

Analysis of 12 and 24 Hour Operational Shifts in Wildfire Ops

TECHNICAL BULLETIN

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The purpose of this research project was to analyze the two operational shifts, 12-hour and 24-hour, being used on major wildland fires by the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CDF Fire). The problem was no definitive research had been conducted within CDF Fire concerning the operational shifts used on wildland fires. This study used a descriptive methodology. The research questions were: 1. Are firefighters working on the fireline getting adequate rest, a minimum of eight hours sleep, while off shift when working: a) 12-hour operational shifts? b) 24-hour operational shifts? 2. Is there a difference in resources required for a 12-hour versus a 24-hour operations shift which could affect the overall cost of the incident? 3. What are the benefits and drawbacks of both the 12-hour operational shift and 24-hour operational shift under different circumstances and when the fire is contained versus uncontained? The procedures involved an onsite literature search at the National Emergency Training Center's (NETC's) Learning Resource Center (LRC) and CDF Fire library and an on-line search for other sources. A survey of CDF Fire Major Incident Command Team (MICT) members was conducted. The results revealed that there was adequate scientific information and field experience available regarding both operational shifts. This applied research paper suggests that CDF Fire should consider both the 12-hour and 24-hour operational shifts, with a strong preference to the 24-hour shift for uncontained wildland fires and use the 12-hour shift for contained fires, or wildland fires that had no night shift. It was further recommended that CDF Fire adopt 24-hour shift as its preferred operational shift in all its policy handbooks and training manuals. Finally, it was recommended that CDF Fire have Firefighting Resources of Southern California Organized for Potential Emergencies FIRESCOPE and California Wildfire Coordinating Group (CWCG) adopt the 24-hour shift and have it placed in the field operations guide (FOG).

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