

NRCG Operations Committee
Meeting Notes
Oct. 30-31, 2007

Present: Bob Lippincott, Tony Lubke, Larry Svalberg, Biddy Simmet, Jess Secrest, Tom Corbin, Wally Bennett, Steve Frye, Chuck Stanich, Doug Turman, Mark Grant, Tammy Clark, Gary Boyd, Beth Card, Phil Gill, Bob Fry, Rory Laws, Rick Kusicko, Greg Poncin, Mark Heppler, Randy Sanders, Dave Solem, John Monzie, Tracey Nimlos.

Meeting Objectives:

- AAR of 2007 fire season
- IMT Futuring Committee Update
- IMT Configuration report to NRCG
- Respond to recommendations for LTIP, AMR, Closeout Template
- Review S-420 Nominations

AAR:

Stanich:

- Multi-agency incidents: need a template for cost share agreements
- Ability to recruit and retain finance positions due to ASC; do we want to centrally locate finance support services?
- Too much is expected of the Finance Section by the hosting agencies.
- Not good to ask IMTs to go out short during higher P.L. levels because you can't get people as need escalates. Also if you move to another incident with a higher staffing need, you can't get your folks back. Suggestion is that IMT needs to decide what they need, not the hosting agency.
- BVC resources must learn to recognize agency administrator discretion on how to staff and deploy resources (give this issue to SAC)

Frye:

- BVC still needs resolution on several items
- Different rehab standards between agencies need to be agreed upon in relation to the cost-share agreement

Bennett:

- Multi-agency incidents—WFSA preparation teams are not bringing in all the players that could eventually be impacted.
- Lack of qualified finance people is impacting payment packages
- Too hard for IMTs to go short, let us take the whole team and right-size after 48 hours
- Biggest complaint on BVC is perception that EERAs are brought in and BVC resources are demobed first. Need a write-up to give to out of area IMTs, regarding demob of contract resources

- Need a better tracking system for lowboys and procedures for contractors with equipment on their own lowboy. Too many are sitting at incidents.

Secrest:

- More contracts means more supervision for contract administration and it's harder for finance sections to keep up with the workload
- Structure protection needs to be clearly define at the beginning of an incident

Poncin:

- Multi-jurisdictional fires—using a landowner liaison is a good idea to avoid damaging local relationships

Heppler:

- BVC had some positives and negatives for the dispatch community this year. Dispatch centers not following protocols for ordering BVC resources was an issue.

Sanders:

- BVC resources don't want to stay on patrol or standby, but out of area resources will, so that mixes up rotation
- C&G on CA IMT came in ½ day before rest of team and met with local unit ended up being very helpful

Simmet:

- Figuring out where to get new folks is the hardest issue
- IMTs cannot change per diem agreed to by AD hosting unit
- Supplies and equipment disappearing on fireline continues
- Contractors cannot re-supply at incident—they must go thru claims process. ICs think this policy needs to be changed.
- Administrative tracking of supplies after the incident is too expensive
- Cache expectation for incidents with multiple IMTs needs to change.
- Requirement for 2 v. 3 firefighters on a Type 6 engine on BVC engines. It's harder for contractors to fill engines with 3 firefighters. We typically use contract engines for large fire and need the flexibility of having engines with 3 firefighters.

Svalberg:

- Timely and quality involvement of agency administrators in the Northern Rockies was good this year.
- Cost-share agreements need to be an agency responsibility, not a burden for the IMTs
- Agency administrators and everyone need to be thinking bigger and longer in terms of fire season
- Does Fire Use shift structure protection responsibilities?
- Discussions need to take place with the public on successes

Solem:

- Type 3 organizations are being used on increasingly complex incidents.

