

The Quarterly Dispatcher

Volume 1, Issue 3

Initial Attack, Mobilization, Training, Support

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What Dispatchers do!

I must admit, the idea of “The Quarterly Dispatcher” filled my head with grandiose ideas that any one reading would have a well painted picture of what it is dispatchers do and that each edition would be filled with a wide range of articles from throughout the Eastern and Southern areas. I was sure I would win a Pulitzer. I mean, did you read the last two issues?!

However, reality has set in and I’ve realized it is not as easy as I pictured it. Oh don’t get me wrong, I greatly appreciate all the folks that have contributed to these first three editions. I feel the newsletters have been appreciated, well received, well done and successful, but articles are not flowing in like I had envisioned. Instead of getting articles submitted, I frantically contact folks and ask (sometimes beg) them to write articles. The personnel with in my unit have been troopers in writing articles when I approach them but I’m afraid I will have used up all my charm on my home unit, very soon.

So I wanted to take the time to encourage everyone reading this edition to think back on your position, career, colleagues, past fires, daily duties etc., and remember how a dispatcher assisted you. Whether providing you the information you needed for your report, helping you on a committee, assisting in training classes, directing you into a fire, taking the reins on the all employee day activities, or helping with a career or school day activities. I know there are dispatchers out there who have had impacts on those they serve and those they serve with.

Dispatchers do a lot of things other than answer radios and get you from one place to another during a fire mobilization. As you will find out in this edition, dispatchers not only assist with wildland fire, but also with prescribed fire, law enforcement, weather forecasters, aviation activities, returning veterans, cooperators and the list goes on. There are a multitude of hats we all wear and, honestly, we are happy to assist in all we can. After all, that is what we do best — we assist others.

So while you are reading this edition, jot down some things about your own experiences with dispatchers and send it to me for future editions of the newsletter. If you would like to write an article and just can’t think of a topic, check out page 4 for ideas, or if you have photos of your area you would like to share, send that as well with a brief description. This is an ongoing learning experience, and the more ideas we have, the greater success the newsletter will have.

The new format (I’m trying out) allows for longer articles from folks just like you who want to inform readers of the great things dispatchers do, how they assisted you, or how important they are to your program but just can’t do it in a few paragraphs. It gives more opportunity to add pictures of centers, discuss projects dispatchers are participating in, write about the dispatchers themselves or add local scenic pictures like the ones you will see in this edition (FYI, its Illinois) in order for readers to get a clear mental picture of how, what, where we all work and call home..

Thanks for your support and I do hope you enjoy this edition, and I hope to hear from you soon.



WHAT'S WORKING!!

"From the EADWT Chair's Corner"

New changes are popping up all over the place and the DWT is excited for what is in store for 2015. I'd like to introduce Mike Kern from the Pennsylvania Bureau of Forestry (PABOF) as our new Chair of the Eastern Area Dispatch Working Team. Back in April the EADWT met to discuss finding a new chair to replace Jim Flores and Mike Kern has stepped up and will take on this responsibility beginning Feb 1, 2015. Until then, I will continue the duties as the acting Chair. Mike comes to us with a great deal of logistical experience from mobilizing crews nationally, to opening the Harrisburg Mob Center for Hurricane Sandy Support. He plays a vital role in PABOF's operations in Harrisburg, PA. We would like to welcome Mike and we look forward to the leadership and opportunities he will provide for the Dispatch Working Team.

Some of the latest tasks the DWT has been working on is cranking up the ROSS practice machine and working with EACC on facilitating a hosting dispatch center each week and the units that want to receive orders. If you have not participated in ROSS practice and would like to do so, please contact Cameron Crisp, ccrisp@fs.fed.us, 304-636-1800 X243. We will continue until interest runs out.

ROSS Update Molly Campbell

As a member of the ROSS Change Board, I thought some of you may be interested on the status of the next version of ROSS.

The prior contract for ROSS with Lockheed Martin has expired and the new the strategy for the transition from the current ROSS to 3.0 is set in 3 phases

Phase 1 – ROSS Operations and Maintenance: A contract has been awarded to Phacil, Inc., who will be responsible for maintaining the current ROSS application fixing any bugs, doing software updates, etc.

Phase 2 – Discovery Requirements Contact: The contractor selected for this phase will be establishing the "road map" from ROSS 2.0 to ROSS 3.0. Their basic job will be to take what the dispatch community identifies as important or the "vision" if you will of what the program needs to incorporate in order to meet our needs. Estimated award for this portion of the project will be late June of 2014.

Phase 3 – Technical Refresh (Development) Contract: This contract is for the actual development of the 3.0 application by utilizing the "road map" which was developed in phase 2. Currently there is no time line for awarding this specific contract.

