



# **Northern Rockies Coordinating Group**

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

Date June 29, 2022

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To: Northern Rockies Interagency Wildland Fire Community

From: Chair, Northern Rockies Coordinating Group

Subject: Northern Rockies Geographic Area Briefing

Welcome to the Northern Rockies Geographic Area. We appreciate the support of your team in managing the fire workload in our geographic area. The following is a list of key points Incident Management Teams need to be aware of while managing fires in the Northern Rockies.

## **General Information**

In the Northern Rockies, all agencies, cooperators, and local fire departments work together during fire suppression operations. Northern Rockies incident management teams are interagency with most federal, state, and local agencies represented. We have two Type 1 teams, four Type 2 teams, one Wildland Fire Management team, and several organized Type 3 teams.

With often limited resources in the Northern Rockies, sharing between incidents and initial attack forces is critical to being successful. Teams are often asked to share crews, engines, or helicopters with each other. Team willingness to be flexible will help with our overall success.

Please review the Agency Administrators [\*Incident Management Team Expectations\*](#) developed by the NRCG Board and Agency Administrators. It is expected that all teams will uphold the intent of this guidance and direction.

Although you will receive local briefings, there are several items in the Northern Rockies GACC that may be missed because it may be assumed that you are already aware of them. We want to bring them to your attention so we can best support each other for successful management of the shared risk during your assignment with us.

Hazardous environments such as working in bug-killed timber, grizzly bear habitat, and rattlesnake habitat needs to be discussed with local agency administrators and within your team.

The Northern Rockies has many contract resources requiring specific evaluations and financial requirements that will need attention.



It is critical that all teams work closely with private landowners and local communities. Developing and maintaining relationships with all landowners is critical. Having community meetings and making personal contacts with all landowners whether they are agency, community, or private landowners has proven effective in maintaining those relationships.

### **Incident Commander Conference Calls**

IC calls are conducted daily whenever a Type 1 or Type 2 IMT is assigned within the NRGBA. Significant Type 3 incidents will also be asked to join the call.

ICs will address the following in 4 minutes or less:

- Incident Size Up – Agencies involved / Acreage / Fire behavior / Containment / Cost to date
- Any changes since the last 209 report, especially evacuation levels
- Values at Risk – Communities / Structures / Infrastructure / Resources currently at risk, 8, 24, 48 hours out.
- Yesterday’s Successes and Challenges; Today’s Objectives
- Critical Needs – what, when, duration needed, planned accomplishment. Needs by priority, resource type and needed 12, 24, 48, 72 hours out
- Evacuations / Closures / Restrictions
- Safety concerns; including accidents, injuries, and near misses.
- COVID mitigations and concerns.
- Community Meetings
- Additional Items of Interest

**The IC calls are held daily at 0800 Mountain Daylight Time. (888) 844-9904, PIN: 5126907#.**

### **Other Contact Information**

Teams will receive a thorough in-briefing from their local agency administrators when assigned to an incident. Should your incident management team need additional assistance or have questions, the following phone numbers should be utilized:

Northern Rockies Coordination Center (NRCC):	<b>406-329-4880</b>
Northern Rockies Operations Officer:	<b>406-329-4961 Office</b> <b>406-868-7419 Cell</b>
Northern Rockies Coordinating Group Chair:	<b>208-568-0441</b>

### **Northern Rockies**

The Northern Rockies Geographic Area encompasses Montana, Northern Idaho, North Dakota, Yellowstone National Park and a northwest county in South Dakota.

All agencies within the Northern Rockies Geographic Area are represented on the Northern Rockies Coordinating Group and Multi Agency Coordinating Group. The Northern Rockies Coordinating Group is made up of representation from the states (Idaho Department of Lands - IDL, Montana Department of Natural Resources & Conservation – MT DNRC, North Dakota Forest Service – ND FS), all wildland federal agencies (Bureau of Land Management – BLM, United States Forest Service – FS, Bureau of Indian Affairs – BIA, Fish and Wildlife Service – FWS, National Park Service – NPS), Montana Sheriff and Peace Officers Association, Montana County Fire Wardens Association, the Montana State Fire Chiefs



Association, and Montana Department of Disaster and Emergency Services (MT DES). Each representative from their respective agency has been delegated the authority to make decisions for their agency. As the fire season intensifies, this Board of Directors may meet, either through weekly conference calls or in person, and act in the role of a Multi-Agency Coordinating Group (MAC Organization) prioritizing the allocation of critical resources across the Northern Rockies.

### **Multi-Agency Coordinating (MAC) Group Activations**

During times of high activity with multiple large incidents and when there is competition for resources, the NRCC Center Manager and Operations Officer will meet with the Northern Rockies Coordinating Group to determine whether to activate the Geographic MAC Group. Typically, this will only occur during the higher Preparedness Levels (3-5). The MAC Group function is to assess the fire situation from an interagency perspective and make resource allocation decisions based on the latest intelligence and information from the Incident Commanders. The NRCC is responsible for implementing these decisions and the NRCC staff will be briefed by the Center Manager after MAC decisions are made.