Lubke:

- IMTs from out of area had a difficult time grasping AMR

Lippincott:

- Need work on cost-shares and rehab
- Clean up cache procedures on accountability
- NR procedures for out of area IMTs is needed
- Need operations briefing paper for out of area IMTs (fuel types, terrain, etc.)
- Make a CD of all the info IMTs need when coming into the Northern Rockies

Fry:

- Liaisons were essential
- Type 2 assignments are getting as complex as Type 1 assignments
- Fire Use team assignments are being diluted
- Pre-evacuation alerts are going on too long. Residents are left on 24-hour notice for weeks. Need to establish expectations for the IMTs

Gill:

- Structure protection is a big issue NRCG is working on
- Pumps left on site for structure protection for weeks impacted availability for other fires
- Local agencies have the responsibility to be prepared for fire season; they shouldn't expect an IMT to come in to "rescue" them from not being prepared. NRCG is preparing workshops for this winter to help prepare agency administrators.
- Need help from IMTs and zones to get resources to MAPs rather than just assigning resources to incidents.
- Initial attack capability at local units remained successful during high levels of large fire.
- Do zones have organizations in place to move resources within the zones?

Boyd:

- Saw teams and availability was an issue and bottleneck
- IMS resources were not readily available

Clark:

- Successful in right-sizing for fires and sharing resources
- Unified command was set up and in place in case it was needed for evacuations
- Tracking line officer certifications

Grant:

- Teams were out for long periods of time and we may be risking burning people out
- Rural fire chief as liaison fire was a huge benefit
- Cost containment factors seemed trivial and process was confusing as far as what should be tracked. Agency administrator strategy selection is the most important cost factor.
- Glad to see Northern Rockies' willingness to bring out of area IMTs in.
- Large number of C&GS were ADs at the end of the season

Kusicko:

- Numerous signatures on delegations—need to look at who has statutory responsibility.
- Work/rest is working well.
- Would like to see resources better allocated at the local level in order to avoid having expensive resources sitting and waiting.
- 5 cost factors are good to consider, but are they really going to help?

Turman:

- struggled with cost factors and what exactly they are looking for
- liaisons were very helpful
- long-term planned helped calm the community's fears because they realized we were prepared
- Co-ICs does not work well

Common Issues:

1. Cost share agreements – Business committee will take on
2. Short team vs. long team staffing – ICs will present w/IMT configuration in an issue paper to NRCG
3. AMR education including cost share – NRCG is already working on
4. Finance issues/incident business service organization – Biddy will bring up with Business Committee
5. Best value contracting – request SAC to work on these issues
6. Structure Protection guidelines – NRCG group is working on this and we will ask to see their product before it is released
7. Releasing equipment on holidays – Ops will draft guidance for NR team protocol and insertion into out of area IMT briefing packet
8. Accountability of Cache items – Ops committee will draft some questions for the Cache to answer.
9. Complexity and staffing for AMR and needs for IMT configuration – see above
10. Out of area IMT briefing/AMR education CD – compilation of information – a subcommittee of the Ops committee will work on this. Bob Fry, Randy Sanders, Jess Secrest, Bob Lippincott and Rick Kusicko will be on this group. Draft will be done by Dec. 1, 2007. Tracey will send Bob the info the MAC group was using last summer.

11. Long term evacuation notices – this is a management issue that needs awareness.
12. Cost-efficiency guidance – this is a confusing issue that needs clarification for the ICs. ICs should send comments to Chuck and he will forward questions to Jane Haker.
13. Co-ICs configuration – this will be included in the IMT configuration paper.
14. Liaison officers – Ops committee would like to recommend the landowner/community liaison position from the local community that works with the IMT liaison officer. Martha Smith has a liaison workshop that she would like to put on in the Northern Rockies. The Ops committee supports this. Zone restrictions networks and DES networks will be used to market the workshop.

GPS Units:

Division Sups are asking to have their GPS units authorized on IMT orders. ICs say yes, it's a tool they need. NRCG will forward this out to the agency administrators.

Revisit IMT task group recommendations:

- Additional considerations:
- IMTs need to meet national standards
- Short team vs. long team – need team to see what they've got before they can right-size
- Co-ICs does not work
- Difficulty in filling finance positions
- Agency administrator discretion

Task group will reconfigure the recommendation to NRCG. Chuck will put together a letter with the following recommendations:

Recommendation is to continue with the number of IMTs we currently have for 2008. We will begin to work toward the preferred alternative for 2009. This will be revisited annually.