There are many stakeholders and working groups who will be engaged in this effort including groups such as The ROSS Change Control Board (CCB), Dispatch Efficiency Working Group (DEW), Reports Board, ROSS super users, ROSS Team, NCSC, etc.

For more information on the ROSS Change Board go to:
<http://ross.nwcg.gov/>

WildCAD Update **Jennifer Parrish** **EA WildCAD Representative**

Big changes are on the horizon for the WildCAD community. WildCAD 6.0 was installed in dispatch test centers around the country in April 2014. WildCAD 6.0 contains the much anticipated IRWIN component. Centers spent weeks working in the testing site environment reporting errors and conflicts within the program to Bighorn. Corrections have been made, and on May 30th, Bighorn installed WildCAD 6.0 at the Los Padres Communication Center. If all goes well, sometime in June, Bighorn will be looking to install the Live version of WildCAD 6.0 to all other centers. BLM and Forest Service centers cannot load the live version of WildCAD 6.0 until the National Operation Center advises all testing criteria and security of the new version of WildCAD has been met.

As a reminder to centers who do not have a NAS (Network Attached Storage) server, the CIO has identified this server as the only approved solution for operating WildCAD 6.0. For those centers still needing to purchase a NAS server for their WildCAD program, below is the featured link for information:
<http://fsweb.wo.fs.fed.us/irm/asset/ordering/hardware/network-attached-storage-fire.php>

As always, as information regarding the latest version of WildCAD comes available, I will be sure to pass it along. If centers have any questions regarding WildCAD please feel free to contact me via email at jparrish@fs.fed.us.

Now for a fun personalization you can do to your own WildCAD aircraft timers. Want to change your aircraft timers to a specific sound that will grab your attention? Here are the steps...

First seek out your favorite .wav file. A good source for these files is at www.wavsource.com. Once you have located your favorite sound for your personalized timer you need to save it. Rename and save the file timer.wav. Copy and paste it into same file that houses your WildCAD.exe file. Once you have done this, log into WildCAD and click on FILE and then select preferences. At the bottom of the preference box make sure that the radial dial for the timer.wav file is selected. Once you have done that, hit the test button to try out the sound for your new aircraft timer.



Rim Rock



RX Activity and your Initial Attack Dispatcher

Many folks, when they think of an initial attack dispatcher, they envision lots of commotion, lots of moving parts and resources, basically running and gunning. However, initial attack dispatchers also play a major role during prescribed fire activities, which typically happen at the same time wildland fire possibilities are high...yep it can get hectic! Not all dispatch centers provide the same "services" but I can almost guarantee you, each dispatcher and dispatch center are an important piece to the entire prescribed fire puzzle.

Below are some of the responsibilities that we dispatchers provide when prescribed fire projects are being planned as well as implemented: (Don't get any ideas Jon)

- *Track all resources going to and returning from each burn.
- *Find, or assist in gathering resources needed for the burn including overhead, leadership, signage, fuel mix, aircraft, engines, and other equipment and crews, as well as contingency resources while making sure there are no duplicate assignments on days with multiple burns.
- *Making public contacts. These contacts could be to radio stations, adjoining landowners, cooperators, 911 centers, Regional Office, Forest Supervisor (sometimes these are the day before but mostly the day of). At MOC this could be anywhere from 10-60 contacts depending on number of burns schedule for the day, the locations and burn plan requirements.
- *Receive spot weather readings from the field and submit to NWS, then relay/broadcast back to the Burn Boss when posted, and give copies to unit FMO/Fire Managers, as well as monitor the weather throughout the day and provide updates when necessary.
- *Develop a manifest or list of resources assigned to the burn and provide to Burn Boss for review and then make adjustments as needed.
- *Create IQCS, WildCAD, and ROSS incident records.
- *Document all communications coming into the center from the Burn Boss and other resources
- *Take complaints from the public regarding smoke.
- *Notify EPA of burn location, time of burn, how many acres, etc.
- *Make sure the acres get reported on SIT report, the RX activity sheet gets emailed to individuals at the RO, text to FLT and Forest Supervisor on the day's accomplishments (also update throughout day if needed).
- *Participate in AAR with Burn Boss on day's activities as well as plans for next day burn, resources needed, etc.
- *If using Job Corps FFT2 trainees, close out OF288's, all hiring forms and taskbooks if needed.
- *Contact 911 centers prior to leaving for evening informing of interior burning (but reinforce all is secure).



Bell Smith Springs

I'm sure there are other things dispatchers throughout the Eastern and Southern Geographical Areas provide their units, but I wanted to point out that without dispatch assistance, prescribed fire activities would be just a bit more cumbersome for the Burn Boss and other overhead.

