooele County Wildfire TTX

Preface

This tabletop exercise (TTX) is being provided by the International Association of Fire Chiefs (IAFC) through the Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP) Assistance Program. The CWPP Assistance Program is being funded through an FY 2021 DHS/FEMA/AFG/Fire Prevention & Safety Grant. Through the grant, the IAFC and WUI subject matter experts are assisting in community wildfire risk reduction planning and engagement efforts with fire departments across the United States. North Toole Fire District applied for this grant and was selected as one of six departments nationwide to receive targeted assistance for the creation of a CWPP and assistance with a wildfire public education community day. In addition to the general assistance mentioned above, they were also selected to receive a wildfire tabletop exercise to assist the community in preparing for a wildfire and to support the creation of the CWPP.

All exercise participants should use appropriate guidelines to ensure proper control of TTX information within their area of expertise and protect this material per current jurisdictional directives. Public release of exercise materials to third parties is at the discretion of the North Toole Fire District and is based solely on the sharing of lessons learned.

Introduction

Background

The reality of destructive wildfires occurring in communities across the country is becoming more common every year. Examples such as the 2018 Camp Fire in Paradise, California, the 2021 Marshall Fire, North of Denver, and the 2023 Lahaina Fire in Maui County Hawaii, show how large fast-spreading wildfires can cause chaos to a community. Unfortunately, these fires proved to be deadly and overwhelmed emergency responders almost immediately with “unprecedented” fire behavior. All were driven by sustained strong winds and burned at record paces into inhabited areas, destroying multiple homes, businesses, and infrastructure, surprising even veteran emergency responders. The Lahaina Fire alone killed 100 people, making it the deadliest fire in more than a century. The Camp Fire killed 85 and destroyed close to 19,000 structures, with almost 14,000 of them being residential homes. Much of the destruction in both occurred within the first four hours.

As some of you may have experienced in the Big Spring or Jacob City Fire, fast-moving fires of significant magnitude quickly became a reality for this region. Given the alignment of fuels, weather, and topography these fires serve as great reminders of the need for continued preparedness for large wildfire events.

The mitigation work done in and around some of your communities will help firefighters in most situations; however, there are times when conditions line up to produce the potential of a catastrophic event. A fire like the Marshall Fire is an all too real scenario for many communities adjacent to wildland fuels. Environmental conditions supporting extreme fire growth (sustained drought, several days of low RH, low fuel moistures, hot temperatures, and high winds) happen many times yearly in this region. It is just a matter of time before these conditions meet up with an ignition, potentially causing a very catastrophic event.

Purpose

The purpose of this scenario-based exercise is to provide participants with an opportunity to critically review current response concepts, agency roles and responsibilities, plans, systems, and capabilities for response to a rapidly emerging WUI fire with an ongoing evacuation of the community. Aiming to learn from lessons from real-world incidents, this TTX is designed to be a pre-incident evaluation. The focus is on local emergency responder command and control, coordination, critical decisions, notifications, public information, and eventual integration of state and federal assets necessary to save lives and protect the health and safety of both responders and the public. North Tooele Fire District has a history of interagency partners working well together, as demonstrated during previous incidents. We will work to

maintain and enhance these existing collaborative processes and supporting systems, to prepare your community for the potential of fast-spreading wildland fire and help you bring focus to your CWPP efforts.

Scope

This exercise will focus on the greater community's role in response to the potential consequences of an emerging WUI fire. Processes and decision-making are more important than minute details. Emphasis is on coordination, integration of capabilities, and problem identification and resolution. Ultimately lessons should be learned by the end of this exercise to assist the community in its overall plan to deal with a real-world incident.

Exercise Design Goals and Objectives

Goal: To work together as emergency response agencies and partners, dealing with a catastrophic wildfire scenario impacting communities. Identify the roles and responsibilities of each agency that will ultimately lead to better preparation and preparedness for a real-world event.

Objectives:

- Gather emergency responders and partners together for a TTX involving a rapidly evolving wildland incident.
- Evaluate agency roles and responsibilities in a catastrophic wildfire scenario impacting the community and how each agency will collaborate with other organizations.
- Define and understand each agency's role in the incident and how they fit within the organization of incident command or the Emergency Operations Center.
- Identify blind spots that need to be addressed to be successful with future events.
- Document key outcomes and follow-up actions of the tabletop.

