

Operations Committee Meeting
February 1-2, 2005
Missoula, Montana

Attendees – Howard Carlson, Neil Nelson, Jim Kelton, Mike Plattes, Wally Bennett, Chris Shelton, Dave Larsen, Stan Benes, Bill Cowin, Sally Estes, Mark Grant, John Specht, Alan Chrisman, Bob Sandman, Jeff Kinderman, Rory Laws, Wayne Cook, Colleen Finneman, Mark Romey, Valdo Calvert, John Monzie, Tony Harwood, Doug Turman, Tom Heinz, Bret Ruby, Chris Acceturro, Maggie Dougherty; Larry Svalberg; Phil Perkins

NRCG Chair - Jim Kelton

There is a NMAC/GMAC conference call on Friday, 2/4. They will be giving the NWCG results regarding team configuration. It sounds like the previous guidance given in Dec. is what we are going to adhere to. They have taken Area Commander and Incident Commander comments into account. They are looking at the NIIMO study – trend is shorter rather than larger teams.

National Coordinator's Meeting - Mike Plattes – NRCC Center Manager

- Ownership vs. protection – ICS-209's will now be reporting ownership across
- ROSS - the capability is now there for incidents to order thru ROSS from the incident. The dispatch group is meeting the first week of March and will decide if this is what they want to happen and if so, come up with operating procedures and guidelines. The reports in ROSS have improved, i.e. tracking a resource, getting the status of a resource. If the decision is made to allow incidents to order thru ROSS, training will be provided.
- IFPM – focused primarily how it affects dispatch/coordination system. The focus right now is on GS-11 and above. Right now the Forest Service can use a Dept. of Interior position description, but it still has to be classified thru the Forest Service. The Forest Service has sent a letter to the Dept. of Agriculture requesting that the Forest Service just be able to use the Dept. of Interior position descriptions. There was big discussion on career ladders; what do we do about the GS-5, 7 & 9s.
- ADs and AD rates – the Coordinator group was not in favor of the new AD rates – they are too low in many cases. They recommended that this be revisited and phase in changes.
- The Geographic Area websites are heading toward standardizing. This should take place this spring. There is also a move to have the Teams have standardized websites. Jim Kelton will ask on the NMAC call to see where they are in that process and what deadlines there are.

Incident Team Management Topics

Valdo Calvert (R9) – perspective from the Eastern Area. Thank you for allowing the Eastern Area to be a part of the Northern Rockies teams. Our plan is to start growing our own in order to have some Teams of our own. We plan to continue to share. In the Eastern Area, a lot of focus is on all risk – awareness level has been raised to use the team concept.

Valdo also brought a signed copy of the Interagency Agreement between Northern Rockies Coordination Center (NRCC) and the Eastern Area Coordination Center (EACC). Mark will take to NRCG BOD for signature.

NRCG Operations Committee Charter's focus is Type 2 Teams. How much depth do we have to fill 6 Type 2 teams? We need to make some tough decisions.

The Northern Rockies would like to strive for **2 Type 1, 6 Type 2 and 2 Fire Use fully staffed, qualified teams** – that's what we recruited for:

- we need to take a hard look at the openings, having solid teams lead to cost effectiveness
- agencies are trying to get more commitment from management
- need to look broader – maybe person's third preference for team is better for the good of the NR Area than their first preference
- need to find a way to have developmental people tag along with teams – we have to get people in the system; having a hard time meeting work rest ratios
- use short teams
- if IC is unable to take team out, and the deputy has an emergency, we need to seriously look at standing the team down, be honest with ourselves
- a good portion of fire use team assignments are to non-fire use incidents and should be used give developmental positions experience

Operations Committee with IMT Incident Commanders looked at 2 operational options for this 2005 fire season:

1. Stand down 1 Type 1 team and go with 6 Type 2 teams, 2 FUMT
 2. Keep both Type 1 teams for 1 year – combine western MT Type 2 team into 1 – for a total of 5 Type 2 teams and down to 1 Type 1 next year, 2 FUMT
- **Option #2 is preferred**

Jim Kelton made telephone calls to several members of the NRCG BOD – they are in concurrency with preferred Option #2.

What are we doing with the other W. MT T2 team? We need to make Carlson's team whole. After that, the remaining folks need to be placed in empty slots on other teams. We also need to look at the positions currently filled by ADs. If we have agency people that can fill those slots, that's what we should do.

When one Team goes out, the other ICs need to make a real effort to **make their trainees available** to get them out with the assigned Team.

HRSP – Jan Everett keeps NRCC in the loop as to who will be available.