Thanks to Charlene Rogers (MO-MOC) and Cameron Crisp (WV-CAC) for providing me with a list of duties they provide

**If you find yourself
a tad bit stressed,
find a manatee,
its sure to bring a smile...**

<http://calmingmanatee.com>



Developing "The Quarterly Dispatcher" Team

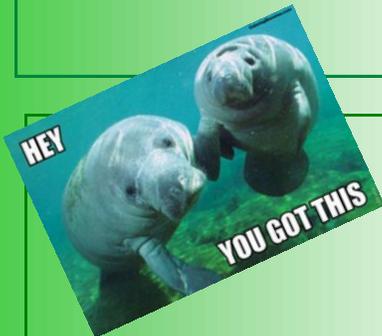
In order to continue the development and production of The Quarterly Dispatcher, I am soliciting individuals who would like to have a continued part in each issue. Below is a list of topics which I would like to have within each issue (this is not by all means the completed list) and am hopeful some of the dispatchers within the Southern and Eastern Areas will step up and give us a hand.

My goal is to have one individual responsible for producing an article (whether they write it up or they find someone else to do it) for each issue on a specific topic. We already have folks who submit articles for each issue, for example Jennifer Parrish always provides updates on WildCAD, and Cameron Crisp always provides something from the EA Dispatch Working Team.

I'm really excited about the newsletter and I know it can only get better with the more involvement we have. Below are some topics which I'd like to have someone take charge of. Again, this is not at all complete, so if you have something, even if it is a one-time article, please submit, and we will put into the newsletter. In all honesty, it's really quit fun and frankly a break from the normal day to day things we all do. So come on, break out of your shell, and participate!

- * **Health/Exercise:** There is a wide range of topics on this
- * **National Activities:** What other dispatch centers nationally are doing which Eastern and Southern area dispatchers could use
- * **Nutrition:** Eating healthier, recipe's, web links etc.
- * **What is happening in your GACC:** I need 2 folks for this, one for the EA and one for the SA
- * **Non "Dispatcher" written articles:** Articles from field personnel, managers, etc. on how dispatch and or dispatchers affects their programs
- * **Editing:** Someone to review each issue/article for spelling/grammar etc.

These are just some ideas I have, but I am open for your ideas and suggestions. If you are interested in participating, please contact Molly Campbell @ 618-687-1725 or email me at macampbell@fs.fed.us or at quarterlydispatcher@gmail.com.



Operation Warfighter

I'm not sure how many of you have heard of this very cool program called Operation Warfighter.

This program was established in 2006 by the Department of Defense and is a Federal Internship program where Federal agencies identify temporary assignments and opportunities for injured service members giving opportunity for service members to build their resumes, explore different job positions, obtain formal and on-the-job training and gain valuable federal government work experience. By partnering with Operation Warfighter, federal employers have a unique opportunity to connect with recovering service members and learn about their needs and challenges, as well as benefit from their skill sets, motivation and strong work ethic.

Currently the Illinois Interagency Dispatch Center has opened its doors to this program. We have sent in an application and are waiting to see if there are returned vets who are interested in learning about the types of dispatching we do. I think it is an wonderful opportunity to not only support our returning veterans, but a great opportunity to encourage and possibly attract future dispatchers. We all say we are need more dispatchers in the dispatch community, so this is a great way to find those dispatchers.

If you are interested in this program and would like more information, here are a few links that will help.

<http://www.dia.mil/Careers/Students/OperationWarfighterInitiative.aspx>

<http://warriorcare.dodlive.mil/wounded-warrior-resources/operation-warfighter/>

<http://www.dia.mil/Careers/Students/OperationWarfighterInitiative.aspx>

<http://www.militaryonesource.mil/12038/Project%20Documents/MilitaryHOMEFRONT/Troops%20and%20Families/Military%20Severely%20Injured%20Support/OperationWarfighterProgramOverview.pdf>

Meet Michele Stephens,
Ohio Interagency Dispatch Center (OH-OIC)
Eastern Area Geographical Area

How long have you been at OIC?: Since it was handed to me in a briefcase in 2002. During the last 11 years, the Center has developed into a fully functional Interagency Dispatch Center.

What elements of a dispatch program does your center provide: OH-OIC is hosted on the Wayne National Forest in southeast OH. The Center provides mobilization to NPS, USFS, USFWS, NOAA, FEMA, NAS, OH Division of Forestry and The Nature Conservancy.

What additional services does your center provide: The Center is a fully automated CAD dispatch providing initial attack coverage to all units of the Wayne National Forest.

What are your responsibilities at your center: As Center Manager my responsibilities include providing oversight to all mobilizations and IA, Forest RAWs Coordinator, IQCS Administrator, Training Officer, AD Hiring official, FLT member and DWT member.

What is your most favorite thing to do as dispatcher: Calling resources to let them know they have an order. The most rewarding thing about dispatch is being part of a national network that can safely and efficiently deliver resources to meet the needs of an emergency.

