

BURNS DISTRICT BLM



2003 FIRE & AVIATION REPORT

Prepared by: Burns Interagency Communication Center



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I. Fire Season Narrative

The 2003 fire season on the Burns District was much like that of 2002 – hot and dry with an abundance of cured fuels, but minimal lightning activity to produce many starts. Throughout the end of May, all of June, and into the first week of July, activity was limited to 9 fires (6 lightning caused, 3 human caused) and all incidences were kept to less than 2 acres. The District didn't see another wildfire until July 23, 2003 when the next storm passed through, resulting in approximately 42 starts over the next 2 weeks. 91% of those fires were kept at less than one acre, while the remaining four left 11, 5, 7, and 168 acres burned.

The 168 acre Cecil Fire was the District's only Type 3 incident during the 2003 season. Burning near Riley, in a thick juniper slash cut, the fire had definite potential to spread quickly and into the adjacent forest. Fortunately, when the fire started, several things were to our benefit including it happened a single start day, most resources were on district, and the wind was blowing in our favor. The incident turned out to be a good opportunity for training and allowed several employees to gain experience on their home unit. Following the Cecil fire, activity on the District was minimal. A 60 acre incident occurred in early August and was the District's largest human caused fire for 2003. During hunting season, unattended camp fires resulted in 29 incidents, all of which remained at less than one acre.

Over the course of the season, resources were also used in California, Washington, Montana, Alaska, Idaho, Utah, Mississippi, and Texas. With only 102 incidents and 308 acres burned in 2003, the District saw one of its slowest fire seasons in the past 10 years.



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II. Aviation Summary

Overview

The aviation program went through several personnel changes during 2003, requiring everyone in the aviation group to work with a new supervisor, accept new management styles, and remain flexible while maintaining focus on aviation operation safety. Throughout the midst of change, the program sustained optimum functionality and had only one SAFECOM (#03-455) for an intentionally released longline and one CA-1 for a cut finger for the entire season. No aircraft accidents or incidents with potential occurred, however, an aviation end product contractor did have a major accident with injuries, but no fatalities.

SEAT Base

The SEAT operation proved successful in 2003. Gallons of retardant pumped increased over last year, and no incidents or accidents occurred during the season. The SEAT manager wrote a new base operating plan and negotiated a two year MOU and rental agreement with Ponderosa Ranch for incidental use of their paved airstrip in the Silvies Valley. Two VHF-AM radios for SEAT ramp communications were purchased during the season as well.

Helicopter

In 2003, the Helibase received new Tri-Max fire extinguishers and VHF-AM radios, and a new four year EU helicopter contract was awarded to Roger's Helicopters and their B-206L-1 aircraft. The aircraft has low hours, light weight, and a strong C30P engine, making it ideal for operation in the high/hot environment of Steens Mountain. The BIFZ provided Helitack personnel as instructors for the National HCWN workshop, numerous off-unit helicopter module assignments (large fire support), and assisted neighboring BLM units with relief Helicopter Managers. The crew also supported BIFZ Rx fire projects by providing PSD capability and Helibase management during helitorch operations, and Prineville Rx projects (10,000+ acres) by providing aircraft, PSD with operator, and ground support. The BIFZ aircraft and crew were used to support many non-fire activities as well, including: slinging of fence materials into the South Steens area, transporting resource specialists on the Kiger Canyon fence survey, flying BLM-LEO surveillance, assisting Harney County Search & Rescue, providing post-crash Medivac service, performing Pueblo Mountain cattle monitoring, and assisting with Kiger/Riddle wildhorse census.



Miscellaneous

- Fire reconnaissance flights were performed, as requested, to supplement zone lookout tower detection capabilities.
- Aerial observers using current lightning maps were very successful in locating new starts.
- Every detection flight discovered at least one new fire start. Early detection, combined with rapid Helitack and SEAT response, assisted the zone in keeping overall acres burned to a minimum.
- The BIFZ aviation group assisted SORO, WO, OAS and USFS on many projects, issues, reviews and requests. These included participation with Western Oregon Fire/Aviation Review Team, formal WO FOIA response on aerial retardants, negotiating with aerial ignitions working group and OAS on protocols for use of contractor mixmaster modules, and USFS working group on aviation end product contract policy development.





