

# Personal Safety of Federal Land-Management Field Employees Working Along the Mexican Border



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**6E62H30—Personal Safety of Employees  
at Borders**

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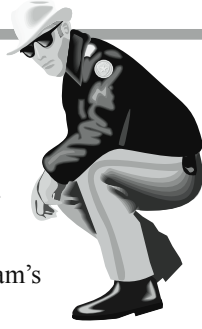
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## Background

In the spring of 2005, the U.S. Department of Agriculture Forest Service Technology and Development Program's safety and health steering committee asked the Missoula Technology and Development Center (MTDC) to prepare a report identifying the unique personal



safety problems public land-management field employees face while working near the Mexican border. The center also was instructed to make recommendations to the committee. All the Federal employees the project team interviewed felt they were working in a dangerous place and believed the dangers they faced were likely to increase.

## Field Trip to Arizona

In September of 2005, the authors traveled to Arizona to interview Federal employees (table 1) about the unique personal safety and health problems they face while working on or near the border. While there, we used

range of positions (table 2). Some of the interviews were with one individual while others were in a group setting. The interviews were not tape-recorded, but each team member took detailed notes during each interview.

Table 1—The 38 employees interviewed were from the following Federal agencies:

Agency	No. of employees
Forest Service .....	13
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service .....	9
National Park Service .....	8
Bureau of Land Management .....	5
Bureau of Indian Affairs/Tribal Nations....	2
Border Patrol.....	1

qualitative methodology (Strauss and Corbin 1998; Driessen 1997; Schatzman and Strauss 1973; Glaser and Strauss 1967) to conduct 38 face-to-face or telephone interviews. Each of the employees selected to be interviewed by the chair of the Borderland Management Task Force, the deputy forester for the Coronado National Forest, or the safety and health manager for the Coronado National Forest were from a wide

Table 2—The employees interviewed came from a wide range of positions.

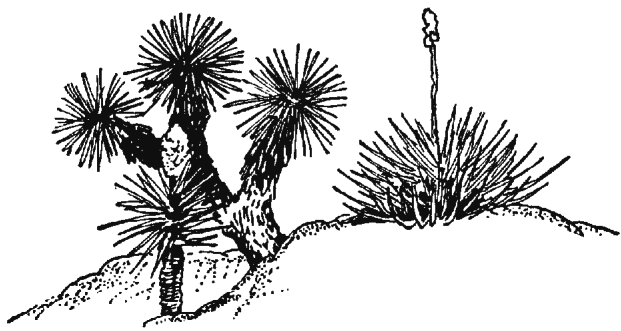
Position	No. of employees
Volunteer .....	1
Indian health officials .....	1
Human resource officers.....	1
Biologists.....	2
Firefighters/managers .....	4
Recreation staff.....	5
Resource management staff.....	7
Supervisors/managers.....	9
Law enforcement officers.....	8

All of the employees were eager to participate in the project and clearly wanted someone to listen to their personal safety concerns and problems. They told us this project is a tangible sign they are being listened to and that someone is trying to solve their problems.

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## Working on the Border: An Increasingly Dangerous Place

The employees we interviewed expressed fear about their personal safety and health. These fears were tied to their experiences, which reinforce their perceptions that the border is becoming an increasingly dangerous place to live and work. Some employees compared their working conditions to working and living in a “trashed” neighborhood filled with “organized crime.” Other employees



described it as a “dangerous landscape.” One employee said, “There is no pause in the problems of people coming across the border.” There is a general pessimistic attitude among

all employees about ever solving the “border problem.” As one law enforcement officer said, “We lack resources to fight the enemy. We are never going to beat them. If law enforcement closes off aliens in one spot, it just creates a problem in another area.”

A common comment we heard from employees was, “I don’t feel safe here.” They view working on the border as a place where you “have to keep your guard up everyday” and “a place where workers have to constantly be aware of their surroundings.” A general conclusion can easily be reached, namely, that all employees we interviewed see the border as an increasingly dangerous and unsafe workplace. As one person said, “there is no safe place, this is the Wild West.” Another person expressed the view of many workers when she said, “It’s not a matter of *if* someone will get killed, its *when*.”

