

NRCG OPS COMMITTEE MEETING NOTES

OCTOBER 7,8 2003

Value Inn Conference Center

Present:

Committee Members:

North Idaho – Bob Burke, (for Mark Grant)
Northwest Montana – Mark Romey (Chair.)
Southwest Montana – Jack Kirkendall
Central Montana – Ross Williams (for Bret Ruby)
South Central Montana – Phil Perkins
Eastern Montana – Phil Gill
North Dakota – Andy Randall (for Maure Sand)
Cathy Scofield - Facilitator
Colleen Finneman – Scribe

Technical Specialists

Kathy Elzig - NRCC
John Specht – NR Operation
John Monzie - MTDNRC
Pat Nooney – NR Cache
Dave Boyd – Eastern Area Rep.
Mike Plattes - NRCC
Paul Linse - Aviation
Paul Chamberlin – NR Safety

Attendees: *IMT Members:* Wally Bennett, Chuck Stanich, Jim Gray, Bob Sandman, Stan Benes, , Kathy Elzig, Andy Randall, Doug Turman, Steve Frye, Dave Larsen, Bill Swope, Chris Shelton, Doug Russell, Greg Greenhoe;
MDC: Sandy Evenson

Spokane Team Meeting – Mike Plattes

- **Red Lion Hotel at the Park in Spokane, WA, April 26-29, 2004**
- North Idaho hosting; need to identify key speaker
- At last years Teams Meeting, it was decided to combine Teams meeting with dispatchers, hotshots, buying teams,
- **Theme selected - Agency Administrator/Team Relations**; committee formed to work on agenda -- **John Specht (lead), Steve Frye, Bob Sandman, Mike Plattes, N. ID rep, Dave Larsen**
- From last year's meeting critiques – times were adjusted to allow for more time for individual teams meetings
- Need to *identify functional breakout leaders* who will be responsible for developing agendas for breakout sessions
 1. **Names to Mike Plattes by Nov. 1**
- Question was asked does this meeting to be as big as it is?
 - Answer unanimously **Yes** – a chance to get together to discuss issues that affect all team members. Helps build the team.
- Team recruitment/nominations – need to get the timeline established: if IC commits to 4-years, then team members should commit also – not sure what their supervisor will say – this could save time from everyone having to resubmit every year; ****decision to be made by end of this meeting**** ; questions posed by

NRCG need to be answered – need to come up with recommendations regarding recruitment, length of tour and possibly developmental recommendations.

- **NR IMT Recruitment Process – Bob Sandman**
 - Discuss draft paper with zone boards
 - Length of terms can be addressed in Team Operating Plans – needs to go to zone boards for discussion.
 - Concept – need to identify people in developing ICs
- FUMT – Operations Committee needs to be more involved in how these teams are established, who's on them, establish who has oversight.
- Lots of good comments regarding team performance from units that hosted Teams this year.
- Comment from Steve Frye – we are extremely fortunate to have the ***high caliber*** of support from **ALL** the dispatchers in the *Northern Rockies and at the Coordination Center*

S-420 Nominations; Command & General Staff Courses; Integration of NE Area Nominations

- NR is hosting **S-420** this training year; **nominations due Nov. 1**
- There appears to be a *disconnect* with training group and zone training committees:
 - **Issue:** ICs have identified candidates to go to S- 420, when it gets to training committee someone else is selected; need to make sure when this Operations Committee identifies individuals for a particular course, they are identified as Team members and should have priority.
 - **Mark Romey will contact training committee**
- NR plans on sending 3 IMT's to S-420.
- NE Area is planning on putting on S-420, NR will try for some slots in this session; maybe NR can provide help with instructors; course put on by NE state and private. A NF in Wisconsin is looking at putting on another 420 course.
 - **Dave Boyd will get R-9 nomination deadlines to Plattes**
- Need to identify our S-420 nominations and then find out how many other courses are being offered so we can get some of our people in those courses; another issue is holding S- 420 like they do S-520
 - **Will have Bob Cunningham contact the R-9 training rep.**

NE Area Team Participation and Team Plans – Dave Boyd

- Does NR want EA participation on IMTs? **YES**
- Relationship needs to continue and strengthen. Need to formalize the communication link between EA and NR