Exercise Structure and Guidelines

The TTX will be a multimedia, facilitated exercise. Each module will begin with a multimedia update that summarizes key events occurring within that time. After the update, the facilitator will engage the various functional response agencies on their appropriate response issues, actions, concerns, and partners with whom they will collaborate. Dialog with all the represented organizations will then occur to determine assistance that could be provided to a specific situation and how an interagency approach can best be accomplished.

Guidelines:

- (2) The TTX will be held in an open, high-energy, low-stress, no-fault environment. Varying viewpoints, even disagreements, are expected.
- (3) Respond based on your knowledge of current plans and capabilities (utilize only your existing assets) and insights derived from your experience and training.
- (4) Decisions are not precedent-setting and may not reflect your organization's final position on a given issue. This exercise is an opportunity to discuss and present multiple options and possible solutions. **Do what's right!**
- (5) Issue identification is not as valuable as suggestions and recommended actions that could improve response and preparedness efforts. Critical thinking and problem-solving should be the focus.

Scenario

It's Monday, August 12th. After the previous year's robust monsoon and an above-average wet spring, there has been below-average moisture, for the last three months. With the above-average early moisture grass crops are bigger than anyone can remember but have completely cured over the record hot summer. With no Monsoonal moisture appearing, the US drought monitor shows most of Utah in exceptional or extreme drought. Energy Release Components (ERC's) are above the 97th percentile which puts the fire danger at extreme. Wildland fires have been occurring for over the last two months in the Great Basin with many of them requiring Interagency Incident Management Teams (IMT'S). Currently, all the IMT's in the region are committed to large or emerging fires. Local resources have been heavily involved in the regional response. The National Weather Service Salt Lake office issued the weather below the evening before for zone 478.

WEATHER DISCUSSION

A shallow Monsoonal wave will push through Utah this evening possibly producing dry lightning followed by continued strong winds. Winds will begin peaking tonight and into Monday. Hot dry, and strong Southwesterly winds are expected starting late this evening, peaking overnight into Monday morning before slowing Monday afternoon. These winds have the potential to reach critical speeds. Winds are likely to initially reach speeds greater than 30 mph by midnight and will continue to increase through the day Monday. Relative humidity is expected to reach critical levels overnight into Monday with the influx of dry air. Conditions will be favorable for rapid fire spread which may threaten life and property. Use extra caution with potential ignition sources, especially in grassy areas. Outdoor burning is discouraged. A Red Flag warning has been issued for all of Western Utah as this system approaches.

*****CRITICAL RED FLAG CONDITIONS FROM 2100 TONIGHT TO 1800 TOMORROW*****

TONIGHT: RED FLAG conditions and Wind Advisory in effect from 2100 this evening to 1800 tomorrow

WEATHER: Continued above-average temperatures with poor overnight humidity recovery and possible dry lighting.

MINIMUM TEMPERATURES: 68-73 degrees above 7500ft and 80-75 degrees below 7500ft.

MAXIMUM RELATIVE HUMIDITY: 15% to 17% above 8500ft / 13% to 16% below 7500ft.

-24 HOUR TREND- down 2 to 5%

20 FOOT WINDS: Southwest winds 10 to 15 mph with gusts to 25 in the early evening. Winds increasing to 15-25 mph with gusts to 30 after 2400. Winds gradually increase through the night and into the early morning.

CHANCE OF WETTING RAIN: 0%

MONDAY: RED FLAG Warning and Wind Advisory in effect

WEATHER: Sunny, windy, and continued dry.

MAXIMUM TEMPS: Ranging from 80-86 above 7500ft and 100-93 below 7500ft

-24 HOUR TREND- little change.

MINIMUM RELATIVE HUMIDITY: 12-15% above 7500 ft. and 8% to 12% below 7500ft.

-24 HOUR TREND-down 2%

20 FOOT WINDS: Southwest winds 15 to 25 mph gusts to 30 before 0900 then increasing to 20 to 35 mph by mid to late morning, gusts to 40-50. Winds decrease slightly late afternoon possibly shifting out of the Northwest 15-25 mph with an occasional gust to 30 mph possible.

CHANCE OF WETTING RAIN: 0%

AFTER ACTION REPORT NORTH TOOELE FIRE DISTRICT WILDFIRE TABLETOP EXERCISE

At 0530 Chief Nunn receives a text from one of the volunteer firefighters with the following video attached.