However, in the midst of this pessimism, there was a sense that with increased awareness and personal safety training, employees can be better equipped to protect themselves when working on or near the border.

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## Nature of the Problem

The health and safety concerns of employees stem from two types of illegal activities on or near the border between Brownsville, TX, and San Diego, CA: drug smuggling and illegal immigration. Each of these illegal activities poses specific safety and health threats to Federal land-management field employees working on or near the border.

As a way to better understand the safety and health issues that field employees face, we attempted to isolate specific problems related either to drug activities or illegal immigration. Many of the problems stem from both activities. Still other problems identified by employees relate to safety and health concerns caused or exacerbated by agency or law enforcement responses to drug smuggling or illegal immigration. In each of these areas, we report on the specific stories told to us during our interviews: stories that provide a more complete picture of the daily challenges faced by field personnel.

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## Problems for Field Employees Related to Drug Smuggling Near the Border

**D**rug smuggling includes a variety of activities related to the transport and distribution of drugs, across the Mexican border into the United States. The U.S. Drug Enforcement Agency has deemed this area a high-intensity drug trafficking area (HIDTA). Drug smugglers are moving large quantities of drugs across Federal lands (primarily marijuana transported by foot) and they also are using recreation sites to stage the distribution of drugs to other parts of the United States. Encounters with smugglers during the course of their normal field work—and the possible dangers associated with these encounters—is a concern for all the Federal employees we interviewed.

### Surprise Encounters With Drug Smugglers: Getting “Bushwhacked” in the Field

The major safety problem for most field employees was summed up by one employee who said, “The constant danger and worry expressed here is being in the wrong spot at the wrong time” (finding oneself caught up in the middle of drug smuggling operations). Field employees said they were constantly worrying about getting “bushwhacked” during surprise encounters with drug smugglers.

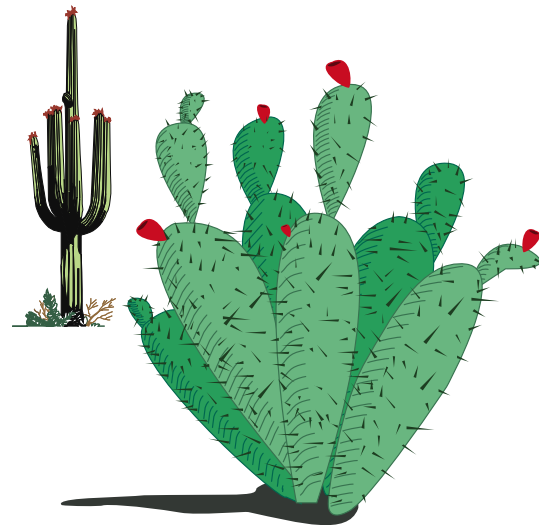
Employees repeatedly pointed out how drug smugglers are always considered potentially violent because they don’t want to be caught or lose their load of drugs. Employees recognize drug smugglers are desperate people—if they “lose their load, they lose their life or their family is punished.” As one employee said, “You are always a threat to smugglers because you could turn them in.” Drug smuggling operations are highly organized and smugglers want to avoid contacts that could jeopardize their operations. Field employees regard surprise contact with smugglers as a potentially hazardous situation and such contacts are of great concern.

The potential for these contacts is heightened because drug smugglers intentionally use remote locations for transport routes and frequently use developed recreation sites as

transfer points. As one employee noted, drug smugglers are particularly dangerous because “they hide in plain sight,” blending into the recreating public and using Federal facilities, such as campgrounds. Some drug smugglers have actually taken over campgrounds to use as transfer stations between the smugglers and dealers in the United States.

We heard stories of field employees who came across abandoned drug packs or vehicles containing drugs. The employees felt their lives would be threatened if drug lookouts saw them approaching a pack or vehicle.

Employees described the surprise encounters they might have with drug smugglers as abrupt, differing from the encounters described in Module 3 (Avoiding Trouble) of the *Personal Safety in Remote Work Locations* video series. This video teaches employees tactics they can use to avoid trouble when they encounter the public and potentially dangerous situations in remote work locations. In this training module, most of the encounters are controlled by



employees because they have time to decide whether or not to interact with forest visitors. However, near the border, encounters with smugglers happen suddenly, surprising field employees. The suddenness gives workers little time to evaluate the situation and react appropriately. Most field workers we talked with simply want to disengage immediately.

