

Illinois Interagency Dispatch Center
http://gacc.nifc.gov/eacc/dispatch_centers/ILC/index.htm
2014 End of the Year Report



Photo courtesy of Scott Crist
Shawnee National Forest



Photo courtesy of Stefanie Fitzsimons
Illinois DNR



Photo courtesy of Jerry Hoffman
Midewin Hotshots

Shawnee National Forest Service
Midewin National Tallgrass Prairie
Golconda Job Corps
United States Fish and Wildlife Service
United States National Park Service
Illinois Department of Natural Resources



2014 ILC Year End Report

Quirky is the only way I can sum up 2014. The year started out just as usual, Jennifer and I working hard to manage the 7 day a week coverage during fire season and looking forward to the summer when we get our seasonal dispatcher on board and we can go to weekends off, something we look forward to every year. However, this summer was different because Jennifer took a 120 day detail to EACC starting in April and our seasonal started only about two weeks before Jennifer left so there wasn't much overlap. I made the decision not to bring in a detailer thinking, even though it would be a long summer, we could manage with just myself and our new seasonal. Well, all this amounted to lessons learned and it is something I will never do again, we really need 3 people here in the summer.

Each year we seem to have a bit of a theme. Last year it was critter focused, year before that it was a move focus, well this year it was electronic gadget focused. It seemed like the entire year was geared towards maintenance on one thing or the other, whether it was trying to get all the Initial Attack, on-call, COOP and personal computers migrated to a new server, trying to figure out how to update the website once we went to the new server, how to get our radio recorder working properly, additional maintenance on the copier/printer, being a test center for the new version of WildCad, and trying to understand "Stamps.com", I could go on, but let's just say we hope 2015 has a vacation focus.

Individually, Jennifer and I were busy throughout the year with participation in varied Local, National and Geographical activities outside of our day to day dispatch duties. Besides her detail into the Logistics position at the Eastern Area Coordination Center, Jennifer continued to participate as the Eastern Area's WildCad representative and was able to attend the S445 and M410 classes. Patricia McCann, our new seasonal dispatcher attended a D110 and ROSS class. I continued my position as the Business Manager for the Eastern Area Coordination Group and a member of the ROSS Change Board; I headed up the Forest Service All Employee Day, attended a ROSS Reports writing class, participated on hiring panels, and continued the pursuit of getting "The Quarterly Dispatcher" newsletter off the ground.

But besides all the electronic gadget updates, we actually had a really nice spring fire/burning season. This spring we hosted a Type 3 helicopter the month of March into April, an 8 person crew from the Cleveland National Forest in California for a few weeks in April along with Engines from the Chequamegon-Nicolet and Allegheny National Forest who assisted us with our prescribed and wild fire activities. Because of all this additional help, we were able to assist the Forest Service in getting 8650 prescribed acres burned, and suppress 24 wildland fires.

The first and last wildfires of the year began and ended with the Forest Service. On January 27th the Cold fire burned 60 acres while the Tower Rock fire burned 3 acres of Forest land in December. The prescribed fire activity began in January starting on the 29th with the FS burning State of Illinois Tract and concluding on November 15 with the Forest Service burning Inagheh and Crab Orchard burning Tacoma. The DNR had a fairly quiet fall burning season, however it was the spring where they kept us busy with 73 prescribed fire projects which we reported for them from January thru April.

Mobilizations were a bit tricky this year with some new twists we had to contend with like the airline cancelling flights and re-booking without the travelers knowledge (which puts a bit of a strain when trying to coordinate arrivals), or that SATO (travel agency) took over 4 hours to book 20 flights, or the many times we cancelled and rescheduled flights for individuals whose planned assignment were either re-scheduled due to fire activity or in one case lack thereof fire activity. Even though it was a "different" year for mobilizations, we still were able to fill 54 overhead, 2 engine, 2 aircraft, and 11 handcrew orders making a total of 96 airline flight arrangements.