“Morning Chief, sorry it’s so early, my brother is heading to hike up in the Stansbury’s this morning and sent me this video. It’s up South Willow Creek above Cottonwood Campground. Have we been called for this? I haven’t heard anything paged out. He thinks it may have just started from the lightning last night.”

Chief texts the County Fire Warden to see what’s going on and at 0600 receives this text.

“Good morning, Chief, yes, Engine 603 just got on scene they were on another lightning fire in the area and were able to get there quickly. Sounds like it’s about 6 acres and spreading fast. They are working on a hose lay but they are having issues getting around it in this wind. What resources do you have available to assist us? Winds are supposed to be brutal today!!”

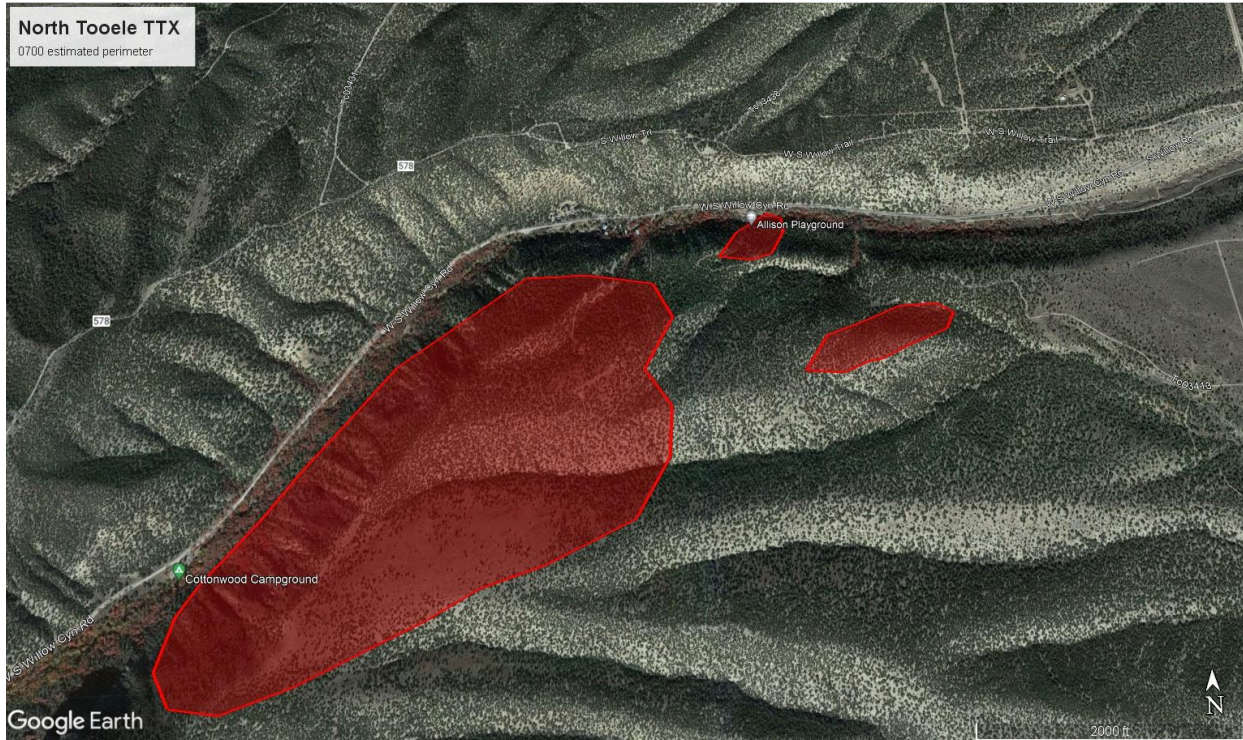
This is an estimated location of the fire that he sent you.



Questions-Are you concerned about a fire in this area? What’s your current thought process? What resources are you sending to help? Currently, are you informing anyone else of this situation?

Notes: _____

At 0700 you get an update; they are estimating the fire to be about 175 acres with several established spot fires and multiple small spots. They are reporting no containment but are trying to hold South Willow Canyon Road and trying to establish structure protection. Here is what the Incident Commander (IC) has drawn as a perimeter. IC states they are ordering resources, but they are stretched. Fire behavior is extreme and they are discussing the possibility of ordering an Incident Management Team (IMT) but no teams are available in the region.



