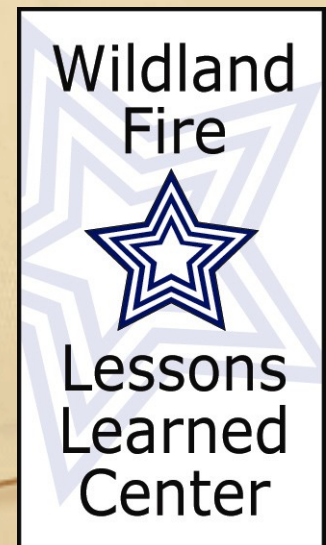


# Building a Foundation for Learning: The Wildland Fire Lessons Learned Center in the U.S.

Paula Nasiatka, Center Manager

The Tassie Fire Conference

September 21, 2007



# Acknowledgements

David A. Garvin

Karl E. Weick

Kathleen M. Sutcliffe

Bushfire CRC/La Trobe University



# Focus of Presentation

- Background in establishing the Lessons Learned Center
- “Lessons Learned” for the Lessons Learned Center
- Strategic direction for the next 5 years



# Need for a Lessons Learned Center

- Identified in Firefighter Safety Awareness Study – 1994 South Canyon Fire (Colorado) fatalities
- National fire training center re-engineering plan



# Early Benchmarking in 2002/2003

- Department of Energy
- U.S. Coast Guard
- Marine Corps
- U.S. Army (benchmarking visit)
  - Organizational structure recommendations
  - Adequately staff the analysis function



# *Interviews with wildland fire personnel*

- Early and reoccurring interviews to ask for feedback is critical
  - Strong interest in general organizational learning in wildland fire vs. sole focus on lessons learned in firefighter safety



# Organizational Learning

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[Advances in Fire Practice](#)
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[Features ▶](#)
[Newsletters ▶](#)
[Organizational Learning ▼](#)
[Overview](#)
[High Reliability Organizing](#)
[AARs](#)
[Leadership Support](#)
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## How Organizations Learn:

One of the Center's main objectives is to improve organizational learning within the wildland fire community. Read about organizational learning here, discover how it will add value to the wildland fire community and understand how you can become part of the solution.

A Learning Organization is skilled at **continuously**:

- 1) creating, acquiring, interpreting, transferring and retaining knowledge and
- 2) at purposefully modifying their behavior to reflect new knowledge and insights.

(Definition by David Garvin 2000)

View the [Six Critical Tasks](#) of a Learning Organization created by Dr. Garvin.



The Center has been working directly with one of the world's leading experts in Organizational Learning, David Garvin, Cizik Professor of Business Administration at the Harvard Business School. He has worked with over fifty organizations around the world on organizational learning and strategic change. He is the author or coauthor of eight books, including the highly acclaimed **Learning In Action, A Guide to Putting the Learning Organization to Work**.

[THE U.S. ARMY'S AFTER ACTION REVIEWS: SEIZING THE CHANCE TO LEARN](#) (128 Kb PDF) An Excerpt from: David A Garvin's Book, "Learning In Action, A Guide to Putting the Learning Organization to Work" (Boston: Harvard Business School Press, 2000), 106-116. Reprinted with permission of the author.

[Organizational Learning and Wildland Fires](#) (128 Kb PDF) Recommendations to the Wildland Fire Community from David A. Garvin, August 2003 was sent to the Center shortly after our first 3-day meeting in June 2003.

Wildland Fire



Lessons Learned Center



# What is a Learning Organization?

## *A learning organization is ...*

- Creating, acquiring, interpreting, transferring, and retaining knowledge.
- Purposefully modifying its behavior to reflect new knowledge and insights.

David Garvin

“Learning in Action”





# Critical Tasks

*A learning organization tries to do six things ...*

1. **Collect intelligence** about the environment.
2. Learn from the **best practices** of other organizations.
3. Learn from its own **experiences and past history**.



## Continued ...

4. Experiment with new approaches.
5. Encourage systematic problem solving.
6. Transfer knowledge throughout the organization.

David Garvin

“Learning in Action”



# LLC Processes

**Collection and Analysis** (collect intelligence)–

AARs/AAR Rollups, Info. Collection Teams,  
Case Studies, Toolboxes

**Knowledge Management/Retention**

(experiences/past history, problem solve) – via  
web sites, newsletters, Advances in Fire Practice

**Knowledge Sharing** (transfer knowledge)–

community of practice venues, workshops and  
conferences



# Key steps in organizational learning success

- Focus on small wins – select one or two geographical areas with “champions”
- Focus on a discipline first - prescribed fire and wildland fire use



# *Community of Practice*

A network of people who share a common interest in a specific area of knowledge or competence. They are willing to work and learn together over a period of time to develop and share that knowledge.



# Role of a knowledge resource center



Supporting the entire interagency wildland fire community now with three unique websites.