II. BIFZ Aviation Summary (continued)

Flight Hours

		FIRE	RESOURCES	LAW ENFORCEMENT	OTHER	TOTAL
FIXED WING	ARA	7.10	0.00	0.00	0.00	7.10
	SEAT (ALL)	30.81	0.00	0.00	0.00	30.81
	CONTRACT	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
	COOPERATOR	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
HELICPTR	ARA	3.40	18.70	0.00	0.00	22.10
	CONTRACT	61.10	36.60	1.60	1.70	101.00
	COOPERATOR	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
	TOTAL	102.41	55.30	1.60	1.70	161.01

Flight Costs

		FIRE	RESOURCES	LAW ENFORCEMENT	OTHER	TOTAL
FIXED WING	ARA	\$1,385	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$1,385
	SEAT (ALL)	\$98,513	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$98,513
	CONTRACT	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
	COOPERATOR	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
HELICPTR	ARA	\$18,193	\$19,501	\$0	\$0	\$37,694
	CONTRACT	\$185,421	\$37,234	\$978	\$1,431	\$225,064
	COOPERATOR	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
	TOTAL	\$303,512	\$56,735	\$978	\$1,431	\$362,565

Fire Time/Use

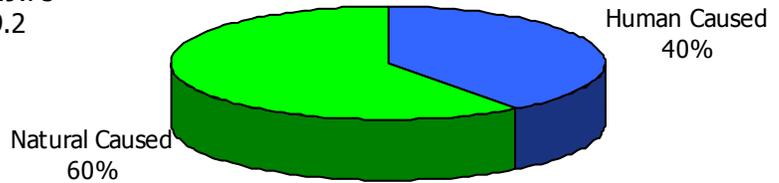
	TOTAL FIRE FLIGHT HOURS	NUMBER OF HOURS	WATER/LC/FOAM
HELICOPTER (EU)	135	23	21,900 GALLONS
SEAT	30	12	13,900 GALLONS