Questions- Do you have a say in the decision to order an IMT? Have you established any management action points (Trigger Points) for a fire coming from this area? If so, what are they? How engaged are you in the management of this fire?

Notes: _____

As the morning goes on, this is the smoke column that is seen looking South from I-80.



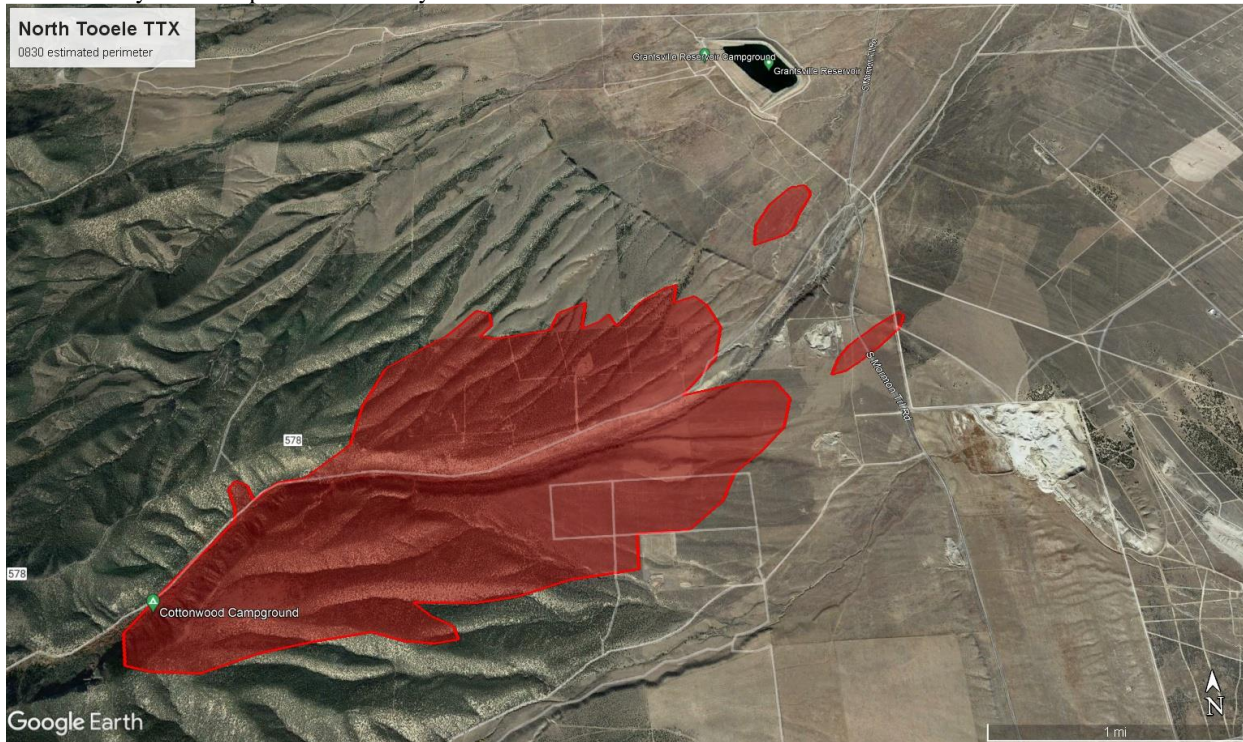
What are your current thoughts? Who are you having discussions with? How are you informing the public about what's occurring? Visitors in the area? How have you historically organized multi-jurisdictional incidents?

Notes: _____

At 0830 you hear air attack on your radio with his initial flight of the fire, here is what you hear as he's talking to the IC.

“This fire is making a hard push to the Northeast; I’m having trouble seeing under the column at this time near the head of the fire, I can see it has made it down to near Morman Trail Road but not sure if it has crossed it yet. As I fly around the South flank there is active fire all along this side with a finger making a push towards Box Elder Canyon. Several structures in that area will need some attention, soon. Coming around to the West I do see some campers up the canyon that will need to be evacuated. Near the heel, the fire is actively backing up South Willow Canyon on that North-facing slope, but crews are holding a portion of South Willow Road. However, there is a finger that has crossed and is pushing up toward the ridge, there may be an opportunity to catch that...does appear there are some structures on fire down in the canyon. Flying East along the North flank, the fire has crossed South Willow Canyon Road down farther and is very active but there are some fuel breaks that it's burning into that may slow it down. I did get a quick look under the column, and you do have at least two established spot fires, 20 to 30 acres in size and the Southernmost has crossed Morman Trail Road and is running hard to the Northeast. Very rough air in here, we are going to have to pull back. I have air support on order but not sure how effective they'll be in this wind or if they can safely fly today. I'm estimating over 1,700 acres on the main fire, with high spread potential. I'm assuming you are in contact with the communities out in front of this thing?”

