

Northern Rockies Southwest Zone

Staffing Plan

2021-2023



Northern Rockies Southwest Zone

Staffing Plan

Approved By: Agency Administrators



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Northern Rockies Southwest Zone

Staffing Plan

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Northern Rockies Southwest Zone

Staffing Plan

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Northern Rockies Southwest Zone

Staffing Plan

I. Introduction

A. Purpose

This Staffing Plan is intended to provide a day-to-day guidance for decisions regarding the “degree of readiness” of fire management resources. The Staffing Plan is designed to address Initial Attack readiness across the Forest. The Staffing Level (SL) is used as a basis to make daily internal fire operational decisions affecting our Agency personnel. At each SL, this plan identifies:

- *Daily Staffing*
- *Draw-Down Levels*
- *Step-Up Actions*

This plan will function most effectively when decisions are made in preparation for escalating fire danger and potential fire activity. Waiting until the day of a critical event during extreme fire danger will prove this plan ineffective.

“You need a fire danger system that will help you make a judgment decision today on what kind and number of fires you can expect tomorrow.” (Lancaster, 2004)

B. Terminology

1. Preparedness Level and Staffing Level

Preparedness Levels incorporate local fire occurrence, suppression resources committed, and stable variables (e.g. ERC, Live Fuel Moisture, 100-hr Fuel Moisture, etc.) to help with long-term decisions, such as the need to request severity funding or activation of public-use restrictions. Staffing Levels only consider fire danger and are intended to help with short-term decisions. Both can be set to the same levels (1-5) with the recognition they have different functions.

2. Step-up Plan

A Step-Up Plan includes supplemental staffing actions designed to enhance the unit's fire management capability during short periods (usually one burn period in anticipation of wind events, dry cold fronts, and lightning events) where normal staffing cannot foreseeably meet initial attack, prevention, or detection needs.

Step-Up actions are incorporated into the Staffing Plan, as identified below in Figure 1.

3. Draw-Down Level

"Draw-Down" is the degree of response capabilities of an agency due to the impact of fire management activity within their home jurisdiction and/or their commitment of resources to the mutual aid system for incident response outside of their jurisdiction. Draw-Down is expressed as either (1) the predetermined number/type of suppression resources, or (2) the percentage of remaining capacity of suppression resources required to maintain viable initial attack capability.

C. Policy and Guidance

Policy and guidance regarding the development of Staffing Plans can be found in Chapter 10 of the [*Interagency Standards for Fire and Aviation Operations*](#) (Red Book).

Agency directives and interagency guidance may require 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 Staffing Plan is an operational plan tiered from the Fire Danger Operating Plan as shown below in Figure 1.