- **Doug Turman has priority to get a trainee assignment with the first Type 2 Team that goes out. Make sure we target the others (Kusico, Grant, Windhorst, Reid) - also need to take advantage of assignments with Fire Use teams as well.**

How do we handle the remainder of applicants that did not get selected for a Team?

- **NRCG will send out a memo that clearly states the decision to have 5 teams and that we went as far as we could to place them with other Teams.**

If we are really going to develop people, we need to stand up and get that done. Every IC needs to send a list of a couple of positions that are close to development to NRCC.

Final Team rosters needed by end of February

Type 2 Team Rotations

How are we going to handle team rotations now that we have 5 Teams?

- **Alan Chrisman will work on the schedule and have out by Friday, 2/4.**

Need someone to ramrod trainees for the Operations Committee. Need to have a plan of attack for IFPM.

Positioning Ourselves for Next Year

- need to be prepared for finance next year
- after all the team selections have been made nation-wide this year, the WO will provide finance positions from ABQ for this year – next year all finance positions will be made out of ABQ (FS only); would commit “x” number of 14 day assignments for finance section chiefs out of ABQ
- computer positions – identify what computer support we need for the teams –needs elevated from the Northern Rockies; computer support is also affecting dispatch offices
- COML – may be good to go this year
- need to identify our needs and forward them to IOS working team

Aviation - Maggie Dougherty

- no one has been assigned to replace Paul Linse on the Ops Committee; has asked the aviation group to assign someone
- Shortages
- Will take to working group and discuss aviation issues

Team Meeting

- March 15-17 at the Holiday Inn in Missoula
- job share folks and command and general staff alternates should attend
- go thru your Team Coordinator to get an order from NRCC for ADs in command and general staff positions
- the NRCC has money for things like zone team meetings, etc. - ***get a hold of Colleen Finneman in NRCC with your needs and to make funds available***

Liability Insurance – Craig Bobzien

- People have a high sense of accountability and responsibility but not sure about liability.
- Some attorney’s will say if you are in the scope of your scope of employment the government will back you.
- Will the government back me? Am I liable?
- How do we know if we are operating in our scope of employment? Jim Steele designing workshop – roll up sleeve kind of workshop – group is targeted; April 19-21, 2005
- Looking at ways to ways increase co-liability insurance.

- The Leadership Team is putting expectations on line officers and administrators to be available, trained and present if they have a Team assigned to their unit.
- State of MT will not represent in a criminal case but will on a civil case.
- People are saying they are getting better representation from private attorneys as opposed to government lawyers. OGC is the only entity that can say that you are in your scope of your job and that usually does not happen until you are way down the road into a criminal process. There is such a gray area from the time an incident happens until civil/criminal charges are brought.

Anything to pursue –

- how much liability is enough
- what sort of incentive is there to fill positions, e.g., IC
- we have some good folks coming up but this issue is stopping them
- we need leadership to standup and not pass it off to next generation
- cannot over-market the positive of being part of a team and squash the rumors – we have not heard the agency say “we back you”
- remind each other “am I doing my job right?”
- field does not trust leadership
- need to hear more specifics – don’t keep things secret
- how do we help folks clearly understand when they are in their scope of authority
- FS going to have a big sales job once the liability issue is resolved – we’ve lost some good folks and the younger folks are not willing to step up because they don’t feel the FS will back them.
- we have a lot of contract resources – it’s not just agency folks
- contracting folks feeling pressure as well
- we get gut feelings but we don’t ask the questions
- Type 3 organization – need consistent direction

What changes have Teams made:

- **document, document, document!!** Teams spending more time documenting everything – every decision and change
- **not committing resources until leadership is in place** – except aviation which seems to be understaffed
- **after action reviews after each change**

Operations Committee Charter - Mark Romey

Handed out the draft charter. **Get comments back to Romey by Feb. 10. Mark will finalize Charter and present to NRCG BOD in March for acceptance and signature.**

Business Committee – Roberta Whitlock

- Updating blue page supplements
- AD – old AD plan good until March; NRCG BOD has no ability to set rates for technical specialists;
- Chapter 30 – added replacement policy for government equipment that can be lost, destroyed on a fire – still being reviewed

- Added 1 team member to buying team – for a total of 6 members along with Buying Team Leader
- New claim information in Chapter 70 for DNRC
- **Chapter 20** – misc. cleanup; new EERA format; new rate based formula; engines and tenders good for 1 year only; additional inspection forms; added feller/ bunchers to standard rates
- Looking at ADs and how they are hired
- If you have resources on severity dollars and put them on standby, don't use the EERA

AD Hiring – John Specht

Handed out the Draft NR Policy and Guidelines for Administratively Determined & Emergency Firefighters – intended to be NRCG policy & guidelines; Jeff Scussel will finalize on Feb. 28.

