

Survey Results

30-Mile Fire; Effects of Criminal Charges

Conducted by the International Association of Wildland Fire
January 28 through February 15, 2007



**International
Association of
Wildland Fire**
www.iawfonline.org

The Thirtymile fire, started by an escaped campfire near Winthrop, Washington, claimed the lives of four U.S. Forest Service firefighters on July 10, 2001. On January 30, 2007 the U.S. Attorney in Spokane, Washington, charged the Incident Commander of the fire with four counts of involuntary manslaughter and seven counts of making false statements.

The IAWF, a non-profit, professional association representing members of the global wildland fire community, initiated a survey of wildland firefighters after hearing speculation that some firefighters were no longer going to serve in certain key management positions on wildland fires due to the new threat of going to prison for making mistakes on fires. The objective was to collect data to determine the scope of the issue, and provide objective information to the wildland fire agencies. Wildland firefighters were invited by email as well as postings on wildland fire forums to take the survey which could only be taken once from each computer. The survey was taken by 3,362 people.

There were eight multiple choice questions plus the opportunity to type in remarks. Below, are the complete results of the eight questions. A sampling of the 1,416 remarks are in a companion document and can be found on the IAWF web site at www.iawfonline.org/documents.shtml

1. Are you aware that a US Forest Service employee has been charged with involuntary manslaughter resulting from the incident where four firefighters were overrun and died on the 30-Mile fire in Washington state in 2001?

Yes	3235	96%
No	122	4%
Total	3357	100%

2. What is your opinion about firefighters being charged with involuntary manslaughter due to incidents on a wildland fire?

Very good for wildland fire	27	1%
Good for wildland fire	100	3%
No effect	100	3%
Bad for wildland fire	905	27%
Very bad for wildland fire	2204	66%
Total	3336	100%

3. PRIMARY FIREFIGHTERS: If wildland firefighting is the primary duty in your job, how will this situation affect your career? (skip this question if it is not the primary duty) Because of this: (mark all that apply)

I will retire or find another job within a year	178	8%
I will make myself less available for fire assignments	804	36%
I will not take any fire assignments until this is resolved satisfactorily.	142	6%
I will not take assignments as an Incident Commander.	504	23%
I was on an Incident Management Team in 2006 but I will not be on a Team in 2007	79	4%
I will remove some positions for which I am qualified from my "red card" ("Incident Qualifications Card")	510	23%
No effect.	866	39%

4. "MILITIA" FIREFIGHTERS: If you are qualified for wildland fire positions, but firefighting is not the primary duty in your job, how will this situation affect your availability for wildland fire assignments? (skip this question if it does not apply) Because of this: (mark all that apply)

I will make myself less available for fire assignments	321	31%
I will not take any fire assignments until this is resolved satisfactorily.	99	10%
I will not take assignments as an Incident Commander.	230	23%
I was on an Incident Management Team in 2006 but I will not be on a Team in 2007	39	4%
I will remove some positions for which I am qualified from my "red card" ("Incident Qualifications Card")	225	22%
No effect	460	45%

5. "AD" FIREFIGHTERS: If you are you an "AD" (Administratively Determined) or "EFF" employee, how will this situation affect your availability for wildland fire assignments? (skip this question if it does not apply) Because of this: (mark all that apply)

I will make myself less available for fire assignments	140	28%
I will not take any fire assignments until this is resolved satisfactorily.	64	13%
I will not take assignments as an Incident Commander.	109	22%
I was on an Incident Management Team in 2006 but I will not be on a Team in 2007	29	6%
I will remove some positions for which I am qualified from my "red card" ("Incident Qualifications Card")	130	26%
No effect	231	46%

6. The highest ranking position for which I am qualified on an incident is:

Type 1, Incident Commander, Safety Officer, Information Officer, or Section Chief	180	5%
Type 2, Incident Commander, Safety Officer, Information Officer, or Section Chief	448	14%
Branch Director, Division Supervisor, or Unit Leader	982	30%
Other supervisory position	1262	38%
Other advanced or skilled position	705	21%
Firefighter	282	9%

7. Do you have personal liability insurance?

Yes	490	15%
No	2845	85%
Total	3335	100%

8. If you don't have personal liability insurance, it is because: (skip this question if you have insurance)

I plan to get it this year	599	21%
I don't expect to be in a situation that would result in it being necessary	673	24%
It is too expensive	522	19%
I don't know where or how to acquire it	378	13%

I think my employer will support me, making the insurance unnecessary	582	21%
Other	515	18%

9. Optional remarks, or explanations for your answers. (These remarks may be made public, but they will not be attributed to any individuals.)

1416 Responses