

## **A contribution to the conclusions of the workshop**

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Following my attendance at the above International Workshop I outline hereunder some of my comments / observations on the issues raised.

There was considerable amount of discussion on the definition of 'initial attack' and what exactly did each member understand by this term. The following definitions may be useful in understanding the term from a Fire Service perspective.

#### **Definitions:**

- Time of origin:** This would represent the actual time the fire started and it may or may not be accurately known.  
**(t = 0)**
- Alert:** First time a dispatcher would be aware of this forest fire.  
**(t =1)** This may be 5, 10, 15 or more minutes after the time of origin.
- First response:** This would represent the first resources mobilised to the forest fires by the dispatcher. It may consist of one or more, for example, fire appliances, forestry personnel and equipment, specialist equipment, aircraft, helicopters etc.,
- The dispatcher may have a PDA (predetermined attendance) for this incident or may rely on his / her experience of such incidents or a combination of both to determine the first response.
- Weight of Response:** This would describe the actual number of resources dispatched to the forest fire e.g.  
5 fire appliances.  
2 Aircraft.  
1 Helicopter.
- Additional resources:** The officer in charge of the forest fire (Commander) may request further resources, which would be, mobilised by the dispatcher e.g. a second response.

The PDA (predetermined attendance) which is the weight of the first response would be prepared by the Fire Service in consultation with the Forestry Service and would be based on experience of forest fires. The PDA could be based on incident type i.e. forest fire or on a geographical area. The PDA could also be dynamic in that it could change with time of day, time of year, temperature, wind conditions etc.,

The essence of this workshop in my opinion is to develop dynamic PDA's, which would assist dispatchers in mobilising resources to forest fires.

### **Philosophy.**

It is also worth considering what is our philosophy in preparing a PDA's to deal with forest fires (I am assuming that 'no intervention' is not an option). Are PDA,s designed to deal with and extinguish forest fires,

- a) as quickly as possible,
- b) as cheaply as possible,
- c) some combination of (a) and (b).

and why do we extinguish forest fires. Is it to

- a) protect the trees,
- b) protect other property,
- c) protect the environment from air pollution etc
- d) satisfy the public.

An understanding of our philosophy for 'forest fire fighting (and it may be different between countries and between regions in a country) would be useful in understanding the PDA.

### **Forest Fires**

In Ireland the number of forest fires and the area of forest destroyed by fires on an annual basis is quite small. However, in very many instances the forest is surrounded by or adjacent to bog /gorse lands and we make a big effort to extinguish gorse fires in order to protect the forest. Therefore the PDA for forest and gorse fires are inextricably linked.

### **The way forward.**

The first step is to capture current best practice and share this information with all participants. Indeed some useful information emerged during the course of the workshop. In order to capture a comprehensive base line for current best practice it is necessary to establish how dispatching is related to various parameters which effect fire propagation i.e. time of year, temperature, moisture content etc.

In order to achieve this a questionnaire seeking information on the parameters, which are considered appropriate for capturing the best current practice needs to be prepared and forwarded to the participants for completion. When this is received and analysed a further workshop should be considered where participants would be requested to make a presentation on specific issues (contents of questionnaire) in relation to their own country.

In this way the discussions would be focused and should assist everybody in understanding the current 'best practice'.

When current best practice is understood one could then consider ways of improving same by analysing our current philosophy or approach and targeting some identified procedures with a view to improving same.