



Boulder Emergency Squad

Boulder County Wildland Fire Training Program Proposal

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Executive Summary

In late 2006, a number of rural fire departments in Boulder County imagined pooling the resources of multiple agencies, making all trainings “joint trainings,” and allowing the members of different department to develop meaningful professional relationships with one another. They envisioned having access to a large number of experts in a variety of disciplines, never duplicating the time and effort a neighboring department puts into their training program, and never being forced to continuously “reinvent the wheel.” In the spring of 2007, the Four Mile, Gold Hill, Sugar Loaf, and Sunshine Fire Departments partnered with the Boulder Emergency Squad to create a consolidated fire training program, with administrative and support services provided by BES. Already, the program has increased the quantity of training available, improved interoperability among neighboring departments, maximized resource utilization, established tracking, compliance, and information management systems, and has reduced duplication of services by capturing an economy of scale.

The success of the Boulder County Consolidated Fire Training Program, also called JointFire¹, has prompted a number of departments to investigate the possibility of expanding the program to coordinate wildland fire training for all of Boulder County.

This document serves to illustrate the potential role of the Boulder Emergency Squad in this program.

¹ See <http://www.jointfire.com> for more information

Understanding of Requirements

In addition to concerning themselves with day-to-day issues of responding to emergency and non-emergency incidents, recruiting personnel, and handling routine administrative tasks, fire/rescue department leadership teams struggle to provide a sufficient quantity of high-quality, meaningful education and training for their personnel. The members of the Boulder County Wildland Fire Cooperators (BCWFC), all of whom have primary responsibilities for their home departments, are often burdened with the additional challenge of wildland training coordination. Unfortunately, the present system is plagued by communication failures, delays in announcing courses, class cancellations, and instructor recruiting challenges. These shortcomings have prompted a number of agencies to investigate the possibility of centralizing wildland training administration using a system already established by the Boulder Emergency Squad to coordinate structure fire training. There are a handful of key weaknesses in the current system that would be addressed by such a shift:

1. **Quantity of training:** At the county level, the BCWFC are able to host only a handful of courses each season. An individual department, especially a smaller, more rural department, is often faced with the daunting task of making a number of trainings and refreshers available in-house.
2. **Centralized administration:** While BCES and BCWFC are involved in administering much of the wildland training for the county, the staff of both are busy with their primary responsibilities. Furthermore, determine “who is responsible for what” is often confusing and inefficient.
3. **Participant registration:** Once courses are announced, which sometimes occurs with only a few days’ notice, registration involves a cumbersome paper-based system, and student often learn whether they were accepted into a class on the first scheduled training day.
4. **Instructor support:** Currently, instructors are expected to manage much of the administrative burden of running a training program, including acquiring course materials, scheduling a class location, finding assistants, tracking attendance, and issuing certificates in addition to teaching.

Key Benefits and Qualifications

The Boulder Emergency Squad is in the business of providing essential emergency services in areas where local departments are unable to do so themselves, so coordinating a consolidated structure fire training program seemed to be a logical niche for BES. The addition of wildland fire training to the existing program would capitalize on systems already in place. The utilization of the Boulder Emergency Squad in this role brings a few key advantages:

- BES is recognized locally, regionally, and nationally as having an intense in-house training program, and the lessons learned and systems used internally can easily be extrapolated to a larger consortium.

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- BES staff members are comfortable with balancing a large number of diverse training topics and are able to implement and maintain a multi-agency training program without losing focus on the importance of each specific skill set.
- BES is politically neutral and is able to draw from a larger pool of instructors and resources without being confined by political boundaries, inter-jurisdictional conflicts, or “turf wars.”
- BES works closely with a large number of agencies and is able to synthesize the input and ideas of a large number of sources to develop a single cohesive plan.

Solution Overview

In general terms, the following is how BES plans to address the requirements and considerations of a consolidated training program, should they be selected to coordinate wildland fire training:

1. **Quantity of training:** By pooling the resources of all participating agencies, the Boulder County Wildland Fire Training Program will provide a larger number of training opportunities each year. Consistently offering at least five courses per season (S-211: Portable Pumps and Water Use, S-212: Wildland Fire Chain Saws, S-290: Intermediate Fire Behavior, a large number of refreshers (RT-130), and a fifth “rotating” class) is foreseeable at the outset of the program.
2. **Centralized administration:** BES will consolidate all administrative support services for wildland training in Boulder County into a single “one-stop-shop,” responsible for the entire training lifecycle from program planning, scheduling, resource acquisition, and instructor sign-up through record-keeping and certification.
3. **Participant registration:** A master schedule of classes will be published well in advance of the courses, and agencies will be able to submit NWCG nomination forms electronically. Immediate registration confirmation will be available, and invoices may be directed to either the student or their sponsoring agency.
4. **Instructor support:** Instructors will be free to do what they do best: teach. By drawing from a large pool of instructors across Boulder County and the Front Range, BES will ensure the delivery of high-quality training by highly-qualified educators. All class support will be provided by BES, and the instructor will need only to arrive at the correct time and place.