The Job Corps Wildland Fire Camp crew program had some changes with the retirement of Don Brown however Hassan Lot gratefully picked up the reins and ran with the program. Even though there was a number of students that left, Hassan continued to enlist students to join in the program and managed to get students the necessary training in order to get a redcard, however it was a quiet year for camp crews so we were never able to get the crew out.

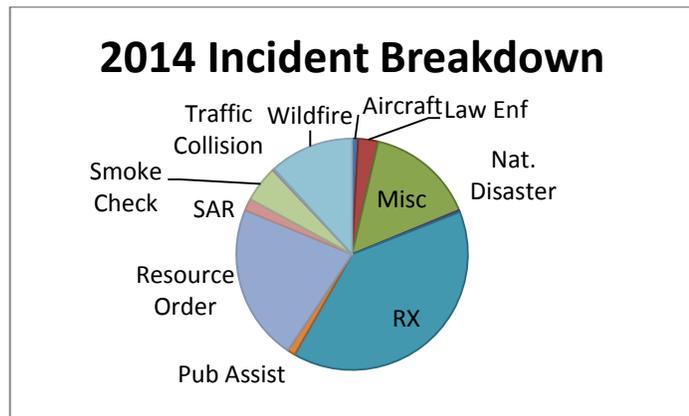
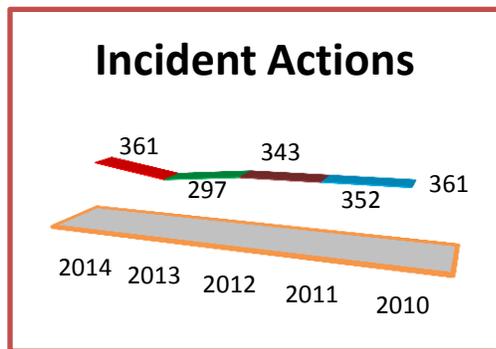
All in all it was a good year. A year of lessons learned, of realizing how important fire and dispatch experience is to a dispatch center, but most of all the recognition of communication and the importance it has in all that we do. There will be some new changes coming in 2015 for the dispatch center. Jennifer was offered and accepted the Logistics position at EACC and Patricia took a job with SIU. I will be bringing in some detailers to help get us through fire season and with the help of DNR funding I will bring a seasonal on earlier than 2014.

I look forward to 2015 and all that it may throw at us. Jennifer leaving is definitely a curve ball, but one I'm extremely happy about because it is a great career move for her, and once I recover from my breakdown, I'll once again see why I believe change is good.

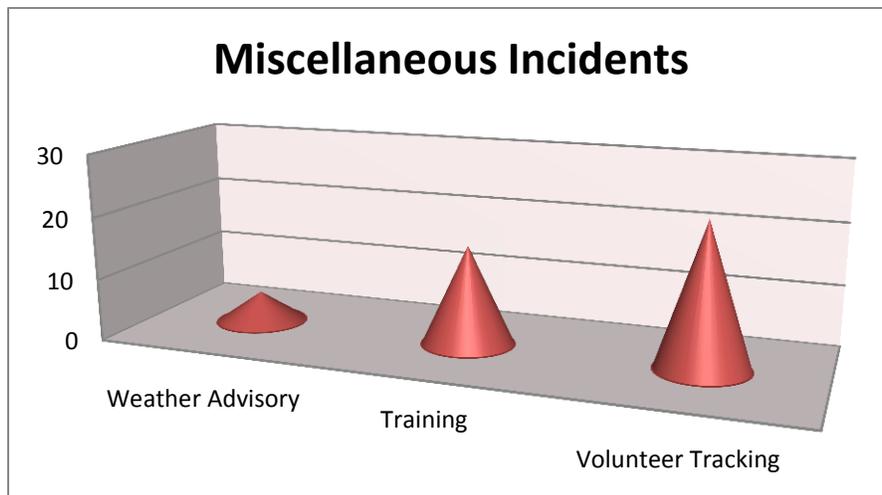
Good luck Jen, we all will miss you terribly.