What is your most un-favorite thing to do in dispatch: When an order gets cancelled and you have to break the news to the resource or turn them around while in travel status.

What is your most memorable fire you worked on? Cavity Lake in MN. I was there for IQCS training and just happened to be in dispatch when the call came in from MSP that a fire had been spotted from a Canadian aircraft. Two days later Gary Moberly arrived for a dispatch position. He still says he would have gone back to TX if I hadn't socked him in a chair and put him to work. (I thought he was just a much needed detailer at the time).

What accomplishment in dispatching are you most proud of: **Center Manager accomplishment:** Bringing state and federal agencies together to establish agreements that enable us to meet the needs of incidents anywhere in the nation. Developing those relationships and working together to reach a common goal has been very rewarding. **IA Dispatcher accomplishment:** My most rewarding accomplishment as an IA dispatcher comes at the end of every shift when all resources are safely back at station and out of service after a hard day fighting wildfire. When a dispatcher gets comments from the field like, "You nailed that one" for relaying a potential wind shift, or "I don't know how you tracked that, but thanks", or feedback of any kind that lets us know we met their expectations, it is a feeling of accomplishment that never diminishes.

Who's your favorite actor? My favorite actor would be my husband and my favorite drama is day 2 of any assignment.

If you could choose any place to live and work, where would it be? If I could choose any place to live and work, it would be somewhere in the Mid-Atlantic. Any time I go west I miss the lush green of our eastern hardwood forests and the change of seasons.

What's your favorite movie? Are you kidding? No time for movies!

What do you do for fun? I look forward to a day at home for fun. I live on a farm in rural OH. It is an hour drive to anywhere, but over the years my husband and I have put together the things we enjoy most: family, riding our horses and ATVs, gardening, archery and hunting and when that gets rained out, I like to cook and our house fills with hungry people.

Five things people may not know about me:

1. I am basically a NICE person and my head really doesn't spin around on my shoulders when I dispatch for multiple IA.
2. I am a structural firefighter for our township fire department.
3. I have had the same husband for 34 years.
4. I have 2 children. My son is an electrical engineer and my daughter is a veterinary technician.
5. I enjoy working with FEMA as an ESF4(t).

Garden of the Gods



Minnesota Interagency Fire Center Tom Fastland, MIFC Coordinator



***Where are you located?** The Minnesota Interagency Fire Center is located in Grand Rapids, MN .

***What is the area known for?** The area is primarily known for timber, mining and tourism.

***How long has the center been there?** Since 1984.

***What Agencies does the center support?** The MNICS organization is comprised of 6 different agencies: The Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, U.S. Forest Service, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Bureau of Indian Affairs, National Park Service and the Minnesota Department of Homeland Security and Emergency Management.

***How many dispatchers work in the center?** The MIFC has 6 permanent people: Coordinator – DNR, Assist Coordinator - BIA lead dispatcher – NPS (seasonal), Fire Behavior Analyst - DNR, Information officer – DNR and Intel Coordinator – DNR (seasonal). For the rest of the year, we hire between 3 and 7 dispatchers to work in the Center.

The Superior-Chippewa Forest Initial Attack Dispatch: 1 coordinator, 1 permanent dispatcher and 2 seasonal dispatchers (and 2-3 other dispatchers as needed)

Minnesota Air Desk: 1 permanent lead dispatcher, 2 seasonal dispatchers

***If you could change one thing about your center, what would it be?** More space for everyone when activity picks-up.

***What do you consider the center's greatest accomplishment?** The 2011 and 2012 fire seasons were extremely busy. We had the Pagami fire and numerous other fires throughout the State. Over 2000 resources were mobilized, both in-state and out-of-state.

***How would you like your center to be remembered?** As one that provided excellent service to all of our clients.

***What do you consider a great day?** Everybody works hard and feels as though they accomplished something at the end of the day.

***If you could add one thing to your center, what would it be?** More office space and additional training rooms.

Kentucky Interagency Coordination Center Bonita J (Bonny) Johnson –Coordination Center Manager

Where are you located? Moved from London, Kentucky to current location at the Supervisor's Office in Winchester, Kentucky

How long has the center been there? Since 1991—over 23 years.

What agencies does the center support? Kentucky Cooperators include Cumberland Gap, Big South Fork, Mammoth Cave, Abraham Lincoln Birthplace and Obed Wild and Scenic River from the NPS; Clarks River National Wildlife Refuge, the KY Ecological Services Field Office and Wolf Creek Fish Hatchery from the USFWS, the KY Division of Forestry; the KY Chapter of The Nature Conservancy; and two USFS units, Land Between The Lakes and the Daniel Boone NF. Three Job Corps Centers are managed through the USFS, including Frenchburg, Pine Knot and Great Onyx. Two Department of Defense (DOD) units are also associated with KICC – Fort Campbell Military Reservation and the Blue Grass Army Depot; and the NWS offices in Jackson, Louisville, and Paducah, KY provide Incident Meteorologists (IMETs) and predictive services information.