### **The typical MAC Group daily schedule is as follows (when activated):**

**0800-0900** – Conference call with Incident Commanders on Northern Rockies incidents to have a dialog regarding their fire situation and any critical needs they may have.

**0900-1000** – Conference call with NRCG Zone Chairs to have a dialog regarding their fire activity and any critical needs they may have.

**0900-1600** – GMAC Group Support and the NRCC Center Manager and NR Operations Officer gather information and intelligence on the fire and resource situation in preparation for the GMAC General Session meeting.

**1700 -1800** – General GMAC session with weather briefings and activity. GMAC Group prioritizes the needs of incidents based on specific threats to life and property, cultural and historical values, threats to infrastructure and natural resources.

**1800** – NRCC staff is briefed, and actions are implemented (resource allocation, reallocation, etc.)

**GMAC - Executive Session** – GMAC group discusses critical issues. The timeline and format of the GMAC executive sessions may vary depending upon activity and needs of the GMAC.

### **COVID Mitigation and Expectations**

If there are any questions or needs that arise regarding IMT Covid mitigation and support efforts, please contact the Northern Rockies Operations Officer at the Northern Rockies Coordination Center at [406\) 329-4880](tel:4063294880).

### **Fire Business and Finance in the Northern Rockies**

The Northern Rockies places a high value on the integrity of the Finance package. In addition to the standard IMT evaluation, a separate evaluation will be completed to evaluate the overall performance of the Finance section and the administrative performance of the Logistics Section's management of equipment and services. The Finance and Logistics sections will be given a copy of the host unit's



Incident Business Operating Guidelines (IBOG) that need to be read and followed. As the delegated Agency Administrative Representative, the assigned Incident Business Advisor (INBA) can provide any needed clarification.

If a Cost Share Agreement has been negotiated, or if an IMT is tasked with managing multiple incidents with separated costs, the FSC and COST must follow agency guidance for cost calculation. The e-ISuite program, rather than external spreadsheets, is the preferred method for capturing all costs and identifying cost-share elements or separating costs between incidents.

In the Northern Rockies, not all agreements are executed in the VIPR Program. All [Northern Rockies competed agreements](#) can be found on the [NRCC website](#). Please utilize the NRCG Supplements to the NWCG Standards for Interagency Incident Business Management (SIIBM), the NRCG Payment Matrix, the Northern Rockies Land Use Agreement Guide, and the many other tools located on the [NRCG Business Committee page](#) on the [NRCG website](#).

### **Fire Contracting in the Northern Rockies**

The Northern Rockies relies on our partners from the private fire service (fire contractors) to be the primary workforce on large incidents. Approximately 50% of the equipment resources on large fires will be contractors. Unlike other Geographic Areas, the Northern Rockies Agencies (DNRC, IDL, NPS & USFS) share in issuing competitive solicitations for a variety of equipment to help meet incident tactical and support needs. The Northern Rockies uses a competed process that evaluates factors such as reasonable price, equipment age, qualified personnel, and equipment standards.

The [private contracting page](#) on the [NRCC website](#) is designed to provide a “one stop shopping” place for information specifically related to fire contracting and assignments with State, Tribal and Federal groups for wildland fire suppression or all-hazard incidents as they arise.

During assignments, please consider ordering the following through your local dispatch center to help administer the contract resources:

- Incident Contract Project Inspector (ICPI) – Works in Finance to help with Contract Administration
- Heavy Equipment Technical Specialist (HETS) – Works in Operations to help with Heavy Equipment and finding the correct mix of equipment for the job
- Northern Rockies Lead Equipment Inspector (THSP) – Works in Logistics with Ground Support

The Northern Rockies also has heavy equipment contract task forces (HETF) that may be of use if they are available. Please contact the NR Operations Officer, Contractor Liaison or the NRCC for more specific information. A qualified Heavy Equipment Technical Specialist (HETS), or a unit employee specializing in timber management, may assist Operations with understanding the production capabilities and implications of a heavy equipment task force. A local INBA or Agency Administrative Representative should be contacted for assistance with financial contract administration for an HETF.

Northern Rockies utilizes local government resources for Rapid Extraction Module Support (REMS) as the first source of supply. Please refer to the [memo](#) on the [NRCG website](#) for guidance on the use of REMS in the geographic area.



## **Predictive Services and Other Useful Products**

[Predictive Service information](#) can be found on the [NRCC website](#).

**7- Day Significant Fire Potential:** The [7-Day Significant Fire Potential product](#) contains projected fire weather, fuel dryness, fire danger, fire potential, and resource status information. It is posted daily by 1000 MDT to the NRCC website during significant wildland fire potential and/or fire activity.

Predictive Services also provides daily [Fire Weather web briefings](#) which provide an outlook of expected weather conditions over the next week and how they may impact fire operations.