- Boyd feels recommendations need to be made from the NRCG board thru the EACG board – Romey feels there needs to be a formal agreement/ operating plan between GA boards
- Where is EA going with their team concept? Lots of turnover – does not feel Eastern Region will be able to develop a full team.
 - Where do we (NR/EA)WANT to go in the future?
 - The Value (experience) of having NR folks involved in all risk in the EA needs to be addressed in agreement.
 - Eastern Area also contributes to the Red and Blue teams in the Southern Area.
 - How do agencies feel about the participation? (National Forests support the idea; a few of the States support the Teams)
- Until we get a formal agreement (MOU), need to commit numbers – up to 16 and 4 trainees - as we have done in the past so that Dave can go forth
- A representative from NR should travel back to EA to express our appreciation, and support. EACG board meeting the week of November 17 in Nashville, Tennessee. A letter from NRCG BOD would be appropriate as well as someone attending the meeting.
 - **Specht will talk to Shiplett regarding getting a rep to this meeting.**
- Any issues to take back to EACG board – does not see many air people coming out of EA

Safety, 2003 Overview – Paul Chamberlin

- Received *positive feedback* from Teams and Agencies on NRCG Safety program.
- No one pulled out a fire shelter
- 2 – heart attack victims – not on fireline
- Most serious accidents were tough to predict – one of the most serious was a tree falling down.
 - Should the Ops. Committee formalize the protocols that was proposed by Gallatin NF? **NO** – should be addressed in 215a – also will be brought up at Safety part of agenda at Teams meeting. Anytime you set a walkway thru the fire, it's mitigated and flagged before crews are sent in.
- Assignment was to be on the road and visit the Districts and local fire stations – not so much the Teams – after a period of time decided needed to spool up with 3 teams and Paul's focus was staying at Aerial Fire Depot and managing the teams
- Teams kept going longer than we normally do, since in 2000 most of the accidents were doing BAER.
- A lot of things were brought back to Missoula and handled there.
- We are weak in gauging our success – some people want more data but we also need to have the safety teams out there.
- Dodged a bullet – we put a lot of effort into hazard trees – a lot of close calls
- Driver travel safety – most of accidents were hitting deer or avoiding deer

- Trying to get something going in facilities safety.
- Lots of complaints about contractors (mostly crews).
 - **Issue: self certification of private sector;** all agencies in NR need to address; need to get at source rather than waiting until they get on the line
- NR Safety Teams are not FAST but SAT (Safety Assistance Teams). These Teams came to the incidents and asked how could we help? This was appreciated. SAT should not focus on inspections but on Assistance. Having results published is also very helpful.

Romey needs feedback from the Teams – are we overstepping bounds? can we do more?

Aviation Representation on Operations Committee – Paul Linse – (Handout)

The **Incident Aviation Advisor (IAA)** position has been an important participant and advisor to the Operations Committee since being chartered by the NRCG Board in 2000. This was part of the NRATQ (Northern Rockies Aviation Training and Qualifications) Program

The IAA has:

- Advised the Operations Committee on aviation operational, training and safety issues.
- Driven the NRATQ program which recruits trainees for incident aviation positions, develops priority assignment lists for aviation positions on IMTs, ensures trainees receive quality training assignments and recommends to the certifying unit that the trainee should be certified
- Recruited and encouraged aviation trainees to attend next level position training in preparation for future aviation positions.
- Served as a mentor to many incident aviation personnel.

Recommendation:

Continue the Incident Aviation Advisor position to the NRCG Operation Committee. This position should be identified by the Aviation Committee as a ***technical specialist*** to the Operations Committee.

The Aviation Committee should:

1. Recruit and appoint an IAA from the active team assigned **AOBDS** or **ASGSs** within the NR.
2. Play an active role in the management of the NRATQ Program
 - **Romey bring to BOD for approval also remind NRCG that they have this aviation committee chartered – do they want them to continue? Reinforce the need for the aviation committee.**
 - **Aviation Advisor would also be a tech rep on the aviation committee.**

Operations Committee/ Team Discussion Items/Issues Brainstorm – All

Contract Resources (Business Committee)

- different contracts – standards, specifications
- COR's - limited
- Signup, dispatch (protocols), demob.
- Self certification
- Cost – contract vs agency, local
- Quality equipment

Crew Hours (Business Committee)

- hours
 - o refurbish time
 - o start/end time
- protocols
 - o T1, T2, SRV, etc.

