

# Northern Rockies Southwest Zone

*Response Plan*

*2021-2023*





# Northern Rockies Southwest Zone

## Response Plan

Approved By: Agency Administrators



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# Northern Rockies Southwest Zone

## Response Plan

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# Northern Rockies Southwest Zone

## Response Plan

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# Response Plan

## I. Introduction

### A. Purpose

Local-level Initial Pre-planned Response Plans, also referred to as “Run Cards”, specify the fire management response (e.g., number and type of suppression assets to dispatch) within a defined geographic area to an unplanned ignition, based on fire weather, fuel conditions, fire management objectives, and resource availability.

### B. Terminology

#### 1. Dispatch Response Level

Dispatch Response Levels (Low, Moderate, and High) are established to assist fire managers with decisions regarding the most appropriate response to an initial fire report until a qualified Incident Commander arrives at the incident. FireFamilyPlus software is used to establish the Response Level thresholds. A statistical analysis of fire occurrence and historical weather has been completed for each FDRA and the combination of ERC and BI values determines the daily Dispatch Response Level. The Lolo and Bitterroot National Forests, Montana DNRC, and CSKT agencies may utilize the Dispatch Response Levels calculated for each FDRA in response to wildland fires.

#### 2. Dispatch Response Zone

Dispatch Response Zones are currently or will be identified for use by the Missoula and Bitterroot Dispatch Centers. Response zones may be based on various criteria such as: common management objectives, land use, fire load, dispatch locations, estimated response times, WUI locations, topographical features, vegetation communities, etc. Response Zone maps for the Missoula, Bitterroot, and Ronan Dispatch Centers have not yet been created at the time of this Response Plan.

#### 3. Dispatch Center

Each geographic area has established dispatch centers that mobilize and demobilize resources directly with the geographic area coordination center. The dispatch center is the focal point for mobilizing firefighting resources between units within the dispatch area responsibility, coordinating incoming resources into the dispatch area, dispatching resources mobilized out of the dispatch area, and collecting and disseminating fire intelligence information within the dispatch area and with the geographic area coordination center.

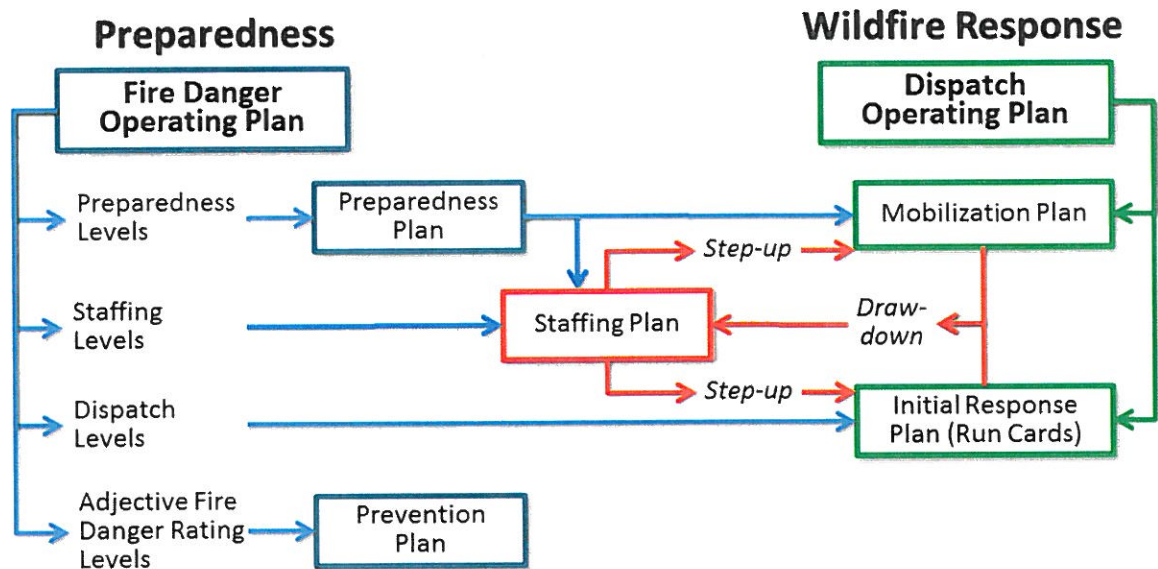
#### 4. Pre-Planned Response Plan

Each dispatch center with the responsibility for initial response to wildland fires shall have a pre-planned response plan that allocates resources to new wildland fires in accordance with fire management direction, initial attack agreements and established ordering procedures. The pre-planned response plan will be reviewed and updated annually prior to fire season.

