



# Northern Rockies Coordinating Group

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

Date: April 21, 2021 NRCG Memo# 2021-007  
To: Northern Rockies Interagency Wildland Fire Community  
From: Chair, Northern Rockies Coordinating Group  
Subject: 2021 Hand Crews - Minimum Staffing

Since 2020 and the onset of COVID-19, the Northern Rockies Coordinating Group (NRCG) has been vigilant in adherence to recommended guidelines and safety protocols related to keeping firefighting personnel safe. The NRCG recognizes the limited number of 20 person hand crews nationally, as well as the potential for those crews to be exposed to and spread the Covid-19 virus as they travel to and from incidents.

Currently the Northern Rockies follows the standards set in the [National Interagency Mobilization Guide](#) and [Interagency Standards for Fire and Fire Aviation](#) (Redbook 2021). Due to the current COVID-19 pandemic, mobilization of Type 2 and Type 2IA crews has been difficult due to protocols such as: sanitization requirements, social distancing, vehicle use, travel location requirements, etc. The impact of reduced availability of hand crews was noticed nationwide during the 2020 fire season and was an additional burden on Incident Commanders.

The Northern Rockies Geographical Area (GACC) will reduce the minimum staffing levels of 20 person hand crews from 18 to 15 personnel for Type 2 and Type 2IA crews. This will apply to internal mobilization within the GACC, as well as out of area crews being requested to assist in the Northern Rockies GACC. Although crews may have less people, they must still meet leadership, equipment, and crew qualifications identified in the Redbook 2021, chapter 13, pages 296-298. This added flexibility potentially allows for more hand crews to be rostered, reduction of impact if COVID-19 exposure were to happen, and boosts other resource staffing needs (i.e., engines, initial attack, aviation) with the remaining individuals not rostered. In the event a minimum of 15 personnel and required qualifications cannot be met, one group option would be to become available as a Fire Suppression Module.

Josh Harvey  
Chair, Northern Rockies Coordinating Group (NRCG)