Fire Management Plan

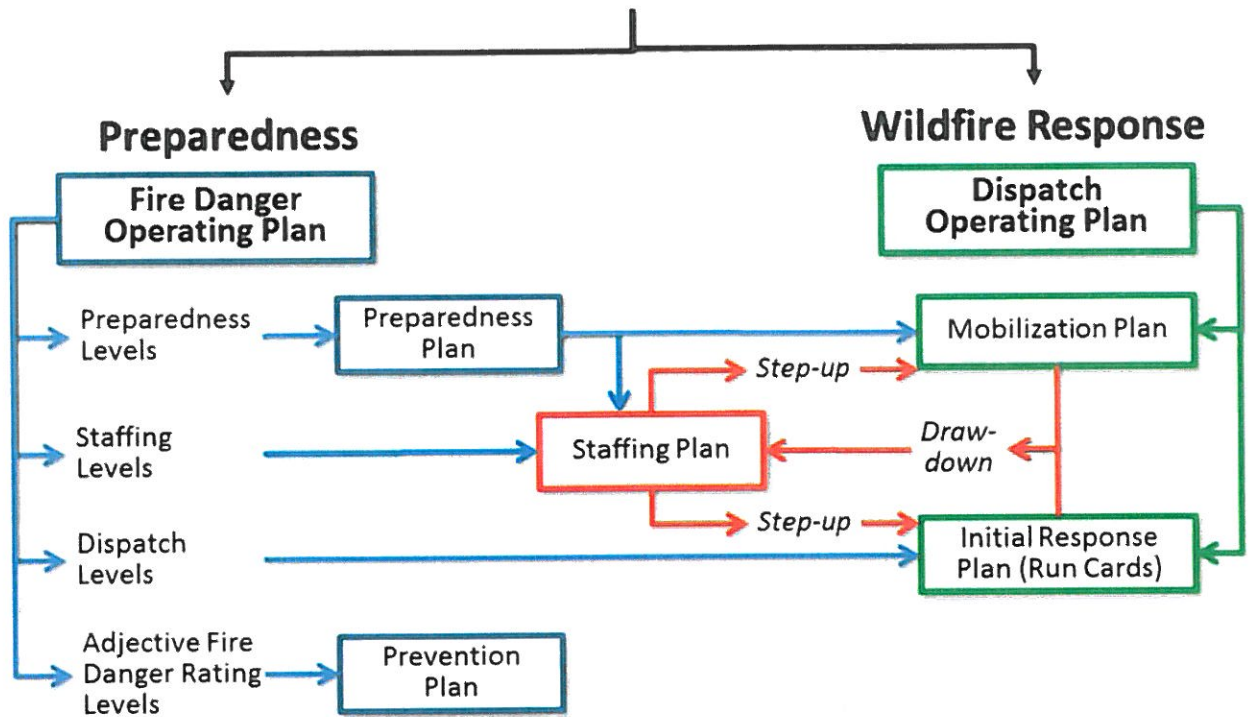


Figure 1. Fire Management Plan

D. Scope

This Staffing Plan has tables recommending resource staffing for the Lolo National Forest, Bitterroot National Forest, Montana DNRC, and CSKT (pending) fire management programs.

The Staffing Levels for CSKT are available upon request; please contact Ronan Fire Dispatch Center Manager, Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes.

The Montana DNRC staffing levels are defined in the Southwestern Fire Mobilization Guide; please contact Southwestern Land Office Fire Program Manager.

II. Staffing Levels

Staffing Levels can be derived directly from the Weather Information Management System (WIMS), or preferably, from an analysis of historical weather observations and fire occurrence data using the FireFamilyPlus software to determine ERC thresholds.

A. Staffing Index

This Staffing Plan is based upon the following Staffing Index: Energy Release Component (ERC).

III. Draw-Down

Draw-Down is the predetermined number and type of resources required to maintain viable initial attack (IA) capability at either the local or geographic area. Draw-Down resources are considered unavailable outside the local or geographic area for which they have been identified. Draw-Down is intended to:

- *Ensure adequate fire management capability for local and/or geographic area managers; and*
- *Enable sound planning and preparedness at all management levels.*

A. Factors Affecting Draw Down

Draw-Down Levels can change dramatically in a short period of time. A few factors which can affect staffing and resource commitment/availability are:

1. Response (or Dispatch) Level

Staffing Levels have a direct effect on the ability to send pre-determined suppression resources to wildland fires, depending upon the Response Level (and vice versa). Even under normal threat levels, a routine call for service can deplete the availability of a unit's resources and result in a degree of drawdown. If an incident becomes prolonged or requires the commitment of resources beyond the initial response, the agencies capabilities can be affected.

2. Unit Size

The size of an agency has a direct impact on its ability to manage its Draw-Down status. The deeper the resource pool allows more flexibility for maintaining adequate coverage within the home jurisdiction. Agencies of medium to smaller size can be challenged to maintain geographical coverage at times of increased wildland fire activity. In the case of smaller agencies, a single resource committed to an incident can result in extreme Draw-Down and challenge their ability to meet their basic jurisdictional coverage responsibilities.

3. 5-Day versus 7-Day Resource Staffing

The Lolo and Bitterroot National Forests, Montana DNRC, and CSKT staff wildland fire engines/water tenders, initial attack modules, prevention technicians, fire lookouts, dispatchers, and helicopters with enough personnel to maintain 7 day staffing through the majority of the fire season. Typically, 7-day staffing begins around the 4th of July and/or when environmental conditions warrant the need and when the districts can appropriately staff 7-day coverage. Similarly, in the fall, Forest/District/Unit/Tribal Fire Management Officers will make the decision to go back to 5 day staffing based on the waning fire potential as well as the lack of personnel due to employees returning to school. Regardless of the staffing schedules, the expectation is that the minimum draw-down levels will be maintained throughout the fire season.

4. Interagency Cooperation & Commitment

The Missoula Interagency Dispatch Center provides dispatching services to multiple agencies. When multiple agencies respond to incidents on each other's jurisdiction – usually based on the closest available resource(s) – coordination amongst the affected agencies is essential to maintain interagency relationships and provide effective and efficient response to incidents.