## C. Policy and Guidance

Policy and guidance regarding the development of Pre-Planned Response Plans can be found in Chapter 19 of the Interagency Standards for Fire & Aviation Operations (Red Book).

Fire Management Officers will ensure Pre-planned Response Plans are in place, utilized, and provide for initial response commensurate with guidance provided in the FMRS and/or LRMP. Initial Pre-planned Response Plans will reflect agreements and annual operating plans and will be reviewed annually prior to fire season. These plans may be modified as needed during fire season to reflect the availability of national, prepositioned, and/or severity resources. Specific agency directives and interagency guidance requires numerous unit plans and guides to meet fire preparedness and wildfire response objectives. Some of these plans and guides are inter-related; one or more plans/guides provide the basis for other plans/guides. The Response Plan is an operational plan tiered from the Fire Danger Operating Plan as shown below:



## II. Dispatch Response Level Matrix

### A. Dispatch Response Level

Agency personnel may use the Dispatch Response Level to assign an appropriate mix of suppression resources to a reported wildland fire incident. Dispatch Response Levels will be established for each day utilizing the Dispatch Response Level Matrix (Table 3) which is a combination of the Preparedness and Response Levels calculated from ERC and BI values. (See Section IV: Dispatch Response Level Decision Process for ERC and BI threshold ranges which provide the daily input into the Dispatch Response Level Matrix).

### III. Response Plan – Run Card

#### A. Run Card Overview

At the time of this plan, the Lolo and Bitterroot National Forests, Montana DNRC, and CSKT are either currently developing or have not yet developed run card systems for their jurisdiction. Projected implementation of run cards is targeted for 2021/2022.

**Effective Dates: May 1<sup>st</sup> through September 30<sup>th</sup>.**

Beyond these dates, notification of smoke reports will be made directly to the appropriate jurisdictional Duty Officer.

The Interagency Run Cards are developed by a group of jurisdictional Duty Officers to provide a standard wildland fire suppression response to the dispatch center for dispatching initial attack fires within pre-identified geographic areas (response zones).

The run cards will be used when a wildfire is reported and does not meet the discretionary smoke report criteria listed below. When an NWCG qualified Incident Commander is on scene of the fire, they may adjust the pre-established initial attack response, as identified on the run card, by cancelling resources currently en-route (or about to be dispatched) or by ordering additional resources as needed. Until such time as an IC is on scene, the Duty Officer is responsible for the fire response and can modify the run card as necessary.

Once run card development is completed, periods of large/multiple fire activity, when there are not enough resources to fill the run cards, the Duty Officers from the Lolo NF and Montana DNRC will be available to Missoula Dispatch to determine incident prioritization and response. The same process can be implemented at Bitterroot and Ronan Dispatch Centers, once run cards are developed.

#### B. Run Card Procedures:

During working hours, Missoula, Bitterroot, and Ronan Dispatch Centers will dispatch the closest available resource according to the appropriate Fire Danger Rating Area (FDRA) Dispatch Response Level.

After resource duty hours, dispatchers will contact the jurisdictional Duty Officer, who will determine the response.

Volunteer fire departments (or any other resource not dispatched by Missoula, Bitterroot, or Ronan Dispatch Centers) will not be considered as meeting the run card requirements for numbers of resources during the initial attack dispatch. The dispatch center can list the closest agency for “Assist by Hire” in each run card.

##### 1. Discretionary Smoke Reports:

When any of the following smoke reports are received, the run card will not be sent, and the jurisdictional Duty Officer will be contacted to determine the response.

- Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) Report.
- Abandoned Campfires, when clearly stated that it is still within the ring.
- Incidents that local volunteer fire departments have responded to or are on scene and are requesting no additional resources.

## 2. Limited Response Plan:

Periodically Missoula, Bitterroot, and Ronan Dispatch Centers get widespread lightning activity resulting in numerous starts, many of these single tree lightning strikes. It is not possible to dispatch the number and type of resources called for in the run card plan to each of these fires. This plan is designed to provide guidance to Dispatch Centers to coordinate an initial response under these multiple start conditions (generally considered 3 or more starts).