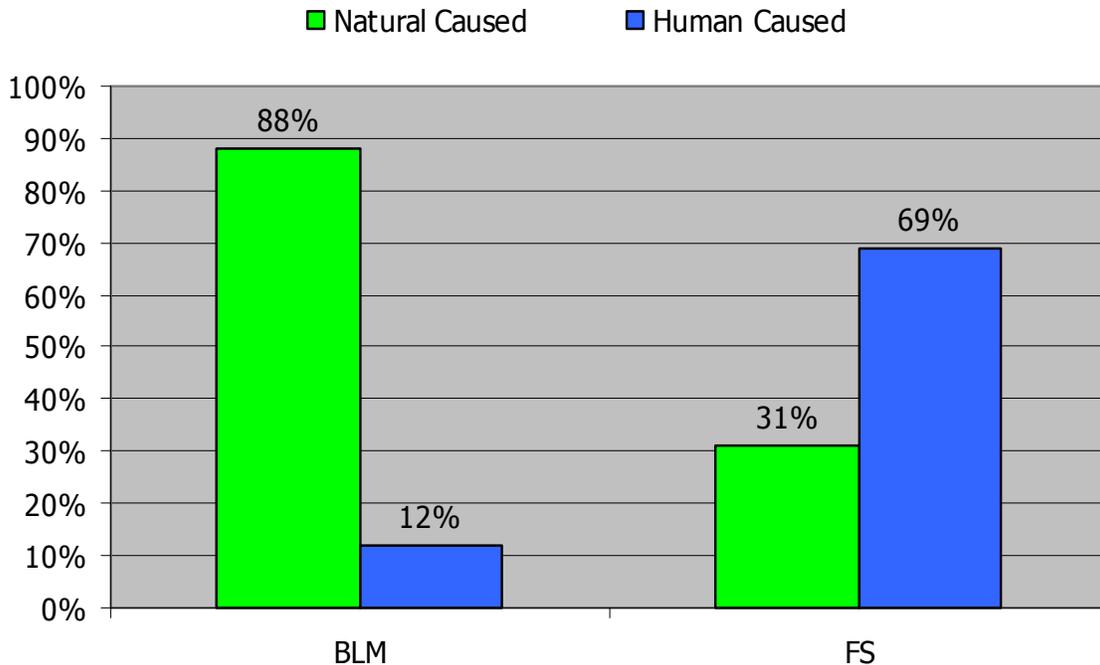


III. BIFZ Fire Activity/Statistics

- Total Number of BIFZ Fires = 102
 - Natural Caused = 59
 - Human Caused = 43
- Total BIFZ Acreage Burnt 2003 = 308.95
 - Natural Caused Acres = 229.75
 - Human Caused Acres = 79.2
- False Alarms = 53



- 51 Total BLM Fires
 - 45 Natural Caused, totaling 195.6 acres
 - 6 Human Caused, totaling 68.9 acres
- 39 Total USFS Fires
 - 12 Natural Caused, totaling 34.15 acres
 - 27 Human Caused, totaling 10.3 acres





IV. Resource Orders

● 77 Resource Order Incident Cards

Overhead

- On District – 13 orders, 183 days
- Off District – 165 orders, 1,430 days

Equipment

- On District – 7 orders, 12 days
Total Local Expenditures = \$113,116.34
- Off District – 57 orders, 348 days
 - 22 Agency Engines (159 days)
 - 6 EERA Buses
 - 23 Contract Equipment
 - 2 water tenders
 - 21 engines (140 days)

Aircraft

- Type of aircraft that came to the District
 - Type II & III Helicopters
 - SEAT's
 - Air Attack
 - Heavy Air tankers
 - Lead Planes
- On District Orders
 - 20 orders, 29 days
- Off District Orders
 - Type III Helicopter (CWN) – N313DH
5 orders, 9 days
 - SEAT T498: 1 order

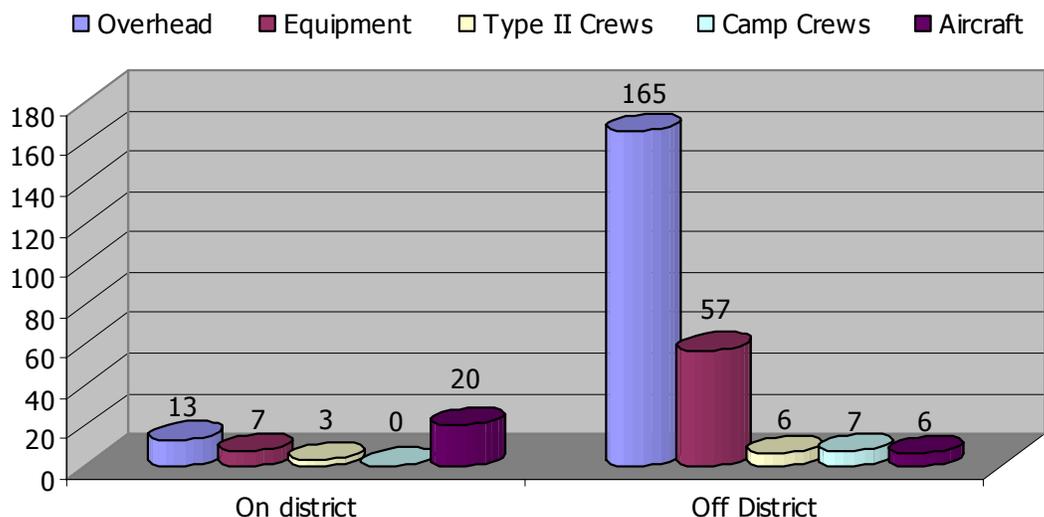
BIFZ Type II Crews – 196 days

- Eastern Oregon #1 (TX-TXS-03514 Palestine Branch)
- Eastern Oregon #2 (TX-TXS-03514 Palestine Branch)
- MAF/BIFZ #1 (OR-DEF-000390 Rattlesnake Canyon)
- BIFZ #1 (CA-SICF-002135 Smoke)
- BIFZ #2 (WA-OWF-000183 ABC MISC)
- BFZ/MAF #1 (CA-SHU-11176 Whitmore)