Misc:

Chuck Stanich will not be able to be one of the NR Type 1 ICs next year. He will bring forward names for his replacement.

NRCG proposal for placing IMTs to manage zones was a fallback plan for intent of use if there were no other IMTs available in the country. There are several ways this could be accomplished if necessary. We need a group to look at this concept and flesh it out. There would have to be some common expectations to the zones from the NR MAC.

We need to do a better job of taking trainees for the lower levels on the teams so we can build out pool for the future. The CAT team template is another option to look at.

I-Suite—Jane Haker would like to put on an I-Suite for IMTs training session. Could this be incorporated into our spring meetings? She would also like to put on I-Suite for Type 3-5 fires.

NRTC will be putting on S-360 this year. Beth will send the date to the ICs so they can recruit at this training.

Line Safety Officer Course—Paul Fieldhouse will be developing this course for the Northern Rockies for Type 3-5 organizations.

S-339 Training will be reworked by Paul also and he would like to add more simulations.

Transition and Close-out Template:

This is being addressed nationally. The length of transition needs to be an issue for the agency administrators also, because sometimes it is their expectation that it takes longer than may be necessary. ICs will keep this as an awareness item for the future. Closeouts can probably be shortened up and get teams on the road home so they can get more rest.

Fire Use Subcommittee Update:

The committee met a couple of weeks ago. The Fire Use workshop last spring was very successful. It will not be held this year because of the LTIP workshops that are being planned. MT DEQ Fire Use Checklist was sent to NRCG and the committee is working on a response to that checklist from NRCG to DEQ.

The subcommittee suggests an AMR discussion be included in all training sessions at all levels from ground level firefighters to agency administrators.

The committee suggests that the AMR training be presented at the zone level to maximize participation.

Business Committee Update:

Their meeting is tomorrow and topics include an AAR, fire procurement, finance and logistics training, I-Suite, IBAs, Buying Team, IMS qualifications and limitations, BVC issues, incident business management handbook updates, billing between agencies, and APMC.

Training Committee Update:

Competitive Sourcing Feasibility study for training—deadlines have been extended. Data is in and they are now doing market research in the public sector to see if that training could be provided. We hope to hear something in the next 12-18 months.

Agency administrators and managers need to support DIVS trainees and allow them to go out on assignments. Would like to have priority put on this position for training assignments over other positions.

NFPA qualification crosswalk is now out, but many of the volunteer fire departments do not meet NFPA standards.

S-320 type course is being developed in the central zone to help people to build Type 3 organizations. The question came up as to whether you need S-420 if you have a task book and are already working in a trainee position.

The idea of full-time zone training officers came up. The SW MT zone has that position already. There is no money to create these positions, so zones would have to make that committee on their own.

Dispatch Update:

The center managers would like to reinstate the dispatch committee. There was considerable discussion of BVC. There is a shortage of inspectors.

The dispatch feasibility study has been started and Northern Rockies had a strong response to the data call.

SAC Committee Update:

Contractors' Association brought up that out of area teams were unfamiliar with heavy equipment we use in the Northern Rockies. Suggestion was made to have a heavy equipment advisor available to work with agency administrators, teams and local units to help them decide what the right equipment to use in different situations is. This position would be valuable in rehab as well. MLA thinks they may have people available to do this. This position could be added to the NR briefing packet for out of area IMTs. The position would need to be added to the AD pay plan.

2009 BVC will add more heavy equipment. In 2008 they are adding faller modules, GIS units, transports and Type 3 caterers.

MLA is going to identify a pool of people for hot saw operations patrols.

We need to make sure performance evaluations are done for contractors and that they are done on the correct form. Copies need to go back to the dispatch center of the contractor. We need to have a process in place to get them where they need to go.