Better yet, they would like to avoid such surprise encounters altogether.

Employees stressed repeatedly the most important technique for *preventing and avoiding contact* with drug smugglers is *increasing the awareness* of employees. This was seen by employees as the most critical requirement for avoiding unwanted encounters. Over and over, we heard employees saying that you need to be aware of your surroundings, especially the danger signs of illegal drug trafficking. For example, they suggested employees pay attention to the type of human tracks they see; tracks of different sizes suggest illegal immigrant traffic, while tracks that are all nearly the same size suggest a drug traffic route. They also suggest paying attention to the color of water jugs; white jugs indicate illegal immigration traffic and water jugs painted black (so smugglers can travel at night without detection) indicate drug trafficking routes.

Another way employees prevent abrupt encounters with smugglers is by intentionally making noise while they are in the field. This alerts the smugglers and gives them time

to scatter, avoiding contact with employees. This practice is similar to that used by hikers who put bells on their hiking stick in the backcountry to avoid bear encounters. Another practice employees used was to flag their work sites. This let the smugglers know employees were in the area, giving them a chance to avoid an encounter. These examples of personal safety work practices are some of the types of material that could be included in a video training program.

### **Problems Associated With Constant Surveillance by Drug Smugglers**

Most of the field employees we interviewed felt they were always being watched by scouts or lookouts working for drug smugglers. This “creepy” feeling of being watched was mentioned by almost all employees we interviewed and was validated by law enforcement officers. The concerns employees expressed about this surveillance goes beyond the simple dislike and stress of being watched, or as some called it “living in a glass house.”



The real concern was that these scouts were probably armed and dangerous, may have been on drugs, and were watching the area to make sure their drug activities were not interrupted by law enforcement or other drug cartels. Field employees fear making the wrong move, approaching the wrong person, or picking up or examining the wrong package or piece of trash. Scouts have shot at law enforcement officers, seriously injuring some of them. Employees we talked to felt that it was only a matter of time before one of them would be shot at as well.

### **Problems With Uniforms and Vehicles: Fear of Being a Target**

There was considerable discussion about whether employees felt safer while wearing agency uniforms and driving agency vehicles, or whether they felt safer when it was not obvious that they were Federal or tribal employees. Some employees felt safer in marked vehicles and uniforms so long as they didn't look too much like Border Patrol vehicles (Forest Service employees consistently want traditional green vehicles). By distinguishing themselves as Federal employ-

ees, but not law enforcement officers, these employees felt they reduced their chances of being perceived as a threat by drug smugglers and that they also reduced the chance that the Border Patrol might mistake them for drug smugglers.

Other employees no longer wear their uniforms because they think they will be mistaken for a Border Patrol officer or another law enforcement officer. They think the vehicles and uniforms of field employees look too much like the uniforms of law enforcement officers. As one employee observed, "You can't tell the difference from 50 yards between my uniform and the uniform of an LEO [law enforcement officer]—you can't see the gun from that distance." These employees wear plain clothes so they will look like a member of the public, who are not regarded as a threat by the smugglers.

This discussion about uniforms reveals the level of concern that field employees have for their safety as they go about their jobs. Employees are investing considerable personal energy coming up with strategies to keep themselves out of harm's way. Employees consistently talked about the need to learn about new techniques that have helped other employees avoid trouble in the field.

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## Problems for Field Employees Related to Illegal Immigration Near the Border

Activities associated with illegal immigration comprise the second type of illegal activity that pose a threat to the health and personal safety of employees. These activities fall into two categories: the operations of those trafficking in illegal immigrants, or “coyotes,” and the activities of the illegal immigrants themselves as they are being transported, or are transporting themselves, across the Mexican border into the United States.