Incident Actions

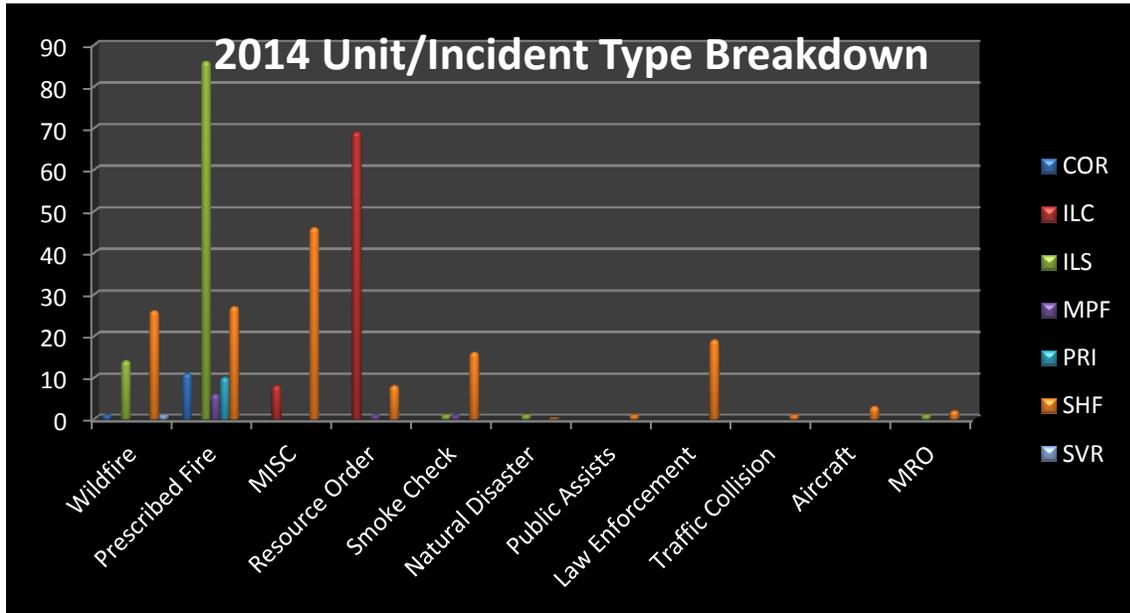
This was a fairly busy year for us, similar to 2010 but about 10% more than 2013. A reminder that every time dispatch takes some kind of action on something whether it is a wildland fire, prescribed fire, severe weather announcement, medical aid, smoke check or a resource order we give it a number and at the end of the year we have a really good indication of how busy we were and we can see which agencies provide us with the heaviest workloads. It is a great little system if I do say so myself, and over the years we have been perfecting the process.



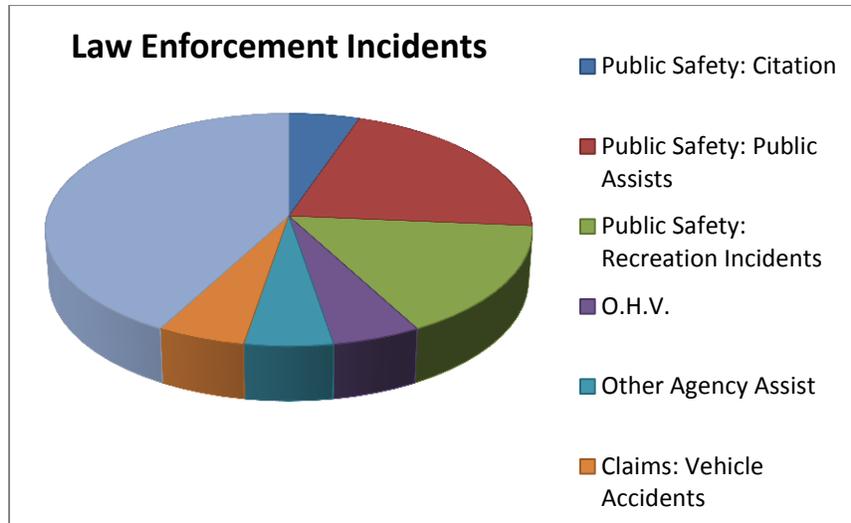
We had a total of 361 incidents in our center for 2014. Prescribed fire burning is the bulk of the incidents. The graph below shows the additional breakdown of the Miscellaneous Category. ILC has shown a steady increase in the volume of volunteers that are tracked throughout the year



