

Southeast Arizona Zone

Staffing Plan

May 2023

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Southeast Arizona Dispatch Zone

Staffing Plan

Introduction

A. Purpose

This Staffing Plan is intended to provide day-to-day guidance for decisions regarding the “degree of readiness” of initial attack (IA) resources. The Staffing Level (SL) is used as a basis to make daily internal fire operations decisions affecting our agency personnel. At each SL, this plan identifies:

- *Daily staffing*
- *Draw-down levels*
- *Step-up actions*

This Plan will function most effectively when decisions are made in preparation for escalating fire danger and potential fire activity. Waiting until the day of a critical event during extreme fire danger will prove this plan ineffective.

“You need a fire danger system that will help you make a judgment decision today on what kind and number of fires you can expect tomorrow.” (Lancaster, 2004)

B. Terminology

a. Staffing Index

The Staffing Index is the selection of an NFDRS output (ERC, BI, IC, SC) to provide the basis to calculate the Staffing Level.

b. Staffing Level

Staffing Level is the bottom line of fire-danger rating and can be thought of as a “readiness” level. Staffing Levels are expressed as numeric values where 1 represents the low end of the fire danger continuum and 5 at the high end. Staffing Level is intended to provide fire managers with day-to-day (short-term) decision support regarding staffing of suppression resources. Staffing Level can be used to determine when additional workforce and resources may be necessary to ensure appropriate staffing in response to escalating fire danger.

c. Preparedness Level

Preparedness Levels often get confused with Staffing Levels. Staffing Levels only consider fire danger, while Preparedness Levels incorporate additional items, such as number of fires, live fuel moisture, and resources committed. Additionally, Staffing Levels are intended to help with short-term decisions, while Preparedness Levels incorporate stable variables to help with long-term decisions, such as the need to request severity funding or activation of public-use restrictions.

d. Step-up Plan

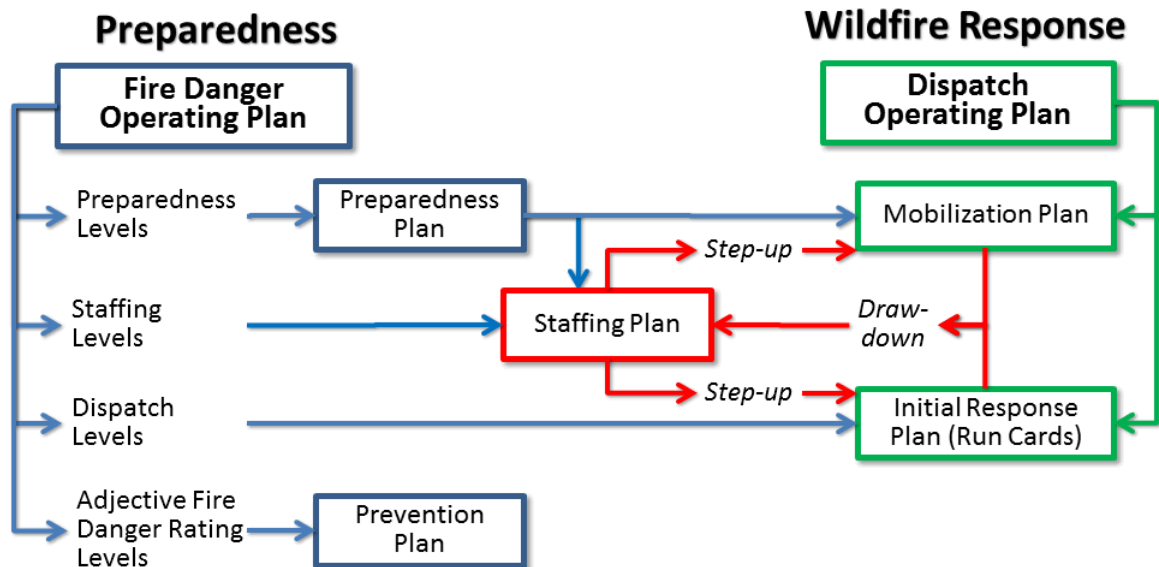
A Step-up Plan includes supplemental preparedness actions designed to enhance the unit's fire management capability during short periods (usually one burn period in anticipation of wind events, dry cold fronts, and lightning events) where normal staffing cannot foreseeably meet initial attack, prevention, or detection needs.

e. Draw-Down Level

“Draw-Down” is the degree of response capabilities of an agency due to the impact of emergency activity within their home jurisdiction and/or their commitment of resources to the mutual aid system for incident response outside of their jurisdiction. Draw-down is expressed as either (1) the predetermined number/type of suppression resources, or (2) the percentage of remaining capacity of suppression resources that are required to maintain viable initial attack (IA) capability.

C. Policy and Guidance

Policy and guidance regarding the development of Staffing Plans can be found in chapter 10 of the *Interagency Standards for Fire & Aviation Operations* (Red Book). Agency directives and interagency guidance may require numerous unit plans and guides to meet fire preparedness and wildfire response objectives. Some of these plans and guides are inter-related; one or more plans/guides provide the basis for other plans/guides. The Staffing Plan is an operational plan tiered from the Fire Danger Operating Plan as shown below:



D. Staffing Levels

Staffing Levels can be derived directly from the Weather Management Information System (WIMS), or preferably, from an analysis of historical weather observations and fire occurrence data using the FireFamilyPlus software to determine fire business thresholds.