This is what you drew up based on what you heard.



What are your thoughts? Any areas of concern where you may need extra time to prepare?
 Where are you at on evacuations? What is your message to the public? How do you get that message out?
 Notes: _____

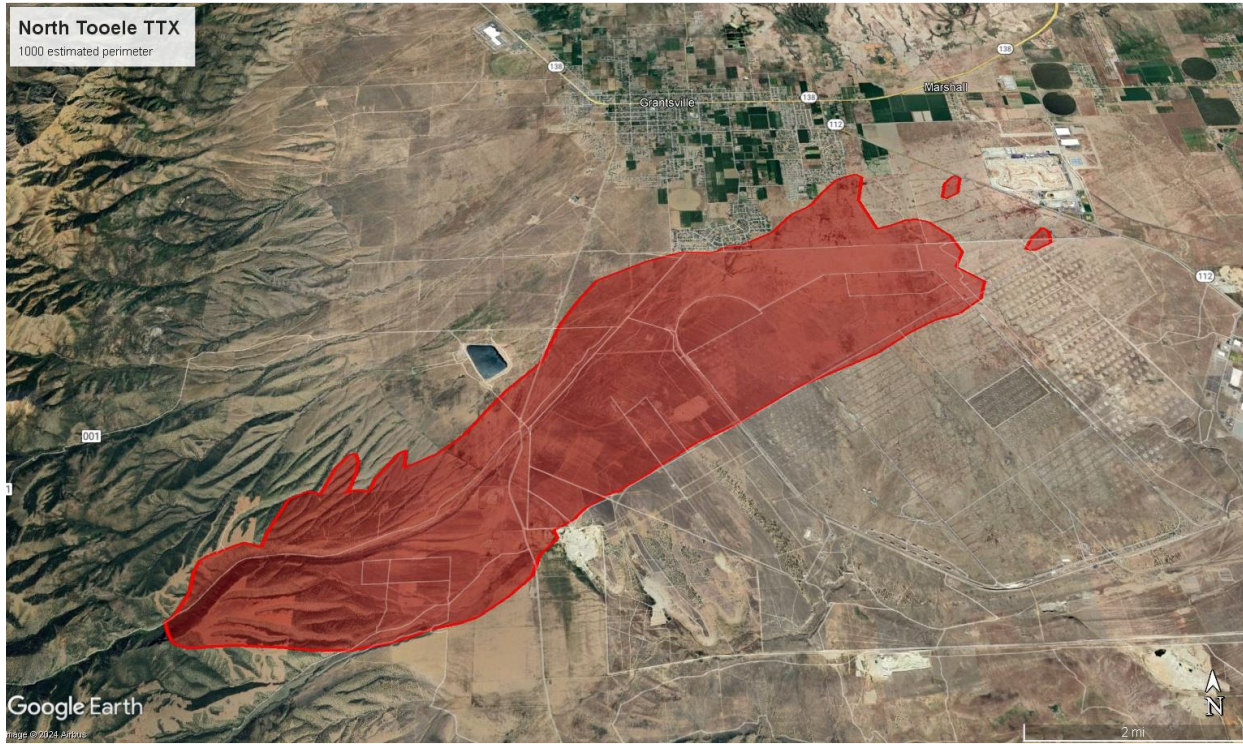
A unit of yours is able to get through the fire up South Willow Canyon Road. When they get through, they find an elderly gentleman, his wife, and three dogs have a 41-foot travel trailer jackknifed and stuck in the middle of the road, there are several families stuck behind them in RV's on the one-way road with no way to get around the vehicle. They are getting multiple spot fires in their immediate vicinity. Their escape route back to the East is cut off by the fire and they can go no further West. What is your direction to the crew? How do you remedy this situation?