Typically when individuals think of us, they think of “fire” but on the graphs below you will see we participate in a wide range of activities. As you can see the Forest Service activity is spread out, whereas activities for the State DNR and Fish and Wildlife Service are mostly wildland fire and prescribed fire activities.



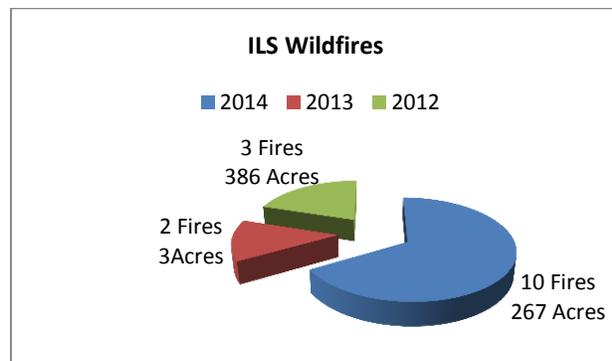
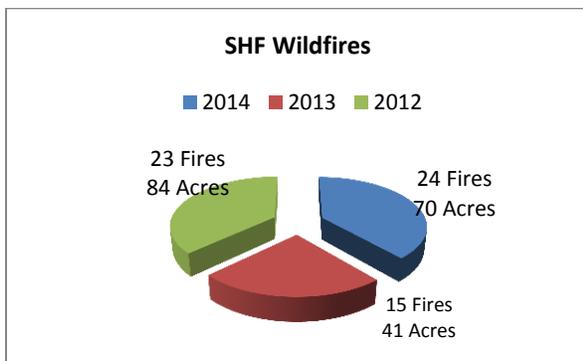
ILC continued to assist local federal Law Enforcement personnel with incidents throughout Southern Illinois. Search and Rescues continues to be the bulk of the incidents for our dispatch staff regarding LE incidents. National Association of Search and Rescue training was put on locally in 2014. Federal employees received classroom and field training, to help assists in these events.

