

Scientific Forest Protection

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depot which distributes to a group of fire-control districts, generally the same group as is handled by a single transport officer.

The officer in charge of the commissary is called the "quartermaster" and, in fact, very often combines the duties of quartermaster with those of packmaster. He arranges for the delivery of the necessary food, tools, and miscellaneous camp supplies, such as tobacco, socks, etc., from the main supply points in the nearest towns to one or more base stations from which they are distributed to the fire-fighting crews as required. The cooks at the various camps make requisition upon him for supplies either directly by telephone or other line of rapid communication, or indirectly by message to the nearest telephone station. The extreme uncertainty of the extent or duration of this class of work constitutes the principal element of difficulty for the quartermaster, and this he is enabled to minimize by being in constant direct communication with each camp.

Finance and Accounting

The payment of fire-fighters must be handled promptly, especially where large crews of a floating class of labour are involved. Also, an efficient organization will want to maintain an accurate record of its expenditure and an adequate cost-accounting system. This is generally handled by a paymaster who disburses for a group of fire-control districts, often including two or more groups of the size handled by a single quartermaster or packmaster. The intercommunicating system expedites the work of the paymaster by enabling him to get advance information in regard to the men coming out and the amount of disbursement he must be prepared to make each day. This is often of great importance in regions where banking facilities are limited. On the fire-line he is represented by the timekeeper who, however, generally has other duties to perform as well.

Intercommunication and Reconnaissance

As has already been indicated it is of vital importance to the efficient operation of each of the several departments of the fire-control staff that constant communication be maintained between the fire-fighting crew and the various headquarters in the rear of the fire-line.

It is also of much importance on a large fire that the officer in charge be kept constantly informed of the



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progress of the fire in all its parts and of the success or failure of the various control measures undertaken by the forces combating it. This, of course, assumes that a relatively large fire is being subdued. Small fires may be readily observed by the officer in charge and no special organization for securing information is needed. On large fires, however, it is frequently found desirable to employ a scout or intelligence officer. The duty of this member of the force is to keep the chief of the fire-fighting force informed of all important features of the work of fire control and of the progress of the fire itself where not yet under control. He is also, as a rule, charged with establishing and maintaining communication with the headquarters in the rear. Now, it rarely happens that a fire camp is located on a permanent telephone line. If, therefore, it is considered necessary that the camp be equipped for direct communication it becomes the duty of this officer to provide telephone connection or establish communication by some other direct means. It is desirable here only to indicate the organization by which it is effected. Naturally, such communication will be required only in exceptional cases. A camp that will be occupied for only a few days at the most and that would need to send only a very few messages would handle them by messenger. But where a large camp may be occupied for a period of weeks, perhaps and is only one of several engaged in the control of a single large fire, then it

may be extremely important to establish direct connection. It is the same problem that faces the military officer who must decide whether to send an order by messenger or have it transmitted by signal. The circumstances in each case and knowledge of the possibilities of all means available must be the guide in the action taken.

Fire Suppression Strategy

The strategy of fire-fighting as distinct from tactics has the same significance as in military operations, that is, it comprises all those broader elements of the problem such as existing conditions of fire, topography, season, forest, forces available, and other factors which taken together determine in a broad way the general method of attack. Unfortunately there is not available in fire-fighting records any body of detailed reports of fire-fighting operations with the reasons therefor and the results attained, such as exist in military history, and lacking this essential data fire-fighting strategy still remains in a condition of very rudimentary development as a practical art. In actual practice it is necessary to rely entirely upon the individual capacity of some member of the force who has himself only his own individual experience to depend upon. Non-specialized forces assume this knowledge of all their members. Specialized forces undertake to bring to bear on this important line of work a more extensive experience by making available for study by the permanent