**Monthly and Seasonal Fire Potential Outlooks:** These [products](#) are longer-term predictions of fire business potential. They are used for strategic planning and seasonal budgeting.

Besides providing these products, NRCC meteorologists provide daily briefings to the Northern Rockies Multi-Agency Coordinating Group (MAC), and others upon request.

NRCC meteorologists also try to routinely monitor all sources of fire weather and resource information to ensure consistency, quality, and applicability. Requests for specific, operationally-oriented weather information, such as Spot Weather Forecasts, are referred to the local NWS offices.

## **Information Technology (IT) Support in the Northern Rockies**

All teams assigned in Northern Rockies are responsible for acquiring, implementing, and managing all necessary IT equipment necessary during their assignments.

Follow host agency direction for the use of FireNet Teams for electronic incident file storage and records management, and for the use of e-ISuite Enterprise for the incident data. Assure that a host unit INBA or other identified Agency Representative is included as an owner on the incident in FireNet Teams, and as user in the e-ISuite program.

## **Trainees in the Northern Rockies**

The NRCC supports and encourages the use of trainees on IMTs and fires within the NR, when appropriate. Please work with your local line officers for agreement on numbers and types of trainees. These may include trainees from local units, as well as from out-of-area.

The Northern Rockies has an active [Priority Trainee Program](#) managed by the NRCC and the Geographic Area Training Representative (GATR). These trainees are supported by their respective Agency in the Northern Rockies efforts in Successional Planning. When an opportunity to mobilize a trainee occurs, there are two available options to fill the trainee position:

1. Utilize local unit trainees from the hosting unit as per the Delegation of Authority.
2. Place a Priority Trainee request through the TNSP or ORDM on the incident (preferred method) or by calling the Northern Rockies GATR, Melissa Wegner (406.329.4925).

## **Fire Cache Supplies and Equipment in the Northern Rockies**

The NRK (Northern Rockies Fire Cache) is a Type I Interagency Cache that supports the fire logistics needs in the Northern Rockies. The NRK maintains an inventory to support 5000 fire fighters and 30





large incidents simultaneously. It is capable of refurbishment, repair and replacement for all equipment issued. With some exceptions, the NRK can deliver large amounts of fire equipment anywhere in the geographic area within 5 hours. In addition to the NRK, Type 2 caches are located in Billings, MT and Coeur d'Alene, ID and service all levels of fire.

#### Availability

- The normal work schedule is 0730-1630
- The NRK's schedule reflects fire activity, so during periods of active fire, the NRK will operate seven days a week.
- The NRK is available to support fire when needed. If you anticipate a need for support over a weekend or holiday, simply contact your local dispatch center and people will be made available.

#### Ordering

- Type 1 & 2 teams that have IROC capability should order directly through IROC.
- IA, Type 3 and others will place orders through the local dispatch office.

#### Order Status

- If a firefighting item is "UTF" (Unable to Fill) or is being forward ordered, you will be contacted with the status. This will not be done for non-firefighting items (i.e., table, pens, paper, etc.).

#### Delivery

- Each fire should work with the NRK administrative section to establish a good time each day for their order to be placed. It is preferred to get each fire on a schedule that works for them instead of having all orders come in at once.
- Fires are expected to have personnel with proper equipment at the designated location to receive cache orders.

#### Accountability

- Inventory your delivery and note any discrepancies on the shipping document. Call the NRK administration office to resolve any discrepancies.
- Issue Reports can be requested from the administration office to help in maintaining accountability.

#### Demobilization

- Cache Demobilization Specialists (CDSP) are a service the NRK provides fires to help maintain accountability and speed fire recovery. Fires are encouraged to request CDSP support when demobilization is anticipated. To provide good continuity and service, we may insist on a CDSP to help with the return of goods to the cache.
- Unneeded equipment can be backhauled throughout the life of the fire, if coordination is made with the NRK. Any backhaul must be preapproved to avoid transportation conflicts.
- Battery Recycling Program – the NRK has instituted a battery recycling program. The Northern Rockies Cache will provide bins for recycling batteries.



*Paracargo*

- The Northern Rockies maintains a robust paracargo capability, supported from three smokejumper bases.
- NRK items can be delivered directly from the Missoula smokejumper base, which is co-located with the cache. All bases can deliver food and water resupply, and limited equipment orders.
- Paracargo operations will usually require 24 hours notice and are best done early in the morning to limit impact on initial attack readiness.
- Availability of self-guided cargo is now an option when low visibility is an issue.
- To discuss and coordinate a paracargo mission, contact local dispatch and the NRCC aircraft desk at (406) 329-4882. A paracargo ordering guide is available on the Aviation page of the NRCC website.

On behalf of the members of the Northern Rockies, we wish to thank you for your team's participation in this effort to manage our wildfires. If there are any further questions, do not hesitate to call one of the contacts listed for more information.

Josh Harvey  
Chair, Northern Rockies Coordinating Group (NRCCG)