### Problems Rendering Aid to Illegal Immigrants

Many of the employees we interviewed pointed out the safety problems they face when they encounter illegal immigrants who want water, medical aid, or rides near the border. Employees fear that an illegal immigrant, who appears to need help, may be a decoy to get employees out of their vehicles. Many employees fear that if they stop and get out of their vehicles they might get “bushwhacked” and their vehicles stolen by a group of illegal immigrants and their coyote (paid guide) hiding in the bushes.

There does not appear to be a uniform interagency policy instructing employees on the proper actions for rendering aid to illegal immigrants. As one employee said, “I’m not sure what we are allowed or not allowed to do.” Employees appear to be using their own personal moral code to decide whether or not to render aid to illegal immigrants. For instance, one field employee we spoke to always stops and helps illegal immigrants if they appear to be in need. Some employees preferred to help immigrants from a distance. In these cases, they would drop water off for the immigrants down the road, where the employees were out of harm’s way. Other employees said they never stop and make contact with illegal immigrants. One employee even commented, “If you give aid to one alien, you become a magnet for others.”

Law enforcement officers said that employees who stopped to render aid or to transport illegal immigrants could arouse

suspicious. These suspicions could further increase the risk that the employees would be caught up in law enforcement activities, putting the employees at risk. Perhaps the most consistent advice we heard from employees about encounters with illegal immigrants was to call the nearest law enforcement officer and stay away from the potentially threatening situation.

### Problems of Disease Transmission

Employees fear that illegal immigrants could be sick with hepatitis, tuberculosis, human immunodeficiency virus (HIV), or other diseases. They worry that physical contact with these immigrants, or with their trash, presents a risk of infection.

We heard many accounts of the tons of trash that accumulate from the estimated 2,500 to 3,000 illegal immigrants who cross the Mexican border each night. The employees see this trash as a continuous health problem, especially for the volunteers and employees who clean it up. Special caution is needed to handle this garbage because much of it poses a potential biohazard from used needles, human waste, moldy and rotten food, dirty clothing and diapers, toothbrushes, medications, unknown items with foreign labels, feminine hygiene products, and on rare occasions, dead bodies.

### Problems of Surprise Encounters With People Smugglers

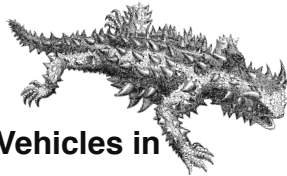
While most illegal immigrants simply want to be left alone in their desperate quest to come to the United States, the coyotes who traffic in illegal immigrants are a different story. The employees we interviewed said any coyote they suddenly encounter poses a threat to their personal safety. These coyotes are engaged in illegal activities, could be armed, and don’t want to be caught. Many of the employees we

spoke with talked about how coyotes use the immigrants they transport as a way to make a lot of money without regard for the immigrants' well-being.

The workers said that the coyotes prey upon those they transport by robbing, assaulting, and raping them. In addition, the coyotes often transport immigrants just across the border and drop them off many miles from the nearest town, telling them that Tucson is just over the hill. This practice accounts for many of the illegal immigrants who suffer and die in the desert or who ask Federal employees for aid.

Coyotes tend to blend into the group of illegal immigrants to avoid detection. An employee interacting with a group of immigrants does not know who among them might pose a threat. One employee told a story of meeting a group of immigrants on a trail and attempting to give aid to a person who was obviously ill. The other members of the immigrant group misinterpreted his actions and thought he was trying to detain them. The employee was able to convince the other illegal immigrants to go on their way, but it was a tense moment, because he had no idea who the coyote was and what the coyote might do if he feared he might be caught.

Coyotes use developed recreation sites as pickup and dropoff locations. Because of their desire to stay undetected, the practice of dropping immigrants off in the middle of nowhere, and the use of developed recreation sites as transfer points, employees face an increasing risk of encountering coyotes and illegal immigrants in remote field locations.



### **Problems With Leaving Vehicles in Remote Locations**

Many of the employees we interviewed worried about leaving their vehicles unattended when they work in the field. We heard about employees returning at the end of the day to learn that their vehicles had been broken into or stolen. Many employees are reluctant to work very far from their

vehicles. One way field employees solve this problem is by stashing water and other provisions away from their vehicles. If they return from their work to find their vehicle has been stolen or vandalized, at least they won't be stranded in the desert without food and water.

