

**m i s h a p**

LESSONS LEARNED

MISHAP SUMMARY

Mishap
Fire

Damage
\$80,000,000

Injury
None

Operation
Support Activities Supply
System Management Unit (SMU)

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System Management Unit Fire

SUMMARY

At approximately 1830, a fire was noticed at a System Management Unit (SMU) lot. A small group of Marines quickly responded, but they were unable to contain the fire and it spread throughout several nearby, stacks of tri-wall and wooden boxes. The aircraft rescue and fire fighting section (ARFF) self responded, also unable to contain the blaze. Additional fire fighting units from nearby camps and airfield fire fighting crews responded to assist. Marines driving heavy equipment bulldozers attempted to create fire lanes to slow and contain the fire. As dusk approached, a sandstorm struck creating confusion, shifting wind patterns and reducing visibility to approx. 1-3 ft, thus forcing the ARFF to abandon the SMU lot which subsequently led to two P-19 fire trucks being destroyed. The fire was contained seven hours later. Small fires and hotspots continued for several days.



DISCUSSION

The fire department conducted an investigation of the suspected origin area of the fire; however, it was impossible to conduct any type of forensic investigation to determine the exact point of origin or any type of potential evidence. The board concluded that the most likely cause of the fire was personnel smoking on the SMU lot outside of the designated smoking area.

- Material overcrowding on the lot; stacking of containers, less than adequate work space, no protection of supplies from the elements, narrow traffic lanes.
- Inadequate quantity of fire extinguishers staged throughout the lot.

- Inadequate perimeter security (unauthorized access by smokers).
- Lack of access and egress points for emergency vehicles.
- Poor communications for emergency response (land line failure, shortage of radios, excessive radio chatter).
- Lack of sufficient water resources to effectively resupply fire fighting vehicles.
- Adverse weather conditions (high winds and low visibility) throughout the fire significantly affected the severity of the fire and the firefighter's ability to gain control.
- Inadequate intermediate supply procedures and documents to provide guidance for open lot storage in an expeditionary environment.

CONSIDERATIONS

- SMU lots must be of sufficient size to support current and future operations, to include adequate protection of material from the elements and access for emergency vehicles throughout the storage lot.
- Fire extinguishers of appropriate size and type must be staged throughout the storage lot, not just limited to office spaces.
- Ensure additional access and egress points for emergency vehicles are established throughout the perimeter of SMU storage lots.
- Ensure effective means of communication are established with all emergency service organizations located aboard individual camp complexes.
- Ensure units have a plan to provide for best possible resupply of water to firefighting vehicles.