5. Multiple Fires

Maintaining capacity to respond to a reported incident is the intended outcome of a Staffing Plan. However, when more than one incident occurs concurrently within the respective unit's response area, a unit's capacity can be diminished or exhausted.

B. Determination of Draw-Down Levels

Local Draw-Down is established by the local unit and implemented by the local interagency dispatch office. The local dispatch office will notify the Geographic Area Coordination Center (GACC) of local Draw-Down decisions and actions.

The term Draw-Down is generally used to describe the level of commitment of an agency's resources at a certain point in time. Most importantly, it defines the agency's ability to perform its basic service levels. Once a level has been reached where basic service levels cannot be provided, actions should be taken to "step up" the capacity to a level sufficient to provide anticipated services.

Draw-Down levels are to be managed between the FDRA's to meet the total resources needed at the Unit level. There will be circumstances when deviations from the staffing plan will occur such as occasions when the unit experiences multiple fire starts and/or when a fire exceeds initial attack capabilities. In these situations, Forest Service, DNRC, and CSKT Fire Staff, FMO's/Duty Officers, and Missoula, Bitterroot, and Ronan Dispatch Centers will coordinate to ensure relief resources are ordered as needed. Additionally, local counties and adjacent federal land management units can be utilized to enhance staffing. When resources are in high demand, certain situations may dictate the need to allow for additional flexibility in our staffing plan where some of the identified Draw-Down levels may be met by sharing resources between our Unit's and potentially an IMT. This should only be used as a temporary fix to meet staffing needs until additional resources arrive.

C. NORTHERN ROCKIES SOUTHWEST ZONE STAFFING PLANS

Staffing levels for personnel and initial attack resources needed will vary throughout the year and by Agency. When we are in Preparedness Level 1 and 2, typically during pre/post season, no or limited initial attack capability is required. The staffing tables below reflect recommendations for resource staffing on the Lolo NF, Bitterroot NF, Montana DNRC, and CSKT (pending).

These tables recommend the minimum staffing levels needed for each preparedness level with the recognition additional resources may need to be ordered to sustain staffing levels once resources become committed to incidents.

2021 Lolo National Forest Staffing Plan
Based on Northern Rockies Southwest Zone Lolo/DNRC East and Lolo/DNRC West FDRA's,
Fuel Model Y

	1	2	3	4	5
Preparedness Level	1	2	3	4	5
Fire Danger Rating	Low	Moderate	High	Very High	Extreme
Fire Danger ERC Percentile	0-<40%	>40-<80%	>80-<90%	>90-<97%	>97%
Suppression Resources					
	1	2	3	4	5
Days per week	Established Work Schedule	Established Work Schedule	Consider 7 Day	7 Day	7 Day
Length of work day	Established Work Schedule Hours	Established Work Schedule Hours	Extended Hours as Needed	Extended Hours (District DO Discretion)	Extended Hours (District DO Discretion)
Forest Fire Duty Officer-DIVS & ICT3 or RXB2; or ASGS & ICT3 Qualified	1	1	1	1	1
Forest Aviation Officer	0	0	1	1	1
District Fire Duty Officer-TFLD & ICT3 or RXB2; or HEBM & ICT3 Qualified	3/Forest	3/Forest	5 1/district	5 1/district	5 1/district
Dispatch Duty Officer	1	1	1	1	1
Initial Attack Dispatcher	1	2	2	3	3
Aircraft Dispatcher	1	1	1	1	1
Fire Investigator	1	1	1	1	1
Forest Fire Lookouts	0	0	Key Lookouts Staffed	Key Lookouts Staffed	Key Lookouts Staffed
Engines	3/Forest	3/Forest	5/Forest	8/Forest	8/Forest
IA Module	0	0	5/Forest	5/Forest	5/Forest
Helicopter Module	0	0	0	1	1
Fire Prevention	1/Forest	1/Forest	3/Forest	4/Forest	4/Forest
Aerial Detection	DO request	DO request	Following lightning and/or DO request	Following lightning and/or DO request	Following lightning and/or DO request

*Forest Draw-Down resources will be determined through discussions with District and Forest DO's. Daily Staffing Levels on the Lolo NF often exceed Draw-Down Levels. Duty Officers have the discretion to adjust these Draw-Down Levels to efficiently move resources where needed across the Forest and dispatch area.