### **Problems of Home Safety: Illegal Immigrant Break-ins**

Several employees we interviewed had their homes broken into by illegal immigrants looking for shelter, food, and water during their journey north. In one instance, an employee came home and surprised several immigrants in her house. She was not hurt, but they pushed her aside as they ran out of the house. To keep themselves and their houses safe, some of the employees have installed fences, placed bars on windows, and in one case, mounted razor wire on a fence. Another employee said she was afraid to leave anything of value in her house. Whenever she left her house, she took everything important with her.

A major impact of these break-ins is to increase the overall stress for employees living and working in this region. Employees report feeling like "there is no safe haven." The stress of theft at home, along with the ongoing stress of living and working in a dangerous environment, represent a potential health concern for employees.

### **Gender Concerns**

Some of the women we interviewed expressed a particular concern regarding sexual assault both at work and at home. Sexual assault occurring between coyotes and the illegal immigrant women they transport is well documented. Coyotes and illegal immigrants who break into homes are seen as a particular concern by women who may be victims of sexual assault.

## **Problems of Language**

A few of the employees briefly mentioned the language problem. We heard conflicting views on the importance of being able to communicate with illegal immigrants encountered in the field. Some employees believed being able to communicate their intentions to illegal immigrants prevented dangerous misunderstandings. Others said that since the primary goal is to avoid most encounters, it is largely unnecessary to communicate. One employee said, “The only Spanish you need to know is *adios*.”

Spanish is not the only language spoken by illegal immigrants—people from many nations cross into the United States illegally through the Mexican border. Finally, a few employees thought knowing the language of immigrants might actually cause incidents. Employees who know the language may be more inclined to contact illegal immigrants or stay too long in unsafe situations.

## **Problems Associated With Local Vigilantes**

Some field employees expressed concern about coming into contact with local vigilante groups. Two such groups, *The Minutemen* and *Ranch Rescue*, include hostile local ranchers who are trying to take the law into their own hands to get their land back. Although field employees are not the target of the vigilantes, some employees are afraid of them and want to avoid them because they fear getting caught up in violence and gunplay. Several employees said these groups are angry about some of the humanitarian measures taken near the border, such as establishing watering stations in the desert. These employees fear the vigilante groups may vent their anger at them.

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## General Consequences of Drug Smuggling and Illegal Immigration for Federal Employees

Overall, the employees we interviewed felt that the problems associated with working near the border put them at risk of being hurt while carrying out their duties. Even though there have been no reported cases of physical harm to a field employee, there have been cases of serious injury to law enforcement officers. Many of the field employees we interviewed reported close calls and near misses. The general sense shared by the employees we interviewed was that it is “just a matter of time” before a field employee is hurt or killed.

### Mission Deflection and Threats to Employee Mandates and Morale

Beyond this generalized sense of potential physical harm, a theme began to emerge from our interviews centered on the threat to employee morale stemming from their inability to do their job—something sociologists refer to as deflected missions and threatened work mandates. Because of the personal safety and health problems posed by drug smuggling and illegal immigration in this area, the employees described how they often can’t carry out work on trails, wildlife, fires, social services, and the other resource management tasks. In many cases, employees felt they had to avoid or simply neglect needed work in certain places near the border because of the perceived danger there.

Mission deflection creates what sociologists identify as a mandate problem for field employees. Their work means much more to them than merely making money. Employees feel deeply that by doing their jobs they are carrying out their moral mandate to do something good that needs to be done: caring for the land and serving people. When people working on the border hold these deep moral feelings about the importance of their work, but have difficulty carrying it out because of increasing dangers, their morale suffers. Many of the employees we spoke with were frustrated about not being able to do their jobs and reported feelings of stress and low morale.

In spite of the increasing dangers in the field, some of the employees we talked to are trying to do the jobs they feel need to be done. Many of them are taking risks and ignoring the potential danger to accomplish their mandate. They have developed what they call “rhino hide,” which creates personal safety problems for themselves and for the agencies they work for.