- **comments to Scussel by week of Feb. 14**

Northern Rockies Fire Cache - Pat Nooney - Cache Manager

- 4 million in business – .25% of average and .10% of 2003; well below national average
- 1.5 million cache restock – equally divided between NR and AK
- changes – demo project on first aid kits (100 and 500-person); will send kits to Maryland to be refurbished – if successful – hope to make it a national contract
- modifying coffee/heating kits
- jeans – transition on target
- new item out this year – new goggle replaces 1024 and old 300 goggle – NR cache is exceeding the 1024 but will transition out the old 300;
- no policy changes between the 3 caches in the NR
- Strategic National Supply (part of Homeland Security) – CDA cache formerly in the program; when the need arises, a shipment from one of the core centers will be staged there and shipped out to the Northern panhandle; adding an amendment to the Cache plan how this will be handled during fire activity
- Yurts – very expensive -- **need to look for alternatives.**
Nooney will do a write-up options and forward to NRCG Equipment Committee, Nooney will work with Erickson.

Equipment Committee – Kevin Erickson

- Committee plan matrix put on website – met most of those in timeframes allotted
- Train the trainer inspection class in Helena March 21-24 in Helena – 30 slots for each class (2 classes) – target is lead inspector
- Basic inspector class April 11-15 – aimed at online inspectors and ground support unit leaders
- **Need response from Ops Committee:**
 - Length limits on Type 6 fire engines?
 - **Radio requirements in contracts? Operations Committee agreed that this is a need**
- Big Iron Workshops May 2-3 near Arlee and May 5-6 near Mica, ID
- Weed wash standards

- Rewriting potable water
- ROPS vs FOPS
- Breakout heavy equipment into separate groups
- Working with Strategic Action Committee
- Formalizing workbook for equipment inspection procedures
- Developing a class for Soft tracks
- Changes to dozer typing
- T3 engine crew requirements
- Next committee meeting is March 2-3

Contractor Questions to Ops Committee

- Geographic boundaries vs. dispatch boundaries. Resources are ordered from farther away because of boundaries.
Response: Boundaries are pre-identified and dispatchers are doing their best to use closes forces within these boundaries.
- ◆ Some contracting officers would not sign up new or unusual equipment. Ops people need to make the call as to whether this equipment is needed.
Response: Contracting Officers need to know whether there is a need for this type of equipment. Operations will be involved in establishing and identifying equipment needs. Also developing a price for new/ unusual equipment may take some time, which may result in not signing up equipment immediately.
- ◆ Give direction to agency personnel that performance evaluations MUST be filled out.
Response: The agencies recognize the importance of these evaluations and will keep pushing to get these done.
- ◆ Have contractor's rep from private sector on the Teams.
Response: No, a person attached to the contracted item is a rep. of the contractor. We recognize the need more COR's.
- ◆ What is the role/need between water trucks and water tenders?
Response: Water trucks are delivery vehicles where as water tenders are tactical vehicles. These vehicles are defined in Chapter 20 of Incident Business Management Handbook

NRCG Contractor Mobilization Guide – Tim Murphy

- Handout – NRCG Mobilization of Private Fire Suppression Resources – would like to finalize by the first of March –
 - **Comments back to Tim Murphy before March 1**
- Last 5 years what percentage of resources are government vs. private? – 50/50
- How much money spent on private contractors? \$70 million
- 750 engines and 350 water tenders signed up on EERA – 9 contractor associations
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Strategic Action Committee for Private Fire Suppression Resources plus Task List and Timeline – Tim Murphy

- We are finding that contractors are attending several of the committee meetings. What is the public's info policy? In Montana, if you have a state employee or government employee at the meeting, they can attend except for dealing with personnel issues. strategic action committee telling folks that it is a government meeting and will have a time for open/public comment.

- Mobe Boards an issue in some parts of the State of Montana
- National contracts – national engine and crew contracts have been sent to all dispatch centers; there will not be a national engine contract – specifications will be required for each FS region if they are going to enter into a contract; crew contracts – hosting 10-12 crew in NR
 - **comments due by end of week**
- Training audits – 38 have signed memo of understanding to provide training to private sector; would like us to do one audit on each – need Ops to help; standard template on NRCG website to assist in audit