2021 Montana DNRC Staffing Plan
Based on Northern Rockies Southwest Zone Lolo/DNRC East FDRA,
Southwestern Land Office, Missoula, Clearwater and Anaconda Unit
Fuel Model Y

	1	2	3	4	5
Preparedness Level	1	2	3	4	5
Fire Danger Rating	Low	Moderate	High	Very High	Extreme
Fire Danger ERC Percentile	0-<40%	>40-<80%	>80-<90%	>90-<97%	>97%
	1	2	3	4	5
Days per week	5 day	5 day	7 day	7 day	7 day
Length of work day Fire Staff, Dispatch, Aviation, and Engine Crews	8 hours	8 hours	Discuss Extended Hours approaching PL4	Extended Hours 10 hours a day 6 on/1 off *	Extended Hours 12 hours a day 13 on/1 off *
Aerial Detection	Unit Request	Daily Discussion: after lightning & increased fire activity	Daily Discussion: after lightning & increased fire activity	Daily Discussion: after lightning & increased fire activity	Daily Discussion: after lightning & increased fire activity
Unit IA Engine Availability per day					
Missoula	One	4	5	5	Additional Engines As needed *
Clearwater		3	4	5	
Anaconda		2	4	5	
Additional Staffing					
Deer Lodge crew or IA hand crew		Available	Available	Consider prepositioning *	Consider prepositioning *
Overhead				1-ICT3 2-TFLD *	3-ICT3 4-TFLD *
Helicopters				Consider Preposition *	Preposition *
Prevention			Fire Prevention Messaging	Local team *	National team *
Support Staff				Dispatcher* Finance* Logistics *	Full type 3 organization *
Mechanic				Consider*	1 *
Dozers, Skidgines, Excavators, w/transport			Track Location	Track Location, preposition as needed *	Pre Position As Needed *
Water Tenders			"	"	"

*Indicates actions requiring severity funding

**2021 Bitterroot National Forest Staffing Plan
Based on Northern Rockies Southwest Zone
Fuel Model Y**

	1	2	3	4	5
Preparedness Level	1	2	3	4	5
Fire Danger Rating	Low	Moderate	High	Very High	Extreme
Fire Danger ERC Percentile	0-<40%	>40-<80%	>80-<90%	>90-<97%	>97%
Suppression Resources: July 1-September 30					
	1	2	3	4	5
Days per week	5 day	5 day	7 day starting PP13	7 day	7 day
Length of work day	8 hours	8 hours	Discuss Extended Hours	Extended Hours 10 hours a day	Extended Hours 12 hours a day
Forest Fire Duty Officer-DIVS & ICT3 or RXB2; or ASGS & ICT3 Qualified	1	1	1	1	1
Forest Aviation Officer	0	0	0	1	1
District Fire Duty Officer TFLD & ICT3 or RXB2; or HEBM & ICT3 Qualified	3	3	3	3	3
Forest Dispatcher	1	1	1	1	1
Initial Attack Dispatcher	1	1	1	2	2
Fire Investigator	1	1	1	1	1
Fire Lookouts	0	Key Lookouts Staffed	Key Lookouts Staffed	Key Lookouts Staffed	Key Lookouts Staffed
Engines/IA Modules	2 (1 must be engine)	3 (2 must be engine)	4 (3 must be engine)	6 (3 must be engine)	4
10 person IA Crew	0	0	0	Consider Pre-positioning	2
Overhead	0	0	0	1-ICT3	2-ICT3
Helicopter Module	0	0	1	1	1
Prevention	1	1	1	1	1
Aerial Detection	Following lightning and/or DO request	Following lightning and/or DO request	Following lightning and/or DO request	Following lightning and/or DO request	Following lightning and/or DO request
Suppression Resources: October 1-June 30					
	1	2	3	4	5
Forest Fire Duty Officer	1	1	1	1	1
Forest Aviation Officer	0	0	0	1	1
District Fire Duty Officer	1	1	3	3	3
Forest Dispatcher	1	1	1	1	1
Initial Attack Dispatcher	1	1	1	1	1
Fire Investigator	1	1	1	1	1

Fire Lookouts	0	0	0	0	0
Engines/IA Modules	1	2 (1 must be engine)	3 (2 must be engine)	4 (3 must be engine)	6 (3 must be engine)
10 person IA Crew	0	0	0	0	0
Overhead	0	0	0	1-ICT3	1-ICT3
Helicopter Module	0	0	0	0	1
Prevention	1	1	1	1	1
Aerial Detection	Following lightning and/or DO request	Following lightning and/or DO request	Following lightning and/or DO request	Following lightning and/or DO request	Following lightning and/or DO request

D. Aerial Detection

The Lolo National Forest has a light fixed wing aircraft available on an 80-day IDIQ contract. Additional light fixed wing aircraft are available on CWN contracts. The aircraft are used primarily for wildland fire detection and monitoring purposes. The use of the aircraft is based on the following guide:

- Following lightning, DO’s order aerial detection from the Missoula Dispatch Aircraft Desk by 9am.
- District Duty Officer or DFMO will have the responsibility to cancel or continue flight after the two scheduled days.
- Order a second aircraft for coverage as needed.