How many dispatchers work in the center: The Center staff had effectively grown to four, including the Center Manager and Assistant, the DBNF Forest Dispatcher, and a Liaison from the KDF; however, organizational changes on the DBNF after a retirement in 2006 and recent budget cuts for the state have reduced KICC staff to two full-time employees. Some of the workload is now managed outside of the Center by other DBNF employees, and the Center is also blessed with strong militia dispatchers that work in the DBNF Supervisor's Office.

If you could change one thing about your center, what would it be? Several thoughts come to mind, but probably changing our organizational structure would win the vote. We'd hope that would result in at least one additional person in the center; however, that would require additional space and funding.

(Continue from page 6: Bonny Johnson, Kentucky Interagency Coordination Center Manager)

What do you consider the center's greatest accomplishment? The relationships we've developed both within and outside of the Dispatch/Coordination system. These relationships have allowed us to be a part of the TN-KY Wildland Fire Academy, to provide resources to some of the most significant incidents in the nation, and to be a valuable part of incident management in Kentucky.

How would you like your center to be remembered? We'd like to be thought of, and remembered as, excellent in all operations.

What do you consider a great day? A great day is one that is busy and safe – one in which we can see a tangible accomplishment and everybody is committed to achieving common goals. That usually means we are burning and/or having wildfires, aircraft are up, and we're talking to multiple units about activity.

If you could add one thing to your center, what would it be? Another question for which there are competing answers, but right now the vote would probably go with space. We are anticipating an increased initial attack workload, and we'd like to have more space in which to work.

Meet Renee Bishop (GA-GIC)
Chattahoochee-Oconee NF Forest Dispatcher
Southern Geographical Area

How long have you been at GICC? For 19 years

What elements of a dispatch program does your center provide: Initial Attack and Mobilization

What additional services does your center provide: Casual Hire, Fire Wise and Prevention Programs, Training/Refreshers, WCT's, Tracking for FS personnel, Dispatch for FS, FWS, NPS Regional Offices

What are your responsibilities at your center: Casual Hire Processing, IBA, Initial Attack/Resource Mobilization, IAS, Procurement. Assist with WCT, Training, Prevention, other duties as assigned.

What is your most favorite thing to do as dispatcher: Working with FS and other personnel in the office and out in the field (especially out in the field).

Who's your favorite actor? Sean Connery (the older version).

What is your most un-favorite thing to do in dispatch: Working long hours.

What is your most memorable fire you worked on? Sweat Farm (Southern Georgia).

What accomplishment in dispatching are you most proud of: Building relationships with FS and Cooperator personnel over the years.

If you could choose any place to live and work, where would it be? Georgia/North Carolina

What's your favorite movie? Highlander

What do you do for fun? Horseback Riding, Genealogy, Travel, Improving our "Mini Farm"

List 5 things people don't know about you:

1. *Military Spouse (Husband Retired)*
2. *Certified Scuba Diver*
3. *Almost a Black Belt (Taekwondo)*
4. *I have a 5 year old Grandson: Woodrow Matthew Graham (Woody) lives at Ft. Bragg, NC*
5. *Met my husband mountain climbing/repelling at Mt. Yonah, Cleveland GA. He was NCOIC of Mountaineering at Frank D Merrill Army Ranger Camp. He gave a few pointers, the rest is history.*

Whoopie Cat Lake



Southern Area Interagency Support Cache

The late spring season in the Southern Area has been relatively quiet, which has kept direct incident support activity to a minimum for the Southern Area Incident Support Cache (SAK). The cache is processing some incident replacement orders and supporting cache activity in other areas of the country. The lull in Southern Area activity made it possible for the Fire Cache Manager to take an assignment in Alaska, although the Assistant Cache Manager position is currently vacant. The Supply Technician and Warehouse Leader managed cache operations smoothly in his absence.

News and Notes:

The 2014 NFES Catalog is now available online at <http://www.nwcg.gov/pms/pubs/catalog.htm>. The hardcopy version is not expected to be available until the end of July.

Memos released by the NWCG Equipment Technology Committee on April 25, 2013 and May 29, 2014 stated that portable propane heaters are not to be used inside tents, yurts, or other enclosed spaces due to safety concerns regarding carbon monoxide emissions. Warning labels have been placed on propane heaters available through SAK (items 006139 and 006187).

The wildland firefighting equipment program that had been managed through GSA was recently transferred to the Defense Logistics Agency (DLA). This change has required SAK to master a new process associated with DLA procurement, but is not expected to impact the overall availability of items normally stocked by the cache.