Also, field employees report they are increasingly finding themselves involved in work that is law enforcement in nature. This concern was expressed both by field employees and Forest Protection Officers (FPO). For example, we heard about one instance when several employees were asked by a law enforcement officer to let the air out of the tires of a suspect vehicle. This frightened the employees because they feared the vehicle may belong to drug smugglers who could still be in the area. Some of the concern for FPOs is centered on their need to make “good host” and compliance contacts in the course of their duties. They are concerned they may contact a drug smuggler or illegal immigrant inadvertently, ending up in a dangerous situation that requires actions beyond either their training or their mission.

In an area where law enforcement resources are already stretched thin, officers are increasingly being called upon to accompany field personnel and FPOs while they perform their natural resource or firefighting duties. This situation could lead to more role confusion for field employees who may feel they are becoming increasingly involved in law enforcement activities.

### Organizational and Productivity Costs

Both mission deflection and low employee morale are organizational costs in terms of lost productivity and lack of accomplishment of goals. Moreover, safety issues arise when Federal employees feel pressure (personal or otherwise) to increase activities in potentially dangerous situations.

Beyond the personal and organizational costs associated with natural resource management in this increasingly dangerous environment, some widespread and long-term natural resource concerns are associated with the large numbers of people traveling in, and impacting, fragile desert ecosystems. The damage being done to the resource is an ever-present reality to the employees we interviewed, exacerbating the frustration they already feel because they are not able to do their job to their satisfaction.

### **Problems of Communication: Radios, Information Sharing, and Coordination**

Employees told us about several communication problems on the border. Radios and phones simply don't work in many field locations. When cell phones do work, a call placed to law enforcement might connect you to an operator in Mexico.

Even when radios are working, many of the employees felt they were not being kept informed of the current dangers and enforcement activities on or near the border. The "constantly changing picture" in the "dynamic border work areas" makes it difficult for employees to know what is going on. To exacerbate the problem, the Border Patrol, Forest Service law enforcement, and other agency field workers have different kinds of radios, making it difficult to share information.

The culture of secrecy in law enforcement also hinders employees' awareness. The locations of smuggling and interdiction activities are constantly changing along the border. Pointing to the problem of poor communications, one employee said, "We can get more information about what's going on from local ranchers than from the patrol [Border Patrol]." In one instance, an employee talked about how the Border Patrol had "spiked" a road without the employee's knowledge. The employee almost drove over the spikes, which would have disabled his vehicle. We also heard about numerous incidents where employees had been suddenly caught up in law enforcement pursuits. They had no warning of the pursuit and were run off the road or almost

run over during high-speed chases between the Border Patrol and fleeing suspects.

### **Problems Fighting Wildland Fires**

Firefighters told us that they need to be better informed and aware of issues related to illegal activities on or near the border. Many of the supervisors we talked to want to raise the awareness of the firefighters coming into their region from other parts of the country. They also want these wildland firefighters to understand the unique problems they will face while fighting fire near the border.

There is a real possibility firefighters will encounter illegal immigrants or drug smugglers. Several firefighters told us that immigrants and smugglers have inadvertently started wildland fires when warming fires got out of control. When the initial attack crews arrived, the immigrants or smugglers were still there. In another case, several firefighters had to deal with a large number of illegal immigrants when their dozerline became a "highway" for immigrants traveling north. When firefighters encounter immigrants or smugglers, the firefighters may be distracted, losing the situational awareness they need to keep themselves and their crews safe.

Firefighters working near the border have to deal with the potential health risks associated with large amounts of trash or caches of drugs burning, conflicts in air space with helicopters assigned to the fire and helicopters used for law enforcement, and with arson fires being started to divert attention from illegal activities happening nearby. They also have to deal with clusters of illegal immigrant vehicles and with stolen packs and equipment.

To combat some of the safety problems associated with fighting wildland fires near the border, fire managers have requested law enforcement escorts on the fireline. Some managers also have implemented a policy of not fighting wildland fires between 10 p.m. and 7 a.m., when most of the illegal activity occurs.

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## Summary and Recommendations

This paper has pointed to a number of unique but widespread problems affecting the personal safety and health of many employees working in remote locations along the Mexican border. These problems are everyday concerns for the permanent field employees who work from southern California to the west coast of Texas. But the problems also affect employees from throughout the Nation who are detailed to this area. One supervisor said, “Those who come from outside the area leave with huge eyes.”