Missoula Dispatch Center is responsible for ordering and dispatching aircraft, assigning Aerial Observers and determining flight routes. Every effort will be made to place an Aerial Observer trainee on each flight. Districts will assist with providing Aerial Observers.

The Bitterroot National Forest has detection aircraft available under on-demand and call-when-needed (CWN) contracts. They are primarily used for wildland fire detection, wildland fire response, and monitoring purposes. The Forest uses aircraft on an as-needed basis determined by the following general guidelines:

- As determined by fire danger levels
- Following lightning storms
- As assistance in the location of wildland fires
- To assess ignitions in wilderness areas

Bitterroot Dispatch Center maintains a list of Aerial Observers on the Bitterroot National Forest and is responsible for staffing an Aerial Observer on detection flights. The District

Fire Duty Officer is responsible for ordering aerial detection when needed for their unit through dispatch.

The Montana DNRC fixed wing aircraft is used for aerial detection, initial incident size-up, and guiding ground crews to the fire. This resource will be obtained by ordering through Missoula Dispatch Center. The SWLO Duty Officer will have the responsibility for determining priorities when multiple incidents occur on two or more units. MDC is responsible for reassignment of the aircraft when necessary. Before the aircraft is moved or reassigned, communication will be initiated by the dispatch center to the Area Duty Officer and the unit currently controlling the aircraft.

At Preparedness Level III or higher, a discussion between Unit Fire Managers (or designee) and the Aviation Operations Supervisor (or assistant if AOS is unavailable) will determine the flight schedule for each day. This discussion will take place the evening prior to or the day of scheduled flights.

E. Severity Staffing

Forest Service, DNRC, and CSKT Fire Staff, FMO's/Duty Officers, and Missoula, Bitterroot, and Ronan Dispatch Centers will consult, order, and preposition severity resources to best meet their Agency needs.

2021 Severity Plan/Step Up Plan

	1	2	3	4	5
Preparedness Level	1	2	3	4	5
Fire Danger Rating	Low	Moderate	High	Very High	Extreme
Fire Danger ERC Percentile	0-<40%	>40-<80%	>80-<90%	>90-<97%	>97%
Severity Resources					
	1	2	3	4	5
Days per week	Established Work Schedule	Established Work Schedule	Consider 7 Day	7 day	7 day
Length of work day	Established Work Schedule Hours	Established Work Schedule Hours	Extended Hours as Needed	Extended Hours (District DO Discretion)	Extended Hours (District DO Discretion)
CWN Exclusive Use Helicopter	0	0	Preposition as Needed	Preposition as Needed	Preposition as needed
SEAT	0	0	Preposition as Needed	Preposition as Needed	Preposition as needed
ATGS/HLCO	0	0	Preposition as Needed	Preposition as Needed	Preposition as Needed
ICT3/District Duty Officer/Forest Duty Officer	0	0	Consider Ordering to Boost Capacity	Consider Ordering to Boost Capacity	Consider Ordering to Boost Capacity
Engine and/or IA Modules	0	0	Consider Ordering to Boost Capacity	Consider Ordering to Boost Capacity	Consider Ordering to Boost Capacity
T2IA Hand Crews	0	0	0	Preposition as Needed	Preposition as Needed
T1 Crews	0	0	0	Preposition as Needed	Preposition as Needed
Heavy Equipment (Dozer, Excavator, Skidgine, etc.)	0	0	0	Preposition as Needed	Preposition as Needed
IA/Aircraft Dispatch	0	0	Consider Ordering to Boost Capacity	Consider Ordering to Boost Capacity	Consider Ordering to Boost Capacity
Fire Investigator/LEO	0	0	Consider Ordering to Boost Capacity	Consider Ordering to Boost Capacity	Consider Ordering to Boost Capacity
Prevention	0	Increase Messaging	Consider Prevention Team	Consider Prevention Team	Consider Prevention Team