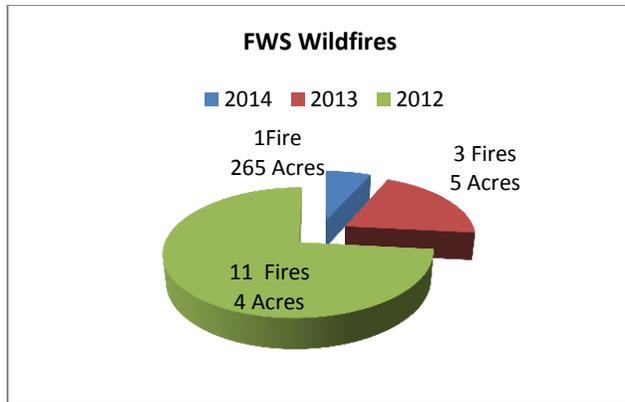


Wildfires

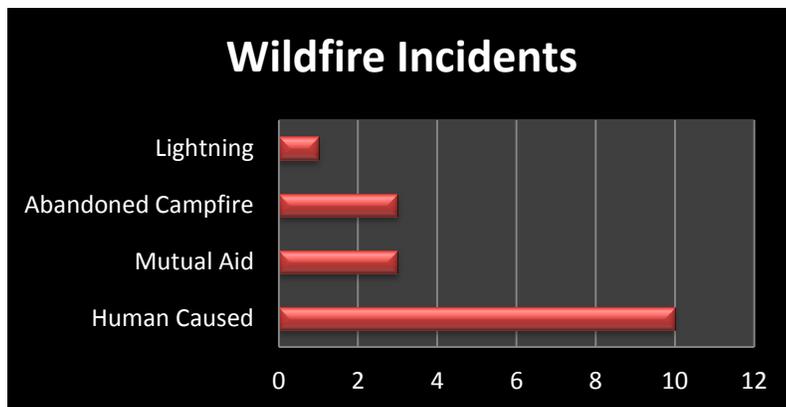
Every year the Illinois Department of Natural Resources have numerous wildland fires however, unless Tom Wilson knows of them or responds to them, we usually don't get the information. 2014 we saw an increase of activity of wildfires which we reported for the State, more than we reported in the last 3 years combined. This is really important because it shows on the National Situation report how active the State of Illinois is in the realm of wildland fires. Even though the number we report vs the actual numbers is small in comparison, I have seen an increase throughout the years.

One of the most interesting wildland fires this year was for the Fish and Wildlife Service. They had just obtained some land near the town of Hebron Illinois which is north of Chicago and just south of the Wisconsin border. An adjacent land owner was burning and it got away from them and burned up the entire parcel of the new Refuge. At the time of the fire, we didn't even have the 3 letter designator obtain for the refuge, so those acres never got reported on the sit report.





As you can see by the above graphs, wildland fire activity varies depending on the agency and the year. The Forest Service stayed fairly consistent over the last 3 years and the reason for the varied activity for the FWS and State is that the Dispatch Center only provides the initial attack support for the Wildlife Refuges and State lands in Southern Illinois and unless we receive information on activity elsewhere, it doesn't get recorded in our dispatch database. So with that said, the above numbers are only the numbers which our dispatch center supported.



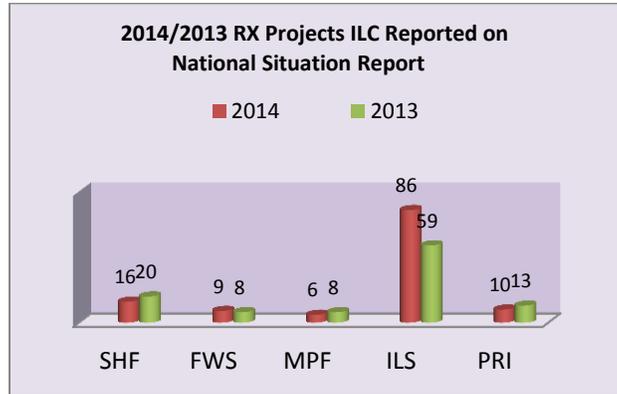
Mutual Aid continues to progress with local counties in Southern Illinois. ILC dispatched personnel and equipment to several counties including: Williamson, Union and Jackson Counties.

Prescribed Fires

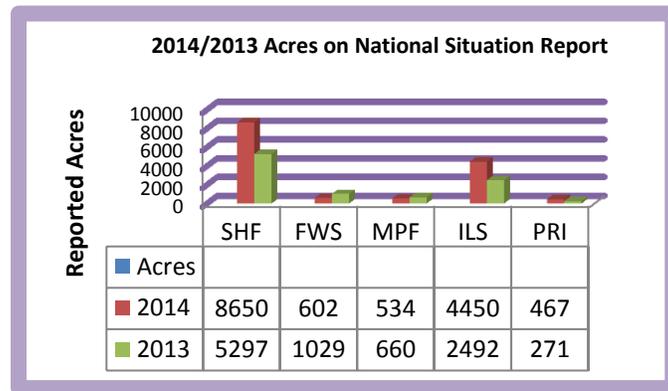
Supporting prescribed fire activities for the Forest Service, Fish and Wildlife Service and Illinois Department of Natural Resources as well as some private individuals who notify us they are burning, keeps us very active in the spring and fall each year. 2014 was no different. In fact we were slightly more active than 2013 with total projects and acres reported.