Notes: _____

AFTER ACTION REPORT NORTH TOOELE FIRE DISTRICT WILDFIRE TABLETOP EXERCISE

Below is the estimated perimeter as of 1000, the fire is being called the South Willow Fire. Multiple structures are now on fire on the South side of Grantsville and up South Willow Canyon Road. The approximate acreage of the main fire is over 11,000 acres with multiple small spot fires. Besides the many small spot fires, there are several large spot fires as seen on the map, the largest being about 40 Acres.



Does the current fire perimeter information change any of your evacuation protocols or routes? Who are the partners you are bringing together to be successful? What are each of your organization's current priorities?

Notes: _____

Responders are having issues with people refusing to evacuate. How do you handle this situation? Can you force them? What system do you have in place to document and keep accountability for this situation? Who has the statutory authority to issue an evacuation?

Notes: _____

AFTER ACTION REPORT NORTH TOOELE FIRE DISTRICT WILDFIRE TABLETOP EXERCISE

You get a report from one of your units responding to the end of Gold Dust Road. "We have multiple spot fires that are becoming established along with several homes on fire. We won't be able to handle it with the resources on hand. We grabbed a hydrant and there's no water pressure, can you check on that for us? We are about out of tank water....We are going to make sure that no one is in these homes that are immediately threatened." One of the firefighters snapped this picture on arrival.



What is your direction to the crew? How do you deal with the water situation?

Notes: _____

How is your working relationship with the various utility providers (Gas, Electric, Water, etc.)? Are they part of your unified command structure? How do you contact them? What if they are being evacuated?

Notes: _____

Several individuals have called and are requesting assistance with evacuating horses that someone let out along West Elda Way Road. They are concerned the horses will get run over, due to the low visibility with the smoke. What actions do you take?