Work Rest (National & Business)

- IA – 8 hour rest after IA period (16 to 24 hours)

Fire Use

- T1, T2, Fire Use -- Instead of 3 teams weave fire use into T1 and T2
- Line Officer understanding of how to manage WFU fires
- Need to do more fire use
- T1 and T2 short teams to manage WF
- T1 and T2 skills and configuration to manage WFU
- One process to deal with all fires
- T1 and T2 teams to manage all fires
 - o team composition based on need to manage incidents
 - o State and local government support

WFSA

- Area of consideration was limited
 - o impact costs
 - o impact alternatives
- Information flow
 - o team, local agency
 - o especially when WFSA's were modified and/or had to be approved at a higher level
- One process to deal with all fires
- Process not well understood and communicated
- IMTs providing support to agency administrators in development and modification
 - o Define team's role

- Should WFSA be prepared before IMTs arrive?
 - o Quality
- does tool (WFSA) really support decision that used to manage fires?
- Effectiveness on multi-jurisdictional fires e.g. local and state
 - o How to capture intent
- aviation costs, impacts and associated risks to support intelligence gathering, monitoring
 - o agency or team decision on product that is needed?

Engagement of local government and State

- WFSA
- Cost share agreements
- Delegation of authority

Cost Share Agreements

- IMTs should not be involved in development
- IMTs need to know what they need to do to support cost share, e.g. identification and percentage ownership
- Definition of structure protection vs structure suppression
- Educate line officers on cost share negotiations

ADs (Business)

- involvement on NR teams
- ADs vs contract employees vs re-employed annuitants vs technical specialists
- Need protocol on hosting ADs
 - o How are we going to use them
 - o Meeting same standards as agency folk?

IA vs Incident Resource Needs

- priority usage
- how to staff and respond for IA when resources are limited – maximum utilization of resources available
- utilization and sharing of resources (IA) within zone, across agencies

Priorities

Identify issues or problems; identify recommendation or tasking; identify interface, e.g. NRCG or other committee; identify Ops lead

Priority #1 -- Contract Resources

Issues:

- Some National contracts work well.
- National Aviation contracts consists of project inspector for each contract; standard across all agencies; standard checklist. Good example of the type of contract needed

Recommendations:

- Standardize specs with end user input and standardize administration and inspections across all agencies
- Hosting agency(s) will provide contract specialist to teams
- Distinguish between IA/local government, extended, project
- Distinguish between Exclusive Use and CWN
- Certain key members need to go to specific training/workshops
- Teams will provide feedback on performance; develop a feedback system GACC wide
- Develop inspection capabilities available to the Teams either within or by other means
- Develop a quality control mechanism for self certification (limit number of contract trainers within GACC)

Interface: NRCG to NWCG, Business Committee, Equipment Inspectors (Committee), Equipment Specialists, Training Committee

Ops Rep: Mark Romey will work w/ other Committees and NRCG BOD to identify issues to work on.

Priority #2 -- Engagement of Local and State Governments

Issues:

- Engagement of local/State resources in management, (cost apportionment, jurisdictional means, re: incidents).
- Recognition by federal and State entities of legitimacy of local government authorities and responsibilities.
- Current tools to engage local governments don't always work or fit local governments, e.g. WFSA, *delegations*, cost shares.
- Procedures and processes that work for Federal agencies don't always work for State/local

Recommendations:

- Ask local government what they feel they need for them to engage us
- Mechanisms to identify intent of local government, e.g. concerns, goals, objectives; identify local government group to interface with MACO, Fire Wardens – how can we work together better, maintain communications to work together, e.g. articulate intent, needs, goals - don't let documents, etc. get in the way of this communication
- Maintain local government liaison on teams
- Groups that are working on amending/modifying tools, e.g. WFSA, need to have local governments participate in the processes, procedures, agreements
- Invite and engage local government Agency Administrators and fire personnel to Team Meeting
- Articulate to them **they** need to share their needs, goals and responsibilities
- NRCG local government representative works closely with local government agencies for solutions, input, etc.