We often get questions on why there is a difference on the daily situation report throughout the year. Everything that is turned into us at the end of the days burning period by the Burn Boss is what we report on the National Daily Situation Report. The situation report is a continued daily snapshot of activity while the information we supply in our end of the year report typically are the final numbers

which are provided to us by the agency. Call it better mapping. But you can see why it is important for all agencies to let us know when they burn. Sometimes we don't get the information until days or weeks after the burn or sometimes not at all. So if you want your agencies work to be documented that information needs to be given to the dispatch center in a timely manner.

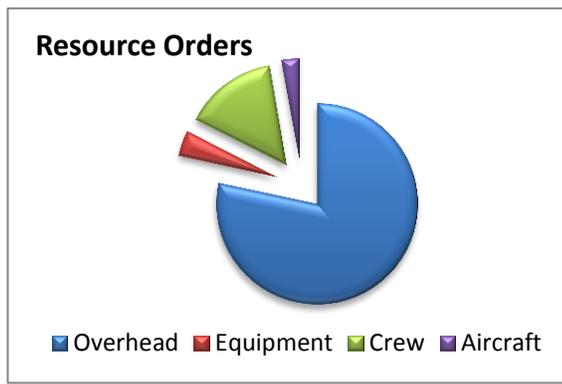
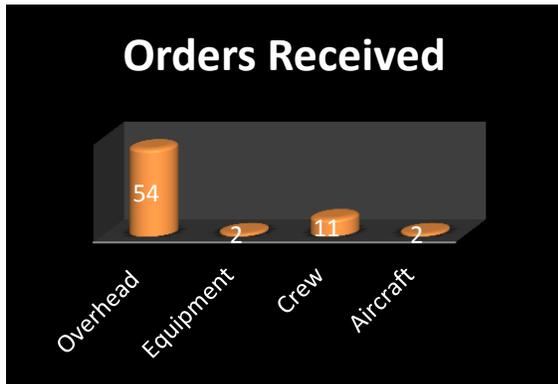


The graph above shows the number of projects which the dispatch center supported and the graph below shows accomplished acres which we received from the burn boss and reported on the National Situation Report.

