**Prevention Team Assignments**

Traditional Requests for Assistance

Raise Awareness

Impact specific fire cause or occurrence area

Improve relations between agency and partners (new and existing)

Develop products for prevention use

Potential Requests for Assistance

Assist agency in prevention strategy development

Educate public on a topic such as Firewise, Prescribed Fire, or agency initiative

Improve communication outlets including websites and social media

Development of community engagement assessments and strategies

Increase agency prevention capacity through training and task book assistance

I believe that states and agencies have become much more informed on the use of channeling resources into prevention team activities. Early requests for teams were generic to raise awareness and try to reduce the incidence of wildfire. Teams were very skilled and effective in that tasking.

Prevention teams are now being requested more frequently, including the requests to assist IMTs in their overall management strategy. States and agencies are becoming more active in their prevention outreach and like to use local resources for their efforts where possible. They do this for several reasons.

* Local partnerships are fostered and enhanced in working together to a common goal.
* Local people are familiar with the issues, communities, and attitudes they are working in.
* Local people that have done this work before can be productive on day 1 contrasting with outside groups that need start up time and have a learning curve.
* Local teams allow for more training within the agency, in turn increasing their own capacity.
* They know what they are getting and have more control of the resources.
* They can add key personnel to fill needed gaps of a resource or skill.
* Travel costs are reduced.

There are negatives for using local resources.

* The same people used over and over limits fresh ideas, views, and observations.
* Personnel are faced with dealing with their normal job pressures in addition to the assigned task of prevention team projects.
* Personnel can be pulled off the prevention assignment to satisfy higher priorities.
* Opportunities are missed to go outside their area to see and use other approaches to a similar problem.

Agencies and states have the right to develop the resources they feel will deliver the best product for their particular situation. Whether we like it or not, they also develop a set of standards and views that translate into who they prefer to be part of the effort. They also recognize certain skill sets and attitudes that work well in the project objectives and reduce conflicts among employees and local administrations. For these reasons, desiring to name request is relatively common.

Name requesting in prevention got ‘bad press’ initially because the same small group got the best assignments and few people got the opportunity to participate. The fact is that at the beginning, there was just a small group and they developed the system and proved its effectiveness. Our hats are off to them and their accomplishments. They also built in the need to train members and leaders and incorporate them into training positions whenever possible.

Moving from the initial group to the corps of trained members and leaders, there were times when favoritism to certain members was practiced. I think this came from three reasonable factors. First, each team leader felt pressure to do well and prove their value. Bringing on known quantities with experience lead to good results. Second, guidelines for ordering and using teams were not clear and were minimally enforced. Third, states and agencies had preferences for certain personnel and positions that guided final team ordering and placement. A fourth source of confusion came when demand for teams was high and all rules were off. Get someone in to help and do it now.

National prevention managers have a responsibility to properly represent national prevention and education teams as professional and able to effectively assist on any assignment, for any agency, at any scale within the scope of their function. They also have the responsibility of providing an efficient and understandable method of ordering a unit through existing resource ordering systems.

If random national teams are required, there is some push back from states and agencies. The direction to optionally fill a team using local GAC resources first will be positive for the local agency. The options then, are 1) Use local team members 2) Use a team from the same region or 3) Use a national team.