Camp Crews – 7 Crews, 100 days

- 2 – Davis Fire (OR-DEF-000345)
- 2 – Fawn Peak Fire (WA-OWF-00200)
- 1 – Boles Meadow Fire (MT-SWS-000151)
- 1 – Robert Fire (MT-FNF-000048)
- 1 – Booth Fire (OR-DEF-000848)

2003 Resource Orders

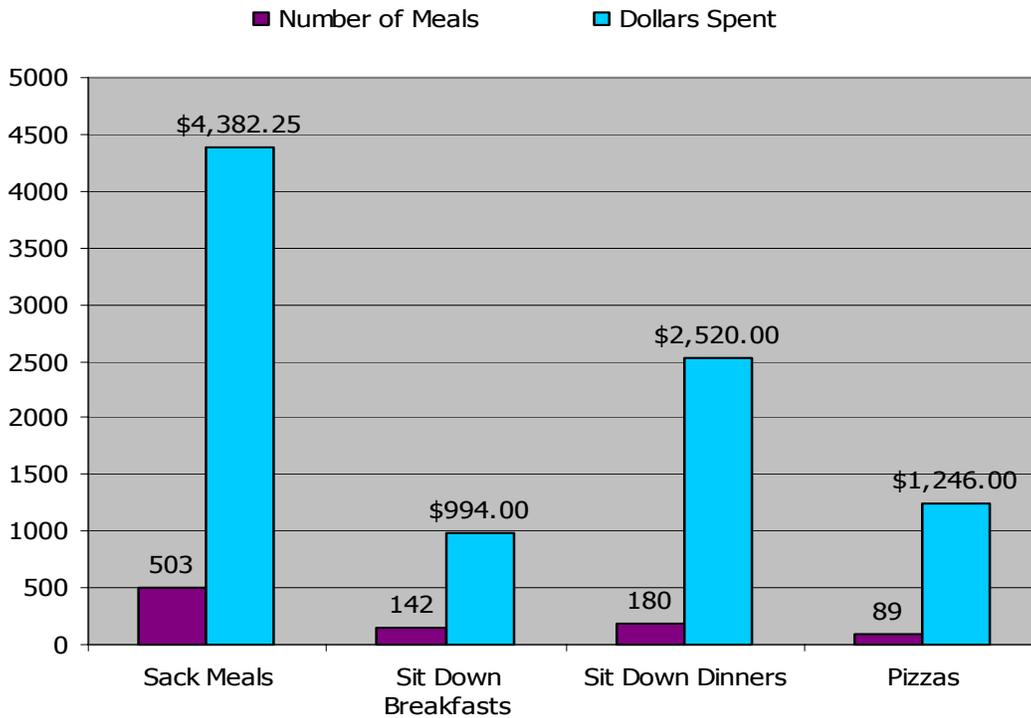




V. Fire Meals & Expenses

2003 Total Local Expenditures = \$9,142.25

- Sack Meals: 508 total for \$4,382.25
- Sit Down Breakfasts: 142 total for \$994.00
- Sit Down Dinners: 180 total for \$2,520.00
- Pizzas: 89 total for \$1,246.00



VI. Other BICC Support

- *Law Enforcement:* 1 law enforcement assist
- *Vehicle Assists / Accidents / Medical Assists:* 16 vehicle assists/ 2 Search & Rescue/ 1 Medical
- *Flight Following:* 38 flight follows
- *Assists – other dispatch center, etc.:* 29 assists
- *Rx Fire / Projects:* 24 Rx Fire Cards initiated





VII. Fire Prevention

In celebration of National Fire Prevention Week, members of the Burns Interagency Fire Zone



and the city Volunteer Fire Department joined forces with Smokey Bear to teach Kindergarten- 4th graders all about fire safety, fire suppression, and fire prevention. Students spent time learning about each of the fire engines on site (city and wildland), participated in safety sessions on campfire use and fire safety, received collection bags full of prevention materials like rulers, pencils, stickers, coloring books, magnets, and posters, and watched a foam spraying demonstration. A BIFZ engine captain showed the students all the parts and pieces of a heavy engine including

tools, hoses, fittings, pumps, safety supplies, meals-ready-to-eat, maps, weather kits, and other essentials.



