



Northern Rockies Coordinating Group

Federal, State, and Local Government Agencies Working Together in Emergency Response Management

Monthly Conference Call – Meeting Notes

Tuesday, July 15, 2025

Participants

Coordinating Group Members:

<input type="checkbox"/>	BIA – Great Plains	Heath Estey	<input type="checkbox"/>	Idaho Department of Lands	Josh Harvey
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	BIA – Rocky Mountain	Bryce Rogers	<input type="checkbox"/>	North Dakota Forest Service	Ryan Melin
<input type="checkbox"/>	BIA – Northwest Region	Brad Donahue	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Montana DNRC	Cory Calnan
<input type="checkbox"/>	BLM – Montana/Dakotas	Aaron Thompson	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Montana County Fire Wardens	Patrick Lonergan
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	BLM – Idaho	Dennis Strange	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Montana DES	Brett Lloyd
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	NPS – Intermountain Region	Paul Cerda	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Montana Sheriff's & Peace Officers	Steve Holton
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	USFS – Region 1	Craig Glazier	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Montana Fire Chiefs Association	Rich Cowger
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service	Tate Fischer	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Facilitator	Karly DeMars

Deputies and Others: Corey Buhl (NR Ops), Kate Holsapple (NRCC) Brian Nickolay (MT Fire Chiefs Association), Bob Flesch (BLM – MT/DAK), Jeffrey Moyer (BIA – NW)

Standing Reports

- **NWCG/NMAC Update** (Aitor Bidaburu) – Aitor emailed his update prior to meeting. NMAC meeting daily Mon-Fri and weekends virtually if needed. NMAC Memo Release this week.
 - Airtanker Drawdown memo
 - PL4 reminder on resource coordination, notifications etc. i.e. all CIMT new requests or extensions come through NMAC and CIMT Coordinator.
 - NMAC leaning forward with National Surge Packages with intent to bolster GA's with elevated IA. Currently NSP #3 currently in the NW.
- **CGAC Report Out** (Dennis Strange) – Notes from June 25 meeting (sent to NRCG via email on 7/7/2025)
 - Brief discussion on the NMAC procurement memos
 - NMAC IMT Type 3 memo adjusting required positions is out (mimics the latitude given to CIMT configuration for 2025)
 - CGAC designated Ted Pierce and Laurie Hackett to attend the ongoing ICAC Fatigue Management Group
 - Some GAs were reporting network outages at dispatch centers
 - Notes from meeting itself are
- **NRCC Operations** (Corey Buhl)
 - The Northern Rockies is currently in good shape for resources, and some are being exported due to recent changes in weather. The Miles City base is now open for smokejumpers. A Type 3 team is assigned in Alaska, with their last workday on July 18 and travel scheduled for July 19–20. Several Interagency Hotshot Crews from the GACC are out on assignment.
- **NRCC Update** (Kate Holsapple)
 - The Northern Rockies remains at PL2 due to weather, fire potential, and fire behavior, and is expected to stay at this level for the foreseeable future. Activity is light to moderate, with most fires caught in initial attack. One emerging fire near Grangeville (1.5 miles from Deary, ID) has prompted an IDL Type 3 team order, with an in-brief scheduled for 1800 today. The Garnet/SWL fire is at 124 acres with no containment, and a Southwest Montana team is assigned.
 - FWS Update: The meteorologist position (vacant since late June) has been released for hiring by Jennifer Hinkley. In addition, the assistant center manager position has been filled by Danee Werdin.

- **NRCG Committee Updates:**

- Mitigation/Education Committee (Cory Calnan) – no updates at this time.
- IC Committee (Patrick Lonergan)
 - Feedback was solicited from the two teams that deployed this year. Sampson noted that downsizing is easier said than done, while Cowger reported success with a smaller configuration. Teams faced challenges ordering REMS units and radio kits, but the “dream box” IT kit was viewed as a success, making setup easier and allowing more focus on firefighters rather than virtual meetings. However, reduced team capacity may limit accommodation of some needs, and procurement remains a significant challenge. Looking ahead, the L580 course in September is creating a staffing issue—Team 5 was the up team, but the IC preferred not to stand down the entire team, so an ad hoc group is being pieced together from across teams, with a response due to Corey Buhl tomorrow.

Old Business

- **DECISION | NRCG Communications Protocol Proposal**

- NRCG reviewed communication protocol options, comparing Microsoft Teams, GroupMe, and text messaging. While Teams is effective for sharing documents, it has more drawbacks than GroupMe and requires toggling with Firenet. GroupMe was noted for its ease of adding and removing members, but the coordination center does not currently use it. Several members favored text messaging, as it stores contacts, provides time/date stamps, and integrates with the CAD system for team mobilization and resource notifications. Agencies responded positively to this approach, with suggestions to name text groups for clarity. Other tools such as the DOI Comp Portal/Band were mentioned as user-friendly alternatives, and regular IC communication via Teams remains effective. Overall, the group leaned toward text messaging as the primary protocol, supplemented by Teams where needed.

NRCG Communications Chat Group - Standard Operating Procedures: NRCG communication via the NRCG Communications Microsoft Teams chat/instant message string may be either informational or decisional.

Informational text/instant messages do not require a reply or a “copy” by members. Informational text messages will include the following scenarios:

- Fatalities
- Serious Aviation Accident
- Entrapments/shelter deployments
- Equipment loss resulting in total damage or loss
- Serious injuries requiring hospitalization (not out-patient or “treated and released”).
 - Not all “red medical” injuries need to be reported (i.e. injured firefighters who are currently being medi-vac), unless they meet the above criteria.
- Significant fire activity (impacts to communities/real time SA, newsworthy activities)
- Geographic area preparedness level change
- IMT mobilization

Decisional text/instant messages require a reply from each agency in the affirmative or negative for each instance. One response per agency is necessary. Decisional text/instant message topics include:

- approval for CIMT or crew commitments (at PL3 or higher)
- geographic area multi-agency business requiring quick decision response

- **REPORT OUT | Incident Close Outs**

- Post Fire (NR Team 5) – Cerda
 - Patrick emphasized the importance of keeping processes simple and ensuring they do not drive the incident, noting the use of the incident drop process and sharing an executive summary.
- Jericho Mountain (NR Team 6, Team 10) – Calnan
 - Team 6 mobilized with a full roster and worked closely with the host agency to appropriately

size the incident, negotiating staffing above 70 personnel. They successfully navigated buying team challenges, though precipitation slowed activity. Mobilization was delayed over 48 hours because the official request was not submitted, and the host unit initially used a Type 3 team with Shane leading operations, relying heavily on the local unit until processes stabilized. Discussions at DOI OWF considered raising purchase limits to \$30–100K. A Team 9 evaluation is on file, and Shane and several others remained to assist with strategic planning. Calnan shared a closeout briefing template with Beau, raising the question of whether it belongs in the evaluation file. IMT Plan Update Status

New Business

- DECISION | AIS Memo (2022-006) and Implementation Guide (Rescinded Memo that should be re-issued)
 - <https://gacc.nifc.gov/nrcc/nrcg/index/AIS-Recommendations-Signed.pdf>
 - <https://gacc.nifc.gov/nrcc/nrcg/index/AIS-How-To-Guide-NRCG.pdf>

NRCG will reissue the AIS memo from 2022.

News/Information

- Cory Calnan asked about the status of the MT master agreement review, and it was confirmed that both Craig and Kristen have signed and returned it to CJ.

Next Meeting: August 19, 2025