Joint Fire Science Project – Anne Black:

Project has been to measure trends in organizational performance and they want to study AMR and take this project beyond the work that Anne did this summer with Rex Mann and Jack Kirkendall. They are looking for a way to yard up the data from safety and cost effectiveness. They want to collect the information that is already available and put it all in one place in order to study the information. The types of information needed are BARC data, fire history as well as operational information like line built vs. line held. Anne is asking for Ops help to collect this information for the Joint Fire Sciences Project. The goal is to collect this data to tell the story of the effectiveness of the fire management

effort and the funding that is committed. How does the full range of AMR affect all levels of gov't and their community relationships? What are some items we can consistently measure that would be useful to report to OMB and state legislatures? Can we define progress for ourselves to OMB?

AMR:

- Equating costs to AMR sends a bad message
- All players need to be at the table in the beginning to address any potential outcomes
- Need to define in the delegation of authority what the expectations are
- Need to talk about desired future conditions identified in the land management plan are used to determine fire management strategy
- Need to educate the public on what AMR really is
- Need to explain the strategies on fires can change over the life of the fire. Need to explain each agency's mission in relation to the strategy.
- Local units need to pass the education on at the local level. Need to emphasize public and firefighter safety, values at risk, resource availability and cost.
- Should be using the tools that are applicable to the incident.
- How do we refocus people in their understanding of AMR and their confusion that it is something "new"?

LTIP:

- Need to involve all stakeholders
- Helped agency administrators have something to rely on
- Delivery was confusing. Added a layer that did not necessarily contribute.
- FSPro does not always accurately display what is happening on the ground and the people explaining it don't necessarily fully understand it.
- Need a national review done on FSPro.
- People didn't understand that they didn't have to have a long term plan and plans could be changed if necessary.
- Delegations of authority and long term plans need to complement each other.
- Use of the LTIPs was refined throughout the season.
- Ensured better communication between the IMT and the hosting agency.

Recommendations

- If a long term assessment has been built, and an IMT is later assigned the IMT needs to be involved in a revalidation of the long term assessment.
- MAPs need to be specific to the assignment, not the 209. We will talk about the impact, not the point.
- Need to be called Long Term Assessments
- NR MAC set priorities by fire, not by MAP. The IMTs deal with MAPs, not the MAC

- Education needs to include the MAPs are not necessarily in stone, use common sense. Management Action Point is not a good name; maybe call them Management Evaluation Points.
- IMT spring meeting includes a topic on the use of MAPs and long term assessments.
- Less effort needs to go into resource needs for each MAP.
- Same LTP team needs to be involved in revalidation as in development.
- Involve ICs in the Long Term Workshop development
- Involve Type 1 and Type 2 IMT members with the Fire Use teams so they can learn to develop Stage 3 and long term plans.
- If getting more acres treated is an objective, that needs to be put on the table up front.

S-420 in the Field:

Paul Fieldhouse presented the concept on conducting S-420 on an incident that was developed in the NW.

Advantages are that you don't need a full trainee team for the course; you can have vacancies in some functional areas. You don't need a bunch of people brought in to do simulations; it's the real thing.

Suggestion is if this is of interest, to get a small task group together to begin working on the process to do this course during the 2008 fire season. Another suggestion is to have those selected for S-420 to attend the classroom portion at a regular class and then do the simulation on an incident. Suggestion was made that the team agreeing to do this staff their training officer position to deal with the students and course. Proposal would need to be tailored to the Northern Rockies. A drawback may be that it takes away from the preparation that's built into S-420 that prepares students for S-520.

Mark Grant will commit to hosting the trainee team. Ops committee recommends to the Training committee that they make this recommendation to NRCG. A steering committee needs to be built to develop this for the Northern Rockies. Mark Heppler volunteers to work with the steering committee.

S-420 Selections:

The committee worked through the selections and priorities for the 2008 S-420 course.

Next Ops committee meeting will be to make team selections. The meeting will be held Feb. 12-13, 2008. Assignments will be made for the IMT meetings April 7-11, 2008.