Quick Tips for Cache Orders:

Check the **Unit of Issue** – Sometimes the dispatcher has to calculate the quantity to request in ROSS from the information provided by the incident. A common issue is for the incident to request “boxes” of AA batteries (item 000030); however, batteries are issued by the package (PG). A “Box” contains 8 PG of 24 AA batteries.

Validate the **Contact Name and Number**.

Ensure the **Date/Time Needed** is realistic and understand that expedited delivery (i.e., Overnight) is often more expensive to the requesting unit.

If the **Shipping Instructions** block is utilized to provide the customer address in ROSS, ensure that the zip code is included with the street address.

Ensure **Fire Codes** established for non-Forest Service incidents are marked as “FS Assisted”. In order for the Southern Area Cache to charge to appropriate non-FS incidents, the Fire Code must be available in the Forest Service payment system as a P-code. Marking the incident in the FireCode program facilitates this process.

A Brand New Dispatcher

Patricia McCann
Illinois Interagency Dispatch Center
Shawnee National Forest

Pounds Hollow



I began working in fire dispatch in April of 2014 and the crew at the Illinois Interagency Dispatch Center and the Shawnee National Forest have given me not only one of the warmest welcomes I could imagine, but also top-notch instruction and guidance. Molly Campbell and Jennifer Parrish have been wonderful teachers since day one. Their experience, professionalism, and skill have made them my dispatch role-models and I am glad that I get to work with, and learn from, such awesome individuals.

So far, one of my favorite dispatch responsibilities is filling orders for crews and personnel on fire assignments. I also enjoy learning about the different ways our personnel protect and sustain our forests and public lands. The fire personnel that I've worked with here at the Shawnee National Forest and from our IHC crew on the Midewin National Tallgrass Prairie have been great teachers as well. I really appreciate the welcome they have given me, and I am happy that I have the opportunity to be a part of their team.

All-in-all, my welcome to dispatch has been a really positive experience and I am really looking forward to working more with my dispatch and fire teams.

INTEL

Southern Illinois Sunrise



Southern Illinois Wild Turkey's



**The new Situation and ICS-209
Program Pros and Cons
James Silverstone
Intelligence Coordinator
Eastern Area Coordination Center
Milwaukee Wisconsin**

The program was rolled out in January and the Eastern Area was one of the first Geographic Areas to put it to work. Our dispatchers have been utilizing it to enter their daily fire statistics and ICS-209 reports. This year fifty-nine Eastern Area incidents have been entered.

As the Eastern Area Intelligence Coordinator, I have witnessed some of the pros and cons of the new program. The new program is NIMS (all hazard) compliant, it's modern technology and it gets the job done. Our dispatchers continue to get more comfortable with the program. The Situation Reporting Program is very similar to the old program and we haven't had many issues. I added the Unit IDs of agencies that were missing from dispatch centers. We have a New Reporting Unit in the Eastern Area, NJ-NBQ (NJ Joint Bases). They were approved by NWCG and CAC is doing their reporting. Remember that "PRI" is not a protecting unit. Private acres should always be entered under "Ownership". I will not be able to remove the "PRI" units listed under "Protection" until the program rolls over in 2015.

The ICS-209 part of the program is a lot different from the old program and takes longer to master. Because it is NIMS compliant and not just used for fire reporting, some of the fields on the 209 form are no longer "required". Acres and percent contained are not required for you to get the report approved, but they still need to be entered on all fires. It is important that your report is complete before clicking "Approve". If you need to change the report after it is approved, you need to submit an update. Once a report is approved it cannot be deleted which is the same as the old program.

Here are a few tips:

Make sure you slide the verification window on the far right open. Click on the "Verify" icon and you will see error, verification and warning messages there. Some of the verification messages have a box you must check before the program will allow you to approve a 209. You must clear all the errors and verifications or you won't be able to approve the report. The person entering the report approves the report. Once approved, EACC and NICC can view the report.

When you want to update a report, click on "Copy" not "Open". If you click "Open", you will not be able to add new data. "Copy" will copy the header information and allow you to enter fresh data.

All the dispatch centers in the Eastern Area have been doing well with the new program. The old legacy program was first rolled out in 1997 and had outlived its usefulness. The upgraded program meets new agency information technology and security requirements and will better meet our reporting needs.



Geographical Weather Services
Steve Marien
Eastern Area Predictive Services Meteorologist

Even though “fire season” is when we often pay close attention to what meteorologists have to say, when you really think about it, they provide us with year round information. Emergency services, in all geographical areas, whether it is wildland fires, snowstorms, floods, hurricanes or severe weather with tornado activity, we as dispatchers rely on information which our meteorologists provide us, in order for to keep our people safe and informed.