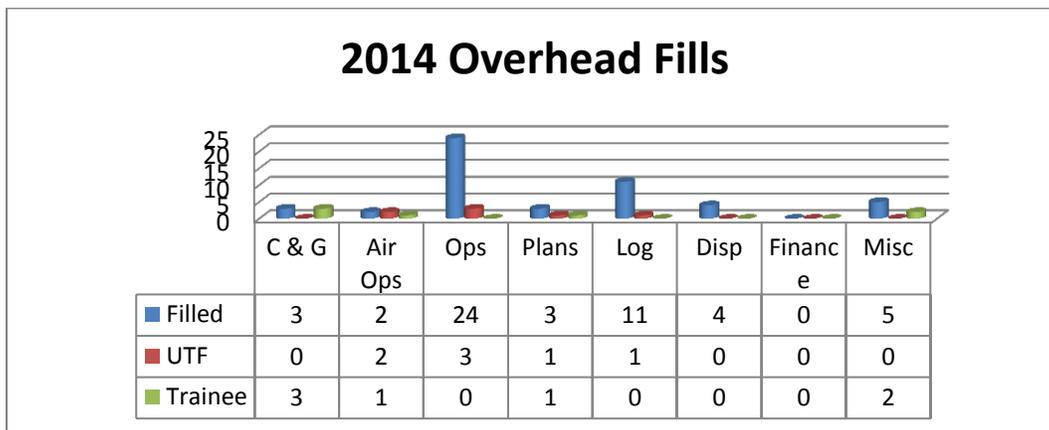


Mobilizations

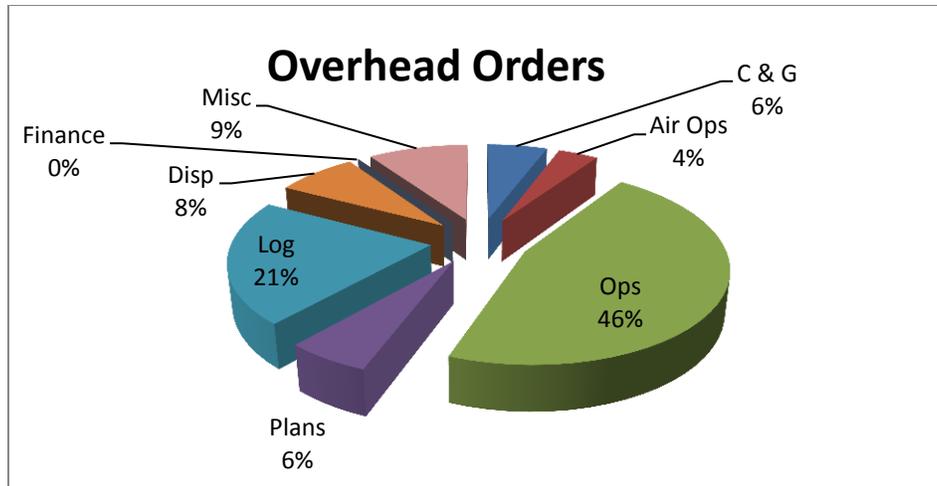
The number of mobilizations IL-ILC had in 2014 is similar to previous years. All total we received 69 resource orders and were able to fill all but 7 therefore 90% of the orders we received we filled. A few of these orders had multiple fills, which is why some of the numbers are different. Of the 69 resource orders placed with IL-ILC, 4 were for resources we brought in to assist us with RX or wildland fire activities (ex: Cleveland 8, Chequamegon-Nicolet Engine, Allegheny Engine or the helicopter) and then they were ordered by another unit (Mark Twain).



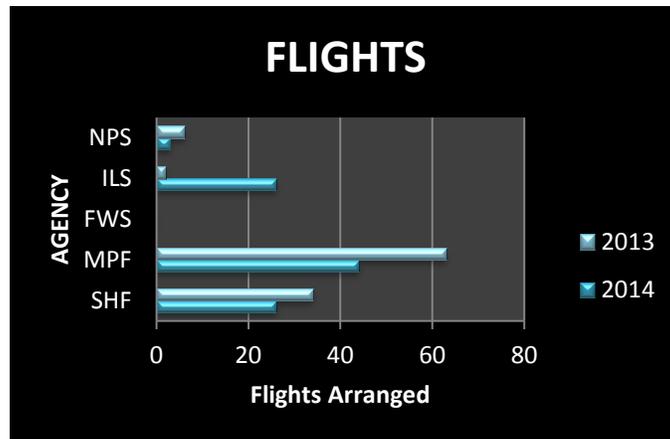
One of the things I really like to see when it comes to mobilizations is which area of the incident command system do we support the most. Every year, which is no surprise, we fill mostly Operations but this year, I noticed we are filling more logistic orders. We still have many employees throughout all agencies that could easily be trained in varied sections of the ICS system, so my hope is that all agencies look at the needs locally and nationally and we work together to build on those needs.



As you can see in this graph below, that almost 50% of our mobilizations are in Operations. We do provide resources in other sections except in finance, which by the way is always looking for help. The last few years the Forest Service has had individual's working on unique qualifications like Buying Team Member (BUYM) and Interagency Resource Representative (IARR).



The processing of overhead orders is still the biggest workload collectively for the center. It should be noted that getting out Crews is no small order either. Many challenges arose in 2014 with travel hurdles to jump through. Even though we made 10% less flight arrangements than in 2013, arrangements for State employees increased with the majority being crewmembers of the Type 2IA crew.



Fire codes are a great way to see trends in fire activity. Most of the fires in Illinois are manmade therefore they all receive a unique fire code, majority of the fires out west are lightning caused and typically use the ABC miscellaneous codes unless the fire is over 300 acres at which point there is a unique code issued. The graphs below show that 2014 was a typical year for wildland fire activity support for ILC.