Under circumstances where multiple starts are likely to occur (i.e. forecasted LAL 6) or are occurring and each FDRA is at a Dispatch Response Level of Moderate or High the Dispatch Center run card plan may be suspended and guidance provided by District Duty Officer for initial response to new starts. If possible, it is desired that the appropriate Agency Duty Officer meet at their Dispatch Center to provide coordinated guidance to the floor supervisor. A MAC call may be initiated if meeting in person is not possible.

Duty Officers should consider using the following priorities for dispatching resources\*:

1. When there is a direct threat to human life
2. When there is a direct threat to homes or communities
3. When there is a direct threat to other high value infrastructure or improvements
4. All others

Until such time as the Duty Officers are able to provide coordinated direction, the Dispatch Center floor supervisor is authorized to determine the fire priorities based on given direction and make modifications to the established run card response during multiple start events.

During circumstances where there are no longer resources available to be dispatched to a new smoke report, dispatch staff will notify the District/Unit Duty Officer of each new report and they will, considering the priorities mentioned above, make a determination of needed staffing adjustments and provide guidance to dispatch staff as to what resources to dispatch to each new smoke report.

\*Additionally, if on any given day when all FDRAs are at a Dispatch Response Level of Moderate or High and Missoula, Bitterroot, and Ronan Dispatch Centers recognize the inability of daily staffed resources to fulfill a dispatch of any run card, the Dispatch Response Plan/run cards may be suspended and any start would use the prioritization process as identified above.

### C. Run Cards

During working hours, Missoula, Bitterroot, and Ronan Dispatch Centers will dispatch the closest available resource according to the appropriate Fire Danger Rating Area (FDRA) Dispatch Response Level.

At the time of this plan, Lolo and Bitterroot National Forests, Montana DNRC, and CSKT have not yet developed run card systems for their jurisdiction.

### IV. Dispatch Response Level Decision Process

Preparedness Level, based upon ERC, from Table 1 and Response Level, based upon BI, from Table 2 are the two inputs in determining the Dispatch Response Level calculated in Table 3.

#### ERC

Decision Threshold Ranges	Lolo DNRC East	Lolo DNRC West	CSKT East	CSKT West	Bitterroot Low	Bitterroot High
Low-PL 1 0% - <40%	0-21.9	0-23.9	0-20.9	0-31.9	0-23.9	0-16.9
Moderate-PL 2 >40% - <80%	22-39.9	24-41.9	21-32.9	32-49.9	24-42.9	17-39.9
High-PL 3 >80% - <90%	40-45.9	42-47.9	33-37.9	50-56.9	43-47.9	40-45.9
Very High-PL 4 >90% - <97%	46-51.9	48-54.9	38-43.9	57-64.9	48-52.9	46-50.9
Extreme-PL 5 >97%	52+	55+	44+	65+	53+	51+

Table 1: Preparedness Levels and ERC Decision Threshold Ranges in all FDRA's.

## BI

Decision Threshold Ranges	Lolo DNRC East	Lolo DNRC West	CSKT East	CSKT West	Bitterroot Low	Bitterroot High
<b>Low</b>	0-21.9	0-25.9	0-24.9	0-20.9	0-36.9	0-32.9
<b>Moderate</b>	22-37.9	26-45.9	25-33.9	21-39.9	37-46.9	33-41.9
<b>High &gt;97%</b>	38+	46+	34+	40+	47+	42+

Table 2: BI Decision Threshold Ranges in all FDRA's.

The decision matrix below uses the combination of ERC (weekly trend) and BI (daily trend) levels to determine the overall Dispatch Response Level. This table provides a connection between the preparedness plan and response plan while incorporating staffing needs. This Dispatch Response Level will be calculated daily to assist fire managers with resource staffing and response decisions.

+ days represent the 3% days when the ERC and BI are above the 97<sup>th</sup> percentile. Historically, most firefighter entrapments, shelter deployments, and fatalities have occurred under these conditions.