The children also learned about personal protective equipment and were



able to see the differences between wildland fire equipment and city fire equipment. All students heard a safety presentation about campfires and learned the importance of using fire rings and making sure your fire is out before leaving the area. To close out the day, everyone received a bag full of prevention reminders and watched a foam

spraying demonstration from the city fire department. BIFZ employees also set up a booth at the 2003 Harney County Fair to promote fire prevention.

VIII. Special Projects/Assignments

Columbia Space Shuttle Recovery Mission

Nine firefighters from the Burns Interagency Fire Zone were dispatched to Longview, Texas, on February 18, 2003, to assist with the Columbia Shuttle recovery effort. The crew, along with hundreds of personnel from across the nation including 11 from the Malheur, Wallowa-Whitman and Umatilla National Forests, searched the area and followed compass lines in rough vegetation to specific locations in the hunt for Columbia debris.

"This mission was a special opportunity for us. We were grateful to help our country and support the families who lost loved ones on the Columbia," commented former Burns District Manager Tom Dyer. "We are incredibly proud to have been part of the recovery effort." Throughout the entire shuttle recovery mission, 13 overhead personnel and 2 crews were sent from Eastern Oregon.





VII. Special Projects/Assignments (continued)

Red Flag Program

The BIFZ introduced a community-based fire awareness plan in 2003 called the Red Flag Program. The Red Flag Program was designed to provide a highly visible reminder to citizens to be extra careful on days when extensive fire starts and/or extreme fire behavior are probable. The program is managed and staffed by citizen volunteers and participating businesses and revolves around communication of expected fire weather conditions and mitigation opportunities against fire starts. Coordination with local Fire Protection Districts, the Burns and Hines Fire Departments, and the local community is a critical element to the program's success, and the overall management of fire in the District.



The program works as follows: When forecasted fire weather conditions such as high temperatures, low humidities, dry thunderstorms, increased surface winds or any combination of the above, appear to be dangerous over the next 24-72 hours, the National Weather Service (NWS) informs fire management agencies of a possible Red Flag Event – a situation in which critical weather and fuel conditions could lead to extensive wildfire occurrences or extreme fire behavior. This notification is commonly known as a Red Flag Warning, which remains in effect until the dangerous conditions pass. The onset of a Red Flag Warning from the NWS initiates the Red Flag Program.

In its first season, the BIFZ Red Flag Program utilized over 100 volunteers to help display Red Flags when such conditions existed. Once the BIFZ received a Red Flag Warning, all program volunteers were notified of the alert status and asked to display their 3x5 Red Flag. Each volunteer was also given information on expected weather conditions, potential fire activity, and current fire restrictions to share with the interested public. According to Katie McConnell, Burns Interagency Communication Center (BICC) Assistant Manager, "The Red Flag Program has helped form a Fire Alert Network across Harney County, which has kept everyone informed of current and expected fire weather conditions. This type of community involvement in the local fire management program has been essential for fire preparedness." The BIFZ Red Flag Program was highlighted in the July issue of Snapshots.



BIFZ Camp Crew

This was the third official year for the Burns Interagency Camp Crew. Locally, the Camp Crew provides emergency employment for many kids and members of the community during the summer months. The amount of applications received this year far exceeded previous years, and the response from the community has increased. The Burns Interagency Communications Center processed paperwork for over 80 camp crew employees and sent out seven camp crews during the 2003 fire season, providing employment for several members of the local community, and giving them meaningful work experiences in an emergency situation.