Based on data we gathered from this trip, we offer two recommendations:

**Recommendation 1**—We recommend producing two training DVDs following the format, style, and methodology used to produce the four personal safety training videos for the Forest Service. Each DVD also would include supplemental scenario training (in which trainees act out scenarios to learn personal safety techniques). The first DVD, *Personal Safety in Remote Work Locations: Working on the Border*, would emphasize awareness. The second DVD, *Personal Safety in Remote Work Locations: Managing Unexpected Encounters on the Border*, would focus on work practices field employ-

ees can use to increase their personal safety and reduce the risk of health hazards while working in the field on or near the border.

**Recommendation 2**—Wildland firefighters have unique problems when fighting wildland fires on or near the border. Many of these problems extend beyond personal safety and health of employees. However, there are safety and health problems all firefighters should become aware of, especially firefighters coming from other parts of the country. The first DVD could help increase the safety and health awareness for firefighters. However, many of the other new problems facing incident commanders on the border should be studied by the wildland fire community and incorporated into training.

These two DVDs will not solve all the personal safety and health problems that exist for employees working on the border. The problem is too large and requires a long-term coordinated safety program involving law enforcement officers, safety specialists, university researchers, State agencies, and Federal land managers. However, these DVDs will help prepare employees to recognize and cope with the dangers they face every day.



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## Project Work Plan and Costs

**A** detailed work plan cannot be submitted at this point. If the project is going to be successful, the project team will need to work closely with the existing Borderland Management Task Force Committee.

The committee must be involved from the start, including planning the project, reviewing draft material, and approving the final training DVDs.

Local safety and health officers from each agency in the region need to be involved. Not only will they have helpful information for the DVDs, but they will be able to provide invaluable logistical support. Safety specialists, perhaps including law enforcement officers at times, will be needed

to provide safety for project team members as they travel to dangerous parts of the region to conduct interviews and shoot videotape.

Cost estimates for the project can be based on the actual expenditures required to produce the previous four personal training videos for the Forest Service. The two DVDs recommended in this report will be somewhat less costly to produce because the project is narrowly focused and will require less travel and time for development. Each DVD will take 2 years to complete. The estimated total cost for this project over a 4-year period will be \$150,000 to 200,000.



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(0167–2841–MTDC, updated November 2003) and *Crew Cohesion, Wildland Fire Transition, and Fatalities* (0251–2809–MTDC). These reports are available at the Web site <http://www.fs.fed.us/eng/t-d.php>.

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## Library Card

Outka-Perkins, Lisa; Miller, Theron; Driessen, Jon. 2006. Personal safety of Federal land-management field employees working along the Mexican border. Tech. Rep. 0667–2802–MTDC. Missoula, MT: U.S. Department of Agriculture Forest Service, Missoula Technology and Development Center. 16 p.

Discusses the unique problems faced by public land-management field employees working along the Mexican border. These problems center around the possibility of surprise encounters with illegal immigrants or persons smuggling drugs across the Mexican border. While permanent employees living in these areas face risks every day, many other employees serve temporary details along the border. Both groups of employees need tools to help them reduce the possibility of encounters and the possibility that any encoun-

ters might result in harm. Wildland firefighters face problems from illegal drugs and hazardous waste that might burn in fires along the border and in the possibility of encountering illegal immigrants whose warming fires may have gotten out of control. Two DVDs are proposed that would follow the format of the successful *Personal Safety in Remote Work Locations* video series. The DVDs would be titled *Personal Safety in Remote Work Locations: Working on the Border* and *Personal Safety in Remote Work Locations: Managing Unexpected Encounters on the Border*.

Keywords: DVD, fire fighting, firefighting, illegal drugs, illegal immigrants, Mexican border, mission deflection, personal safety, safety at work, sexual assaults, smuggling, theft, videotapes

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**Electronic copies of MTDC's documents are available on the Internet at:** <http://www.fs.fed.us/eng/t-d.php>.

**Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management employees can search a more complete collection of MTDC's documents, videos, and CDs on their internal computer networks at:** <http://fsweb.mtdc.wo.fs.fed.us/search/>.