Below are just some of the things your meteorologist provides throughout the year to the fire dispatch community:

- Ensuring that the dispatch community is aware of National Weather Service fire weather watches and Red Flag Warnings as well as local and surrounding area fuel conditions is the most important.
- Advising on prescribed burn windows during the spring and fall fire seasons, potentially providing a cost savings when outside resources are required.
- Providing weekly fire weather/potential briefings to the Eastern Area Dispatch Centers throughout the fire season.
- Advising the dispatch community on National Fire Danger Rating System issues including WIMS and RAWs maintenance.
- Assisting on the development and maintenance of various dispatch center webpages throughout the Eastern Area.
- Providing tropical season forecasts as well as short-term tropical storm hurricane forecasts.
- Ensuring the Eastern Area Dispatch Centers are aware of any severe weather threats and what the hazards may occur such as tornados hail, flooding, and damaging winds.
- Providing updates to any significant winter weather events including snowstorms, ice events, blizzards, etc.

Dispatchers are constantly in close contact with the weather folks when wildland fires are occurring, prescribed burning is taking place, or severe weather is moving into the area. Many times it is the dispatchers that give the forecasters information received from the field on actual weather conditions so there is a close working relationship that is vitally important.

Meteorologists like to hear feedback; it helps them in their jobs and as Steve Marien put it: When I hear feedback that a burn went well on a certain day that I foresaw as being a “good” burn day as far as winds, RH levels, and smoke dispersal goes, well it makes my day!



What is an El Nino?

El Niño is characterized by unusually warm ocean temperatures in the Equatorial Pacific, as opposed to La Niña, which is characterized by unusually cold ocean temperatures in the Equatorial Pacific. El Niño is an oscillation of the ocean-atmosphere system in the tropical Pacific having important consequences for weather around the globe.



Tropical Pacific water temperatures will continue on a warming trend through the rest of the 2014 with this pattern ultimately resulting in the official declaration of an El Niño. While conditions are not yet to that point, the U.S. Climate Prediction Center on Jun 5th issued an El Niño Watch for a 70% chance the sea surface temperatures will reach thresholds for the summer and an 80% chance during the fall and winter.

Currently, however, various interrelated ocean and atmospheric patterns and signals are not coupled and indicate this particular evolving El Niño episode may not end up being as strong as some models have been forecasting. In any case, the warmer sea surface temperatures already in place will continue to modify the atmosphere and alter pressure and wind patterns.

So how does this affect the wildland fire community in 2014?

As we have already seen this year across the US, there has been and will continue to be an overall wetter and, coincidentally, cooler temperature pattern. This will be especially evident during the fall and winter as risks for higher precipitation increase and become a more dominate weather feature across the southern tier of the US.

The flip side of this El Niño will eventually be another drier La Niña and the increasing drought and higher wildfire potential which this pattern produces.

Kevin Scasny
Southern Area Meteorology/Climatology
678-320-3009/kevin_scasny@fws.gov

What a Helicopter Wants
A note to a dispatcher
Tyson Taylor
HMGB (T)/HECM
(IL-SHF)

Trigg Tower



The phone rings, or the radio crackles to life, the voice on the other end says that your helicopter has been ordered for a fire. Whoopee!

OK what do we need? Well, there are all kinds of things we need like a vacation, more money, a nicer helibase, but what is it we need from dispatch to get the job done? First thing is the fire name, and a good Lat/Long, preferably in degrees decimal minutes (you know how picky us aviation folks are). Now remember, once we complete all our pre-flight checks and we jump in the ship, it's still going to take a few minutes for us to get off the ground, but I promise you we aren't just sitting there doing nothing, this is the call we have been waiting for—finally a little excitement for the crew. And the crew, oh yea once we get “the” call, we also get our helicopter crew headed towards the fire by relaying to the driver of our chase rig and fuel truck the information we received from dispatch.

OK, now we are sitting on the helipad waiting to take off. I can't hit the repeater from the airport and dispatch can't hear me on National Flight Following, so now what? Well, as soon as we are airborne I will give you a shout on the repeater. I will let you know that we are off the ground and in route to the reported fire and I will say: “Dispatch, helicopter xxx is off the ground in route to the fire, I got 3 souls on board, 2 hours fuel, ETA 10 minutes, I would like to ensure you have us positive AFF, and would like to request flight following with you”. In return I anticipate hearing from Dispatch, something along the lines of: “Dispatch copies helicopter xxx is in route, 3 souls on board 2 hours fuel, 10 minute ETA, I have you positive AFF, and will begin Flight Following procedures”. Now it doesn't have to be word for word but you get the picture.