Interface: NRCG, ICs, Local government groups and associations. Some of these issues will be taken up at USFS Fire Management Officers in November. **Operations Committee will coordinate with any task forces set up to address these issues to insure all agencies are involved.**

Ops Rep: Rep. Will be requested.

Priority #3 – ADs – Hiring of Non-agency individuals

Issue:

- Utilization of non-agency folks – no matter in what capacity
- Protocols for hosting ADs (training, tracking quals, issuing red cards)
- Concern regarding agency liability and responsibility if ADs are injured.

Recommendations:

- NRCG to sponsor task group of specialists
 - Develop GACC protocols for hosting non-agency individuals, e.g. training, red cards, quals
 - Affirm or expand protocols for utilization on IMTs, e.g. won't use if agency folks are available, assign trainees to work with ADs to gain experience and become qualified
 - End result – want to utilize ADs; need consistency across all agencies

Priority #4 - Work/Rest

Recommendations:

- **Specht** will write recommendation on IA and length of assignment and carry forward.
 - Length of assignment – 14 days, 1 day off; ability to manage fatigue; simplify the language to minimize different interpretations
- Improve process for approving extension of resources – simplify, streamline

Priority #5 – WFSAs – to be taken up at a later date/meeting

Priority #6 - Crew Hours

Issue: Consistent protocol, regarding hours on Large fires, within NR for all types of crew.

Recommendations:

- Define shift length and what it includes, how to make allowances outside defined times.
- Develop a protocol to provide consistency – perhaps Finance group can work on at Team meeting.
- The IAP will be the documentation used to achieve consistency.

Priority #7 - Cost Share Agreement– to be taken up at a later date/meeting

Priority #8 - Fire Use– to be taken up at a later date/meeting

Business Committee Report - Roberta Whitlock

- rewriting white pages of incident management handbook at National level – more standards/specifications for engines, dozers, etc.(input within the next week to Kathy Benson)
- trying to get more into white pages so we can do less in blue supplement pages
- would like a liaison from Operations Committee
- proposing to NRCG board – developing a team composed of equipment inspector, training inspector, and contracting officer to go zone to zone, large companies, etc. preseason so they would be available prior to June
- AD's – traveling with own equipment
- NR teams did an exceptional job trying to keep costs down - most cost containment problems with other GACC teams
- scheduling at least 3 inspection workshops this year
- Next **Business Committee meeting is Nov. 18 in Missoula**; *Chuck Stanich* will attend from Operations Committee
- **Equipment meeting in Billings Oct 28** ; Equipment Ops. Rep. – *Phil Gil* will attend.
- Establish communication link between NRCG committee chairs, e.g. mailing lists

2003 Cache Report – Pat Nooney

- Benchmark year 1988 – \$39.25 million year for Missoula cache, 40% loss
 - 1994 – \$23.25 million, 3% loss
 - 2000 – \$34 million, 9% loss
 - 2003 – \$43.7 million, (regionally \$55 million), 12.5% loss; .85% loss on those fires that are completely closed out
- Average order \$25.5 thousand compared to \$12 thousand in 1988
- Highlights contributing to performance: - never ran out of supplies; excellent turnover of inventory; changes made in organization – supplemented staffing – using 1039 and STEP which allowed for backups; cache management plan approved by NRCG – only one in nation that ties 3 caches together; Billings and COE have been on line with cache computer system – worked great;
- 9 days of \$1 million each shipment - 7 days consecutive
- Policy is fuel should not be shipped back – continue to have some incidents shipping fuel back to cache; DOT getting less tolerant; would like to have some discussions this winter to get this under better control
- Medical kits – program growing; looking for opportunities to contract this out; NWCG committee

Recommendations:

- Water handling – mechanic went to all incidents; suggest a water handling certification program
- Yurts – current desire expressed by Teams is 16/team – looking into an outfit that has deployable buildings – demo at March logistics workshop in Reno

- Develop a contract for leasing Yurts to lower costs when supplementing existing inventory

Lessons Learned - Specht

Have not received all the Lessons Learned packages from Teams.

Regional Fire Equipment Specialist – John Specht

John introduced Kevin Erickson and Howard Carlsen as the new Equipment Specialists for the Region. Their offices are located at 14th and Catlin in Missoula (still trying to get phones).

Next Meeting – December

Location and date to be announced.