		Dispatch Response Level				
		1	2	3	4	5
BI Class	H	Low	Low	Mod	High	High +
	M	Low	Low	Mod	Mod	High
	L	Low	Low	Low	Mod	Mod
		ERC Class				

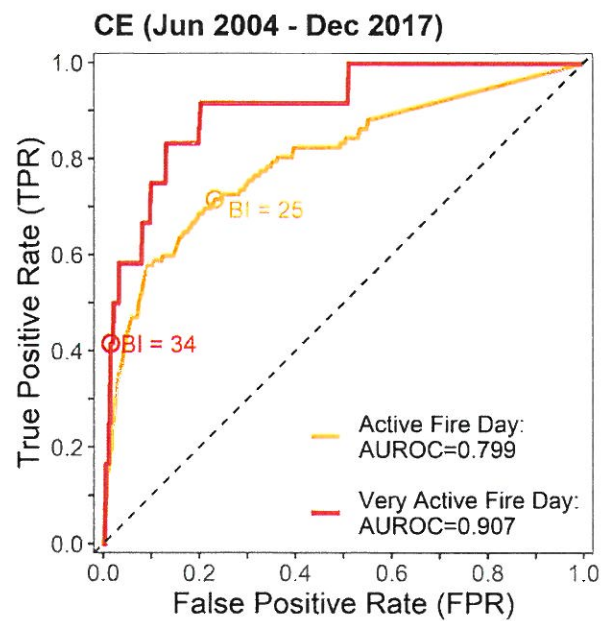
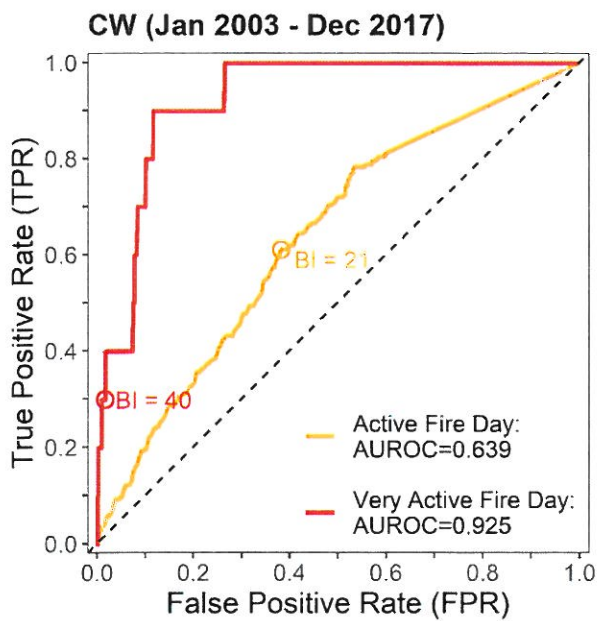
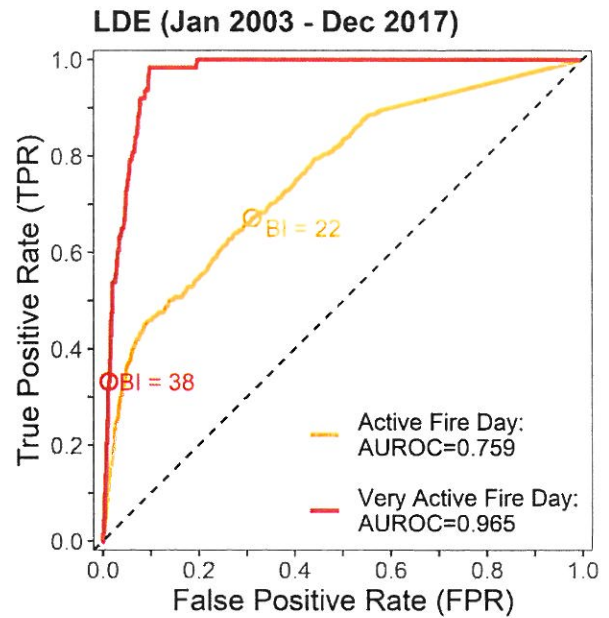
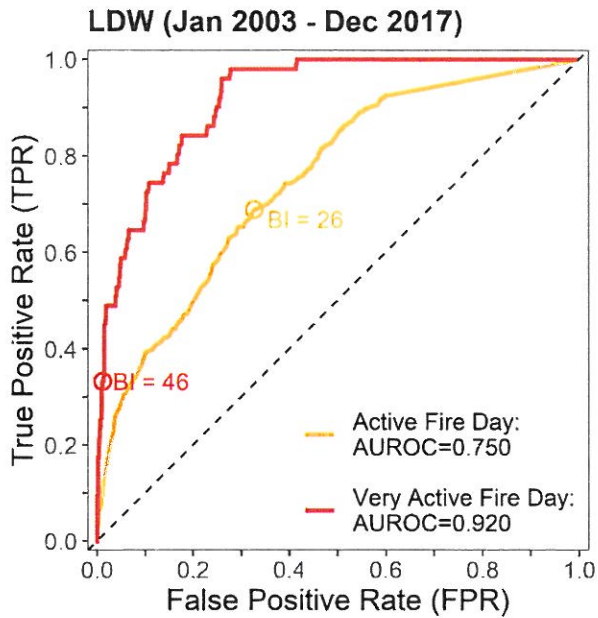
Table 3: Dispatch Response Level Matrix.



