

CALIFORNIA WILDLAND FIRE COORDINATING GROUP



May 28, 2021

To: Incident Commanders
California Federal Interagency Incident Management Teams

From: Jennifer Hinckley, Chair
California Wildland Fire Coordinating Group

Subject: 2021 Fire Season CWCG Expectations of Incident Commanders

Thank you for providing leadership especially with regard to safety and resiliency in an "unparalleled" year in our lifetimes. Not only was everyone in some form of shutdown starting in March of 2020, but you also had to figure out how to respond to incidents while maintaining safety guidelines from many agencies and organizations along with navigating the personal and individual responses to the risk of COVID-19 from each member of your team. Your leadership during this past year was unprecedented, we, the California Wildland Fire Coordinating Group, appreciate and respect each of you, and your teams for planning, flexing and planning again using remote, virtual, and socially distanced communication and coordination.

To maintain the highest standards of professionalism and leadership, the California Wildland Fire Coordinating Group (CWCG) has outlined principles by which all Incident Commanders (IC) are expected to adhere. These principles are listed in the 2021 California Federal Incident Management Team Operating Guidelines.

The mission of the California Interagency Incident Management Teams (CA IMT) is to provide Agency Administrators and land management agencies with highly qualified personnel to respond to emergency incidents within California and across the nation. It is the expectation of CWCG that ICs will demonstrate professionalism at all times and be personally committed to assuring the highest level of performance from their team and its individual members.

CWCG expects that all IMTs will strive to create a diverse, inclusive workforce and a harassment free work environment. Harassment based upon an individual's sex, race, ethnicity, national origin, age, religion, or any other legally protected characteristics will not be tolerated. Of particular concern is sexual harassment, an egregious form of prohibited harassment and a form of sex discrimination. Sexual harassment includes unwelcome conduct such as sexual advances, requests for sexual favors or dates, unwelcome remarks about an individual's appearance, discussions, remarks, or jokes of a sexual nature, and other verbal or physical harassment of a sexual nature. All cases will be reported to the appropriate agency administrator in alignment with specific agency protocols and directives. IMTs need to be proactive to understand reporting processes PRIOR to incidents.

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When a decision is made to engage in any fire management activity, employees are exposed to significant hazards. We ask that IMTs utilize a risk management process to continually weigh/evaluate the values at risk against the safety and exposure of fire personnel and the public, the cost of implementation, and the availability of resources.

The sustainability of CA IMTs continues to be a concern. We are still experiencing shortages of available full time Federal and Local Government personnel to fill critical command and general staff positions. The lack of trainees is a severe challenge and threatens our ability to roster the full complement of IMTs that California and the rest of the nation depends on. CWCG and Agency Administrators expectations include utilization of the Federal Priority Trainee List to provide opportunities, particularly on complex incidents for completion of position task books.

To be successful as Incident Commanders, it is important to make time to establish positive working relationships with the Agency Administrators you support. We expect this relationship to include establishing clear expectations, early in the incident, that describe incident objectives, desired outcomes and a process for evaluation. ICs should also develop an understanding with Agency Administrators regarding how coordination and communications with affected stakeholders will be completed. Please ensure that you share the IMT evaluation form with the Agency Administrators at your Inbrief meeting and articulate clear metrics upon which you and your team will be evaluated.

Incident Commanders need to be mindful of the internal costs of IMT members and incident related support costs, including personnel time. Agency administrators may require documentation of cost savings measures. It is the expectation of CWCG that IMTs will document expenditures appropriately on all incidents and be fully prepared for any resulting cost share or cost apportionment measures.

During closeout procedures of the incident, ICs will obtain an evaluation from the hosting unit. This evaluation will be submitted GACC DOI Emergency Operations Coordinator or the USDA Assistant Director for Operations within two weeks of demobilization. The DOI EOC or USFS AD for Operations will then forward the evaluation to the CWCG Operations Committee Chair. A standard template for team evaluations is located in Appendix B of the 2021 California Federal Incident Management Team Operating Guidelines.

Continue to reference the California Cooperative Fire Management and Stafford Act Response Agreement (CFMA) 2018-2023, which includes important items relative to the payment for structure defense as well as templates for cost share.

CWCG will be directly involved with the IMTs during the 2021 fire season. While individual fire leadership visits are normal during an incident, these individuals may also be representing CWCG during their visit.

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In conclusion, CWCG emphasizes that safety of firefighters and the public has always been and will always be our main priority on every incident.

Thank you again for your continued commitment and long standing dedication to incident management.