



Great Plains Interagency Dispatch Center
8123 South Hwy 16
Rapid City, SD 57702

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Version: 1.0

Date: April 2, 2020

Subject: Initial Attack within the Great Plains Zone during the Covid-19 Pandemic

Discussion: On March 27, 2020 the GPC Operations committee was tasked by the Board of Directors with recommending measures that responding agencies within the Great Plains Zone could take to reduce the potential for large fire growth and the associated need to order additional resources and Incident Management Teams. The overall objective of these measures would be to minimize additional resource needs from inside or outside the zone and thus reduce the potential for firefighter exposure to the Covid-19 virus.

The Committee held a conference call on Monday March 30th and came to consensus on the following:

- No changes to the run cards are necessary at this time. The run cards are science-based and have been crafted to provide aggressive initial attack and limit large fire growth. They provide for an efficient use of local resources under a range of weather and fuel conditions.
- While the run cards are primarily intended as a tool for dispatchers, the Board should consider providing additional direction for the Duty Officers, Fire Management Officers, and Incident Commanders who will be making the strategic and tactical decisions necessary to provide effective initial and extended attack while minimizing potential Covid-19 exposure to firefighters.

The Great Plains Board of Directors recommends agencies implement the following guidelines effective immediately:

- Make every effort to ensure initial attack capability is maintained in order to limit the potential for large fire growth. Maintain open lines of communication with agency cooperators, county Fire Coordinators, County Emergency Managers, and local Fire Chiefs to determine whether mutual aid resources are available. As community transmission of the virus peaks in the zone over the next several months, fewer mutual aid resources may be available. Agencies must be able to work together to fight fire aggressively while providing for firefighter and public safety.
- Conversely, on small fires with low spread potential limit the number of resources responding when it is appropriate. Consider staging responding resources at a location close to the reported smoke until the first arriving unit is on scene and can give a size-up and determine resource needs. Release resources not necessary for control of the incident.
- Carry disinfecting wipes, hand sanitizer, and rubber gloves in all fire vehicles. Brief crews on the importance of using these products while refueling vehicles.
- Disinfect mobile radios, tablets, GPS units, and other shared electronic devices after use.
- Disinfect vehicles and fire equipment in accordance with CDC guidelines:
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/organizations/cleaning-disinfection.html>
- Continue to use Move Up and Cover SOPs that are in place, but maintain open communication between the Duty Officer and Dispatch to determine if moving resources is not necessary based on conditions.

- Although After Action Reviews remain an essential tool for improving our programs, they should not be conducted face to face at this time.

The Board also recommends the following as fire season progresses:

- Consider opportunities for augmenting aviation assets available for initial attack as local fire indices dictate. If fire activity nationwide permits, consider whether the Black Hills Helitack should be kept in the zone to support initial attack.
- Consider the use of pre-identified strike teams or task forces for initial attack. If each of these strike teams was created from the one agency's resources, the potential for virus exposure could be reduced.