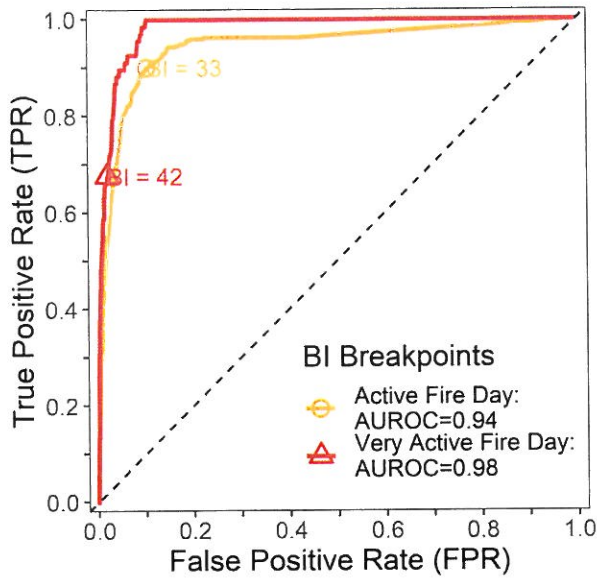
## Appendix A

### BI Threshold Graphs:

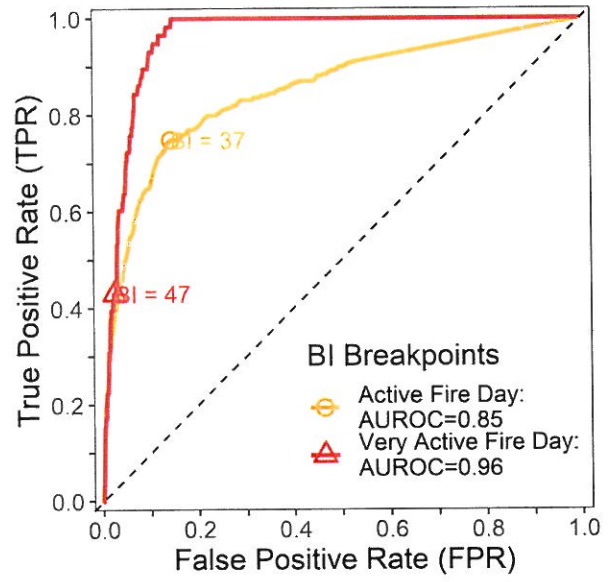
BI threshold ranges were based on active fire days calculated from MODIS.



BRH: MODIS: 2003-2017: Jan - Dec



BRL: MODIS: 2003-2017: Jan - Dec



## **Appendix B**

**Response Zone Map:** Lolo, Bitterroot, DNRC, CSKT maps have not been developed at the time of this plan.

*Need to add maps here*

## Appendix C

### Run Cards:

#### EXAMPLE RUN CARD:

[Name of Response Zone]

[Name of FDRA]

[Name of Radio Group]

<b>DISPATCH RESPONSE LEVEL</b>	<b>LOW</b>	<b>MODERATE</b>	<b>HIGH</b>
<b>RESOURCES (MINIMUM)</b>	Ex: 1 Engine or Module	Ex: 2 Engine or Modules; ICT4/5	Ex: 2 Engine; IA Module; ICT3/4

#### **Dispatch Comments**

##### **SHARED BOUNDARY:**

- Notify adjacent Dispatch Office if fire is within 5 miles of neighbor's boundary.

##### **IF AIRCRAFT IS ORDERED:**

- Ex: Landing site approvals; dip-site locations;

##### **KNOWN HAZARDS:**

- Ex: Access, power lines, etc.

##### **NOTIFICATIONS:**

- Ex: District Duty Officer; Forest Duty Officer, MSO Unit Duty Officer, SWLO Duty Officer,

##### **DUTY OFFICER CONSIDERATIONS:**

- Ex: Contact appropriate Sheriff's office when fire is threatening or close to private property.