Now it is amazing how the radios become so much clearer once in the air, so don't be surprised if I switch my radio over to National Flight Following, or whatever channel we have agreed to do flight following on to ensure that I can contact you, so please don't get mad, I'm just making sure I have all the como like I'm supposed to have. Once we get to the fire and figure out what the IC wants from us, I'm going to get flight following set up with the incident, therefore I will need to end the flight following with dispatch at that time, but I promise I will keep dispatch in the loop, and I will try my best to make your job easier.

When the time comes and we are released from the incident, I will once again make contact with you (dispatch) and reengage flight following until we are safe and sound back on the ground at the helibase.

In all honesty, we appreciate everything that dispatchers do for us on a daily basis, if it wasn't for dispatcher, those ships would never leave the ground. We appreciate all the hours you put in and for putting up with us when we bother you every thirty minutes for information or when we screw up flight strips or itineraries.

Dispatch, THANKS for all you do.

Law Enforcement and Dispatchers
Ande Harris
LEO, Shawnee National Forest

Dispatch provides a very valuable service through communications. The information which they receive can be passed on to the appropriate parties, including law enforcement when necessary. Dispatch centers and dispatchers are the point of contact for many internal employees and external cooperators, so when Law Enforcement Officers receive information that may affect the safety of employees or the public, we can more effectively notify people by contacting dispatch since they often track employees in the field. As a Law Enforcement Officers, that radio communications between employee and dispatch is something we monitor daily while in the field and could be an important factor if something should occur.

Another very helpful service dispatch provides is that they maintain all of the records associated with local wildfires. Our investigations and reports often depend on this information, and it is nice to know we can obtain the documents when necessary. And finally, just like fire personnel, Law Enforcement personnel like to respond to national incidents as well, so just like fire personnel, we rely on dispatch to be mobilized, therefore we always keep our dispatchers updated on our status, just like fire personnel.

As a Law Enforcement Officer, I really appreciate all that dispatchers do, and that they are here to assist us in the protection of our employes, public and resources. (Even on weekends!)

What's Your Question?

The nice thing about starting something new like this newsletter, is you can change something or add something to each edition.

One thing I know for sure, and that is if one person has a question, you can be darn tooting that others have the same question. So in Edition 3, we will be introducing a Questions and Answering section where readers throughout can send in questions and we will find out the answer for you from those individuals who know best and put it in the next newsletter.

The questions can cover any topic from weather related interests, to mobilization questions, to Incident Business/Casual Hiring questions or on how to do something in WildCAD, ROSS, or any other programs someone may be using.

It's a section for you, the dispatcher, fire managers, and individuals who are just interested in what dispatchers do to find your answers from those who know best.

Check out this edition's questions:

For a fuels person / Meteorologist

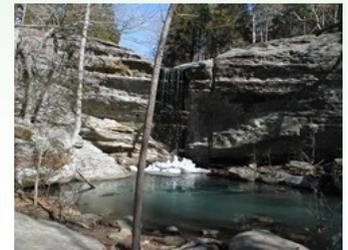
Question: *In the Southern Area, KBDI is such an important value – why is this?*

Signed: *Northern swamp-loving dispatcher*

Answer: Scott Crist (Shawnee NF -Fuels Specialist)

The Keetch-Byram Drought Index, or KBDI, is a measure of moisture deficit in the duff and upper soil. It is a useful indicator of drought, particularly in humid climates like those found in the east. In the southeast especially, KBDI is used as an indicator of fire potential.

Specific values of KBDI have been correlated to expected fire behavior, fuel consumption, and even risk associated with escaped prescribed fires. In other areas, it is used more as a “predictor of expected fire effects.”



Jackson Falls

For Incident Business

Question: *What is the EIC Number and what is it for?*

Signed: *Someone who does casual hire paperwork*

Answer: *Randee Olson (MN-SUP)
EA Incident Business*

The Employee Common Identifier (ECI):

- *Is a unique 10-digit number generated for each casual employee in the Federal Personnel Payroll System (FPPS) system
- *Replaces the collection of Social Security Numbers (SSNs) except for the I-9 and W4
- *Casual Pay has transitioned to the use of ECI as of January 1, 2014
- *ECIs will be the only identification number used on OF-288s and in I-SUITE
- *Hiring units are responsible for obtaining ECIs from the payment centers

Department of Interior point of contact: 877-471-2262

Forest Service point of contact: <http://fswweb.asc.fs.fed.us/bfm/programs/financial-operations/incident-business/CasualPay.php>
(scroll down to bottom and select ECI-FS under reports)

Contact: Randee Olson, 218-387-3204

Got a Question?

Submit all your questions to

Quarterlydispatcher@gmail.com
or maccampbell@fs.fed.us

REMINDER: We are looking for individuals who are willing to write for the newsletter, once each issue (that's only 4 times a year). If interested, please give us a holler!

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