

HUALAPAI FIRE FINED \$20,000 FOR MID-MAY SAFETY VIOLATIONS FIRE DISTRICT WILL APPEAL FINDINGS AND FINE

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THE STANDARD
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The Arizona Department of Occupational Safety and Health (ADOSH) has levied a \$20,000 fine for safety violations at the Hualapai Valley Fire Department (HVFD). The penalty is associated with an investigation that concluded five serious safety violations occurred during a mid-May training exercise at 2255 Ames Avenue in north Kingman.

The citation and notice of penalty details a myriad of blunders in the training exercise that involved the burning of a mobile home and a rescue scenario. The findings of fault are based on an ADOSH visit in late July that included interviews with firefighters and a review of a videotape of the live fire training event in question.

Charlotte Wells, attorney for the HVFD, said the District believes many of the conclusions in the citation are “bogus” and without merit. She said the HVFD will avail itself of informal and formal opportunities to contest the citation and seek relief of the monetary sanctions.

The complaint that prompted the investigation was filed by Tim Hill, the President of the Professional Firefighters of Arizona union. ADOSH compliance supervisor Jesus Maeda issued a five page response to Hill dated August 14.

Maeda’s response indicated it did not find violations regarding several specifics of Hill’s complaint. But it also noted a series of violations, some of them jeopardizing the safety of some of those involved in the training.

ADOSH concluded that placement of firefighter Eric Berg inside the

structure as a victim to be located and rescued constituted a violation of National Fire Protection Association Standards governing Live Fire Training Evolutions. Use of flammable liquid to accelerate the fire was another significant violation.

“Berg stated that he was told to lie down near the master bathroom and assume the role of a ‘victim’”, Maeda’s response stated. “Training Instructor (Dan) Zandvliet stated that Berg was to light the fire and sit down in the southeast corner of the bedroom and observe the firefighters.”

Maeda said that Incident Commander Battalion Chief Jason Scott and Zandvliet shut down the operation when they recognized personnel were struggling.

“Two firefighters were having difficulty pulling the charged hoseline into the bedroom and getting into position to fight the fire,” Maeda’s response stated. “One firefighter (Berg) was heard yelling for the crew and consequently the fire got larger than anticipated. The Training Instructor/Safety Officer and the Incident Commander immediately terminated the drill and all four firefighters exited the mobile home safely.”

Maeda’s response stated that the Training Instructor suffered a minor injury in the drill.

“Zandvliet stated he did get some hot glue-like substance on his glove and did receive a dime size burn on the right knuckle/index finger,” Maeda said. “Firefighters were found to be in poor physical shape and according to Training Officer Scott were ‘spent’ after four previous drills.”

Other findings included that firefighters involved were underinformed, underprepared and underequipped, and that a power line from a utility pole across the service alley was dropped during the training burn.

The ADOSH conclusions prompted a press release issued by Robert Borker, the President of the United Professional firefighters of Kingman, a

union that continues pressing for the ouster of Hualapai Valley Fire Chief Wayne Eder.

“It has been proven that Chief Eder and B.C. Scott lacked good judgment, were negligent in their duties and needlessly placed firefighter’s lives in jeopardy,” Borker’s release stated. It called for the termination of both Eder and Scott but expressed doubt that the HVFD Board would take any such action.