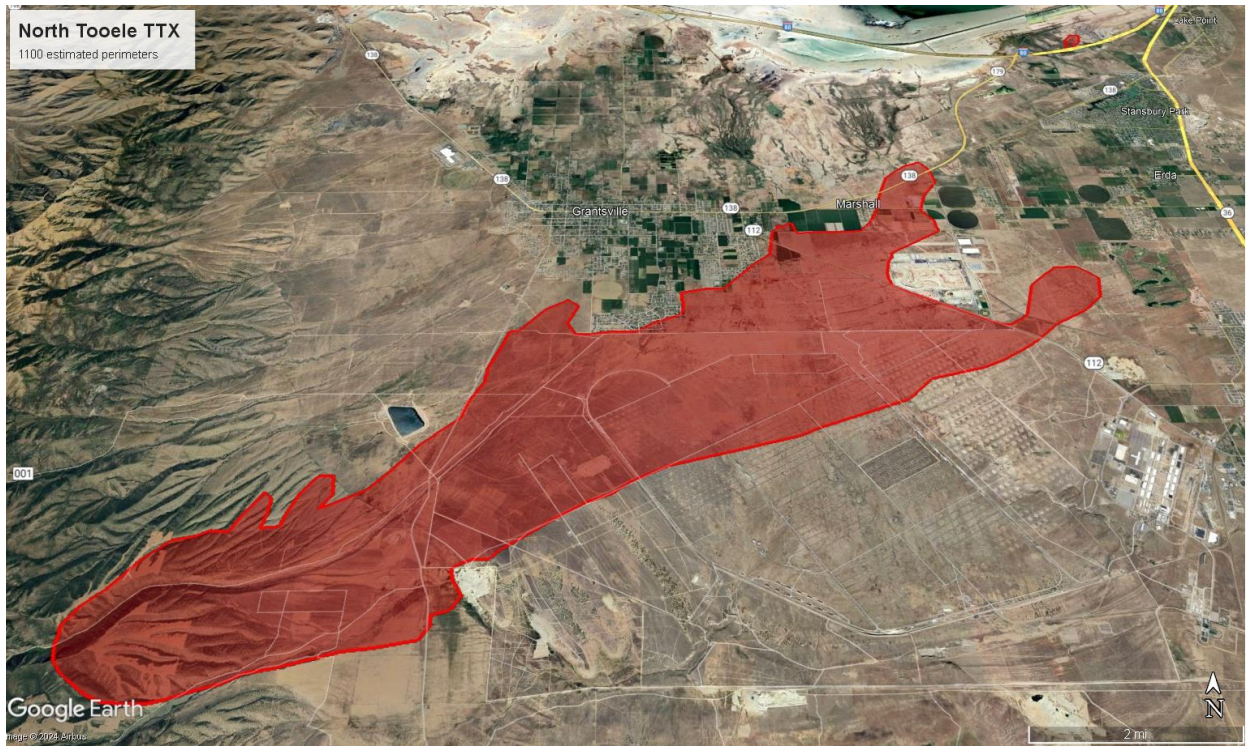
Notes: _____

AFTER ACTION REPORT NORTH TOOELE FIRE DISTRICT WILDFIRE TABLETOP EXERCISE

A mutual aid engine from Unified Fire Authority responding West on I-80 comes up on a multi-car pile-up between Exit 99 and before Exit 94. They are reporting a vehicle on fire spreading into the wildland. As they are reporting it a second accident occurs on the Eastbound side, as a truck tries to turn around through the median. How do you handle this situation? What is your Continuity of Operations Plan? How are you handling the accountability of your resources?

Notes: _____

Here is your estimated perimeter as of 1100 along with the new start from the accident on I-80. The South Willow fire is estimated to be 18,000 and the I-80 fire is 55 acres and spreading fast.



With everything going on at this point: What are your current concerns and priorities? What are your current resource needs and how are you dealing with them? Do you have designated safety zones or temporary refuge areas identified?

Notes: _____

AFTER ACTION REPORT NORTH TOOELE FIRE DISTRICT WILDFIRE TABLETOP EXERCISE

One of your local elected officials called, wanting to know why traffic isn't moving East on Highway 138 They are trying to evacuate and are concerned that they are going to get burned over; they are in heavy smoke and see flames ahead. How do you deal with this situation?

Notes: _____

You were just informed that your spouse called. They were on Facebook and a private individual has taken it upon themselves to be the "information clearinghouse". The private individual, however, is giving out wrong information on evacuations that could lead people into harm's way. The individual is also reporting that an ecoterrorism arsonist is starting all these fires. How would you handle this situation?

Notes: _____

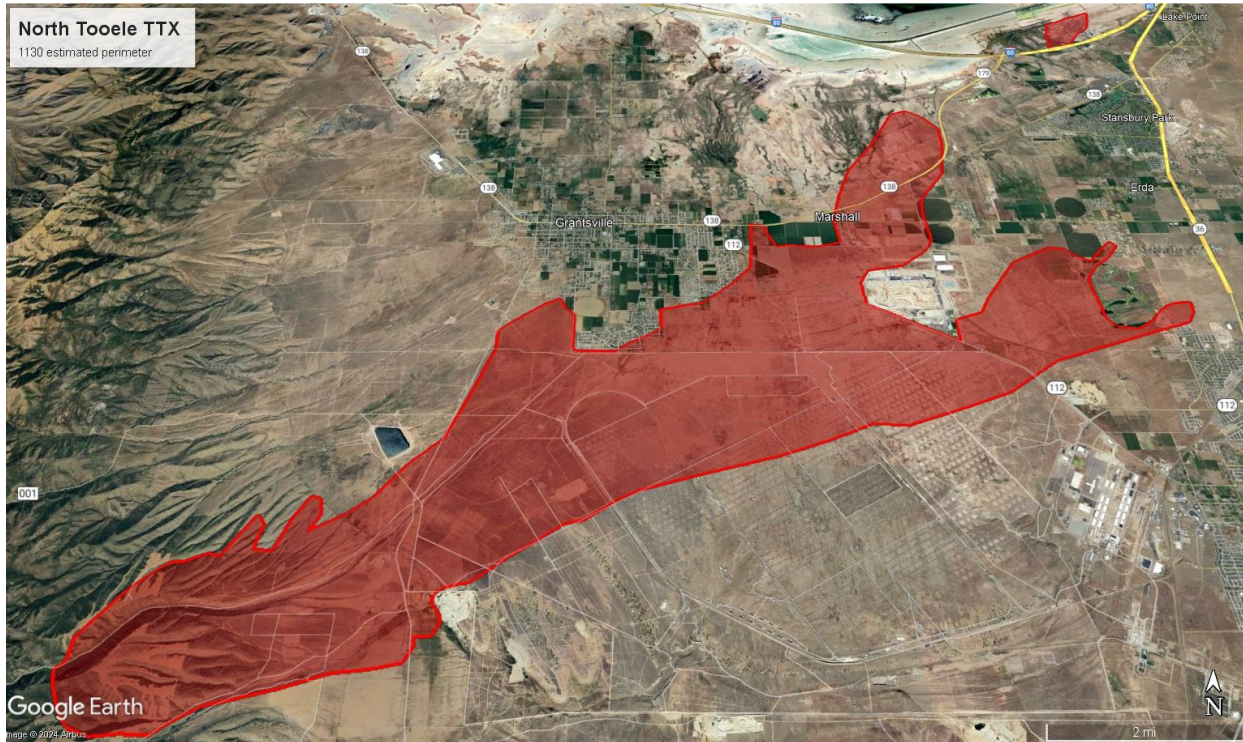
Dispatch has received a call from a panicked husband stating his wife and kid are trapped at home. He has their only working vehicle at work in Salt Lake. His wife works a night shift and was just woken up by their little boy because he heard sirens passing by on the road. They see smoke and fire outside the home located at the end of Marshall Road.