Program Structure

Staying true to the recommendations of the NWCG *Course Coordinator’s Guide* (PMS 907), the Boulder County Wildland Fire Training Program will utilize existing structures to efficiently create a course organizational structure. A Steering Committee, composed of representatives from the Boulder County Wildland Fire Cooperators, will remain responsible for strategic decisions and top-level supervision, including determining the program’s course offerings. The Course Coordinator, who is already working on the structural firefighting training aspects of the

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JointFire program, will be responsible for implementing the directives of the Steering Committee, including creating detailed course plans, ordering materials, scheduling instructors and other resources, managing publicity, student registration, and follow-up. Existing key players in the BCWFC and BCES will be closely involved in assisting the Course Coordinator. Instructors will be provided with instructional materials in advance of the course, and the Coordinator will provide all logistical and financial support.

BES Responsibilities

- Attend meetings of the Northern Colorado Training Committee and report to the Steering Committee
- Maintain a database of local wildland instructors and their instructor qualifications
- Assist with development of instructors by hosting additional courses and instructor training
- Maintain centralized library of training materials and instructor manuals, including a checkout system
- Locate classroom facilities, AV equipment, support materials, food, and instructional resources prior to classes and setup classroom with materials prior to class
- Provide all instructor and student materials required for each course
- Distribute all NWCG required correspondence including nomination forms, confirmations, and certificates
- Streamline course registration and updates via a well-designed web application
- Administer all course billing and manage payments
- Send out all course announcements and confirm scheduling with instructors and students
- Maintain detailed course statistics including number of students, hours of training, cost per student, etc.
- Report to a subcommittee of the BCWFC

Project Timetable

It is reasonable to estimate that BES will require two to three months of planning and preparation time prior to integrating a wildland training component into the existing joint training program and commencing training. A three-year master plan will be available within 60 days of program inception.

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Costs

Administrative support to the Boulder County Wildland Fire Training Program will be available for a fixed annual rate, representing the cost to BES of coordinating the program.

Per-student course fees (representing costs of materials, facilities, consumables, etc.) will remain similar to present amounts (approximately \$60 per day).

Fee Structure and Projected Income

Fixed Income	Amount
BCFFA Annual Contribution	\$2,000.00
BCSO Annual Stipend	\$10,000.00

Course Fee Income				
<i>Course</i>	<i>Number of Students</i>	<i>Student Fee</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>Total (At Half-Capacity)</i>
S-211	30	\$180.00	\$5,400.00	\$2,700.00
S-212	30	\$240.00	\$7,200.00	\$3,600.00
S-290	30	\$240.00	\$7,200.00	\$3,600.00
RT-130	Many	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
Rotating Class	30	\$180.00	\$5,400.00	\$2,700.00
Total			\$25,200.00	\$12,600.00

Grand Total	\$24,600.00
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Projected Expenses

Description	Amount
Instructor Recruitment	\$3,000.00
Information Technology Resources	\$2,500.00
Training Program Coordinator Services	\$10,400.00
Course Materials	\$2,160.00
Course Support (Food, facilities, utilities)	\$2,000.00
Miscellaneous (Fuel, office supplies, mailing, etc)	\$2,700.00
Total	\$22,760.00

Conclusions

There is a definite need for far-reaching changes to the administration of wildland fire training in Boulder County. The consolidation of administrative and support services into the existing fire training program provided by BES provides a number of key benefits in the areas of quantity of training, centralized administration, participant registration, and instructor support.

Allowing the Boulder Emergency Squad to provide support services for the Boulder County Wildland Fire Training Program leverages the strengths of BES in the areas of training planning and administration to develop an all-encompassing solution to growing training concerns. In all, the Boulder County Wildland Fire Training Program will deliver the highest quality training services to emergency responders, allowing them to better protect the citizens of Boulder County.