



Northern Rockies Coordinating Group

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

Date: September 20, 2022 NRCG Memo# 2022-009

To: Northern Rockies Interagency Wildland Fire Community

From: Chair, Northern Rockies Coordinating Group and Chair, Wildland Fire Agency Administrators

Subject: Northern Rockies Incident Management Team (IMT) Organization

The Northern Rockies Wildland Fire Agency Administrators (WFAAs) and Northern Rockies Coordinating Group (NRCG) Board of Directors discussed the future of Northern Rockies Incident Management Teams (IMTs) with an emphasis on future sustainability. For several fire seasons, the Northern Rockies geographic area has faced significant challenges adequately staffing IMTs. To adapt to the growing staff shortages, the NRCG Board of Directors spent a significant amount of time over the last year designing different approaches to ensure incident management obligations requiring IMT support remain in place.

Historically the Northern Rockies staffed greater numbers of IMTs when agencies had larger workforces, and fire seasons were shorter in duration. Today, that business model largely remains unsustainable as agencies suffer from reduced workforces, years of declining or stagnant budgets, and long-standing position vacancies. Agency staffing issues have created critical challenges in recruiting, rostering, and maintaining the current number of IMTs within the Northern Rockies. These staffing challenges in conjunction with demanding, longer fire seasons have led to individual responder fatigue, work/life balance strain, and an increase in mental health issues, as well as a decrease in IMT availability.

To ensure we meet our obligations to the responders that support Northern Rockies IMTs, and additionally to the agencies that rely upon IMTs, as well as prepare for longer duration fire seasons; it was decided that changes must be made to Northern Rockies IMT management.

The WFAAs and NRCG Board of Directors agreed to a new business model for 2023 that includes supporting and rostering five Incident Management Teams.

This decision was made with the priority of supporting the health and safety of employees and ensuring the sustainability of incident management within the geographic area. Fire season duration, fire size, fire severity, and the need for IMTs will continue to increase. Rest assured; the board's



reconfiguration intends to be inclusive. Plenty of positions will be available to employees that want to participate with IMTs. Development of the Remote Incident Support Team (RIST) offers another avenue for incident management support participation. Recruitment for new and developmental team members remains a priority for future continued incident management.

This new model strives to stabilize team numbers, ensure the overall availability of IMTs, reduce long-term fatigue and burnout of responders, and increase the resiliency of our interagency teams, along with those that support them. Moving forward, we commit to continued discussion with the NRCG Board of Directors, WFAAs, and committees regarding Northern Rockies IMT configuration.

Lastly, we want to thank each one of you for the commitment and dedication you have provided during this record setting fire year.

Josh Harvey
Chair, Northern Rockies Coordinating Group
(NRCG)

Paul Santavy
Chair, Wildland Fire Agency
Administrators