Above is a picture of the North Gunderson Circle and Marshall Road intersection. What is your plan to deal with this situation?

Notes: _____

1130 Perimeters for both fires



With the current fire perimeter, what are your current concerns? Are there any changes to how you are organizing? Any new partners that you are bringing together? What are your strategic thoughts?

Notes: _____

Are there at-needs populations that are a concern? Parents are calling concerned about their kids at several of the schools. What's your plan for these locations that are threatened? Other Facilities?

Notes: _____

AFTER ACTION REPORT NORTH TOOELE FIRE DISTRICT WILDFIRE TABLETOP EXERCISE

The fire perimeters are now impacting multiple points within several communities. You have just heard on the radio that a county road employee trying to clear a large tree along Highway 138 across from Tooele Valley Meat was hit with a large limb and appears to have a broken femur. At the same time, a deputy is flagged down near the Purple Mattress Factory by a woman and child, both are severely burned, requesting an ambulance. You only have one ambulance unit available; how do you resolve this issue? What are your options?

Notes: _____

The fire has taken down a primary communications site. What if your communication towers go down? What if cell phones are taken out? What redundancies do you have in place to maintain communications?

Notes: _____

A thunderstorm finally brings in some moisture and stops the fire spread, however, the fire has impacted a large portion of several communities' infrastructure and homes.

At what point do you allow repopulation to occur? Who ultimately makes this decision? Who are the partners that need to be included? Who informs the public that their homes are lost? How do you handle your emergency services when many of your responders are personally affected?

Notes: _____

Are there, or should there be projects in your CWPP re-write that would help lessen the impacts of a similar fire here in North Tooele County?

Notes: _____

END SCENARIO



Thank you for your time and participation. We hope you found utility in this tabletop and look forward to continuing to work with you, as your community works to be better prepared for a wildland fire.

Please take the time to fill out the attached evaluation form so we can continue improving our delivery of future tabletops.

Homeland Security Exercise Evaluation and Action Steps North Tooele Wildfire Tabletop Exercise

Exercise Design and Conduct

1. What is your assessment of the exercise design and conduct? *Please rate, on a scale of 1 to 5, your overall assessment of the exercise relative to the statements provided below, with 1 indicating strong disagreement with the statement and 5 indicating strong agreement.*

Rating of Satisfaction with Exercise

Assessment Factor	Strongly Disagree				Strongly Agree
a. The exercise was well structured and organized.	1	2	3	4	5
b. The exercise scenario was plausible and realistic.	1	2	3	4	5
c. The multimedia presentation helped the participants understand and become engaged in the scenario.	1	2	3	4	5
d. The facilitator(s) was knowledgeable about the material, kept the exercise on target, and was sensitive to group dynamics.	1	2	3	4	5
e. The story map used during the exercise was a valuable tool throughout the exercise.	1	2	3	4	5
f. Participation in the exercise was appropriate for someone in my position.	1	2	3	4	5
g. The participants included the right people in terms of level and mix of disciplines.	1	2	3	4	5
h. The exercise provided a good test of our knowledge/skills.	1	2	3	4	5

Column Totals:

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Grand Total:

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2. What changes would you make to improve this exercise?

Please provide any recommendations on how the exercise could be improved or enhanced to better prepare emergency responders to safely and effectively respond to these types of incidents.

3. Any closing thoughts to help improve future exercises?