## MyFireCommunity.net

Supports professional collaboration among fire practitioners in already established work groups and in new and evolving work groups. Provides a new and more

## WildfireLessons.net

The interagency organizational learning library. Includes a searchable database of Review & Investigation Reports, AAR Rollups, Scratchline Newsletters, Case

## IMTCenter.net

Provides year-round website hosting for IMTs and FUMTs. Includes calendars, team rosters, photo galleries, secure file sharing and more.



# High Reliability Organizing

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[Home Page](#)

[What's New](#)

[Advances in Fire Practice](#)

[Center Library ▶](#)

[Features ▶](#)

[Newsletters ▶](#)

[Organizational Learning ▼](#)

[Overview](#)

[High Reliability Organizing](#)

[AARs](#)

[Leadership Support](#)

[Sparks 🔑](#)

[Surveys](#)

[Links](#)

[About Us](#)

The Center is very fortunate to have a close working relationship with the coauthors of the highly acclaimed book *Managing the Unexpected: Assuring High Performance in an Age of Complexity*. [Book Review](#)



Karl E. Weick is the Renis Likert Collegiate Professor of Organizational Behavior and Psychology and professor of psychology at the University of Michigan Business School. Dr. Weick's research interests include collective sensemaking under pressure, medical errors, handoffs in extreme events, high-reliability performance, improvisation and continuous change.



Kathleen M. Sutcliffe is a Professor of Management Organizations at the University of Michigan Business School. Dr. Sutcliffe's research is devoted to understanding the fundamental mechanisms of organizational adaptation, reliability, and resilience. Her work focuses on processes associated with team and organizational resilience, high-reliability organizing, and investigation of the social and organizational underpinnings of medical mishaps, with the explicit goal of understanding how an organization's design contributes to its member's ability to successfully manage unexpected events

## [Facilitating High Reliability Organizing in Wildland Fire Announcement](#)

(72 KB Doc posted 031007)

The Wildland Fire Lessons Learned Center and The Nature Conservancy co-sponsored a workshop on *Facilitating High Reliability Organizing (HRO) in Wildland Fire* on May 8-10, 2007. The workshop was part of a developing curriculum on high reliability designed to help build wildland fire programs that are consistently successful in achieving their fire management objectives safely and effectively. There was a special emphasis on teaching people to facilitate learning about HRO upon their return to their home units. This workshop will be repeated in 2008.



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[What's New](#)

[Advances in Fire Practice](#)

[Center Library](#) ▶

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[Organizational Learning](#) ▶

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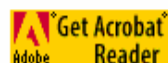
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## Your Interagency Newsletter



The Center publishes a quarterly newsletter as Tactics, Techniques, Procedures and Processes are identified from the field. These lessons and effective practices come from After Action Review Rollups and Information Collection Team interviews. Scratchline's main purpose is to inform the wildland fire community in a fast and simple format. [Email](#) us with your ideas for future issues.



Need the latest version of Adobe Acrobat Reader? [Download it here.](#)

Read the most recent Scratchline newsletters:



[Scratchline Issue 19, Wildland Urban Interface, Part 1 of 2](#)

(1.5 MB PDF suitable for printing, posted 05/07/07)

[Scratchline Issue 20, Wildland Urban Interface, Part 2 of 2](#)

(1.5 MB PDF suitable for printing, posted 05/07/07)

Thirteen experienced WUI specialists from federal and state fire agencies and Firewise were recently interviewed regarding their notable successes, effective work practices, most difficult challenges, most important WUI advice, and WUI training recommendations in wildland urban interface operations and practices.



[Scratchline Issue 18, Line Officer Lessons Learned](#) (1MB PDF suitable for printing, posted 11/27/2006)

The LLC staff recently interviewed ten forest supervisors, park superintendents, state fire managers and district rangers from around the United States regarding their notable successes, difficult challenges, effective practices and training recommendations for managing wildland fire incidents. These line officers also shared advice and guidance for other line officers and fire managers. Special thanks are extended to these agency administrators for sharing their significant lessons and practices with the wildland fire community.





# *Strategic Direction to 2012*

- LLC strategic planning process began in Oct. '06
- Led by a fire mgmt. organization strategic planning specialist
- Using an interagency planning committee
- Now receiving stakeholder input on strategic goals
- Complete plan by Jan. '08



# New LLC Mission

The Wildland Fire Lessons Learned Center actively promotes a learning culture to enhance safe and effective work practices within the entire U.S. Wildland Fire community.

The Center provides opportunities and resources to foster collaboration among all fire professionals. We facilitate networks, provide access to state of the art organizational learning tools, and bridge the gap between learning and training.



# Collaboration with Australasia

“Lessons Learned in the Development of the U.S. Interagency Wildland Fire Center” by Mary Omodei

Australia and NZ participating in LLC sponsored Managing the Unexpected workshops

Fire Lessons Learnt Workshop – Sharing U.S. and Australasian Experiences on Sept. 26



# Contact Us

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# Questions & Comments

[www.wildfirelessons.net](http://www.wildfirelessons.net)

[www.myfirecommunity.net](http://www.myfirecommunity.net)

[www.IMTcenter.net](http://www.IMTcenter.net)

