

Information Bulletin

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Title: Patrol Training Exercise Causes Range Fire

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Lessons Learned Summary: Training evolutions using incendiary or explosive devices must be evaluated for safety with respect to prevailing weather conditions.

Although fire fighting equipment was available at the scene, the explosive nature of the dry cheat grass combined with environmental conditions allowed the fire to grow out of control before the fire fighting equipment could be utilized.

Discussion of Activities: Hanford Patrol was conducting a tactical training exercise in the desert that involved counter ambush techniques. During this field exercise, a diversionary device (flash-bang) was deployed that started a brush fire. The instructors and members of the class initially attempted to extinguish the fire while awaiting the Hanford Fire Department (HFD), but were unsuccessful. Personnel present then moved to a safe area. Although HFD was on scene within 10 minutes, the fire consumed 1270 acres before being put out. No property damage or injuries were associated with this incident.

Analysis: Analysis of this event determined that the risks and consequences associated with using a flash-bang were not adequately reviewed/assessed. The standing hazard analysis did not sufficiently discuss safe stand-off distances required to prevent ignition of combustibles when using a flash-bang. Although instructors were in compliance with all procedures, they failed to recognize the potential fire hazard posed by the flash-bang.

Recommendations: a. Use of pyrotechnics for training purposes has been curtailed pending evaluation of this event and retraining instructors/controllers/ students who deploy pyrotechnic devices.

b. The standing hazard analyses for the Patrol Training Academy will all be reviewed and updated to incorporate lessons learned. A risk/benefit analysis for the use of pyrotechnics as a training tool needs to be conducted.

c. Guidance needs to be established for the minimum safe distance for pyrotechnic use in training.

d. Determine if there is an acceptable non-pyrotechnic substitute.

e. Evaluate the use of engineering controls for use of pyrotechnics in the field.

f. Evaluate the feasibility of having an instructor "field kit" with fire fighting equipment carried by the instructor.

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References: Occurrence Report RL--PHMC-PATROL-2005-0001