1. Staffing Index

This plan is based upon the following Staffing Index: Burning Index and uses five (5) decision classes (Staffing Levels 1 through 5; see Tables 1-6).

Over the course of the 2013 - 2022 analysis period for the Sonoran FDRA, the historical fire occurrence shows 76% of all unplanned ignitions being classified in the Miscellaneous category (Cause Class 9). This FDRA also shows 50% of all recorded fires being in the Class A category (<0.25 acres) and 33% are in the Class B category (0.26-9.9 acres). The data for this FDRA also shows that 86% of all recorded fire days experience one fire per day and 12% of all fire days experience 2 fires per day.

Over the course of the 2013 - 2022 analysis period for the Desert Grassland FDRA, the historical fire occurrence shows 60% of all unplanned ignitions being classified in the Miscellaneous category (Cause Class 9) and 26% of all unplanned ignitions were recorded as being caused by lightning (Cause Class 1). This FDRA also shows 30% of all recorded fires being in the Class A category (<0.25 acres) and 33% are in the Class B category (0.26-9.9 acres). The data for this FDRA also shows that 78% of all recorded fire days experience one fire per day and 15% of all fire days experience 2 fires per day.

Over the course of the 2013 - 2022 analysis period for Forest Woodland FDRA, the historical fire occurrence shows only 56% of all unplanned ignitions being caused by lightning. The remaining 85% of all ignitions are recorded as human-caused; 21% are recorded as Class 4 (Campfires), and 19% are recorded as Class 9 (Miscellaneous). This FDRA also shows 60% of all recorded fires being in the Class A category (<0.25 acres) and 21% are in the Class B category (0.26-9.9 acres). The data for this FDRA also shows that 88% of all recorded fire days experience one fire per day and 7% of all fire days experience 2 fires per day.

2. Determination of Staffing Levels

Sonoran FDRA										
BI Decision Thresholds	0-11		12-26		27-39		40-48		49+	
Significant Fire Potential Forecasted High Risk Day/Event (Y/N)	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes
Staffing Level	SL 1		SL 2		SL 3		SL 4		SL 5	

Table 1a. Sonoran FDRA Staffing Level Matrix – Fuel Model Y, Burning Index, Fire Season (March 1st – August 31st).

Desert Grasslands FDRA										
BI Decision Thresholds	0-17		18-27		28-38		39-48		49+	
Significant Fire Potential Forecasted High Risk Day/Event (Y/N)	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes
Staffing Level	SL 1		SL 2		SL 3		SL 4		SL 5	

Table 1b. Desert Grasslands FDRA Staffing Level Matrix – Fuel Model Y, Burning Index, Fire Season (March 1st – August 31st).

Forest/Woodland FDRA										
BI Decision Thresholds	0-12		13-18		19-30		31-36		37+	
Significant Fire Potential Forecasted High Risk Day/Event (Y/N)	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes
Staffing Level	SL 1		SL 2		SL 3		SL 4		SL 5	

Table 1c. Forest/Woodland FDRA Staffing Level Matrix – Fuel Model Y, Burning Index, Fire Season (March 1st – August 31st).

E. Draw-Down

Draw-down is the predetermined number and type of suppression resources that are required to maintain viable initial attack (IA) capability at either the local or geographic area. The probability of initial attack success is contingent upon the availability of suppression resources during periods of high fire danger. Drawdown resources are considered unavailable outside the local or geographic area for which they have been identified. Drawdown is intended to:

- *Ensure adequate fire suppression capability for local and/or geographic area managers; and*
- *Enable sound planning and preparedness at all management levels.*

1. Factors Affecting Draw-Down

Draw-down levels can change dramatically in a short period of time. A few factors which can affect staffing and resource commitment/availability include the following:

a) Response (or Dispatch) Level

Staffing Levels have a direct effect on the ability to send pre-determined suppression resources to wildland fires, depending upon the Response Level (and vice versa). Even under normal threat levels, a routine call for service can deplete the availability of a unit's resources and result in a degree of drawdown. If an incident becomes prolonged or requires the commitment of resources beyond the initial response, the agencies capabilities can be affected.

b) Unit Size

The size of an agency has a direct impact on its ability to manage its drawdown status. The deeper resource pool allows more flexibility for maintaining adequate coverage within the home jurisdiction. Agencies of medium to smaller size can be challenged to maintain geographical coverage at times of increased emergency activity. In the case of some smaller agencies, a single resource committed to an incident can result in extreme drawdown and challenge their ability to meet their basic jurisdictional coverage responsibilities.

c) 5-day Versus 7-day Resource Staffing

When considering the full capacity of a unit, we include all personnel and resources. For ground resources (engines, dozers, water tenders) and overhead (FOS, ICs, Dispatchers, FMOs, AFMOs, Duty Officers, Resources Advisors, etc.), the daily operating capacity is typically a fraction of the full capacity due to staffing limitations and scheduling days off. Therefore, the "daily" capacity is used as the benchmark for draw-down levels unless a unit has sufficient personnel to keep a resource operational 7 days per week. The 5-day staffing is usually 65% to 75% of the full 7-day staffing (at 100%). For purposes of this plan, a base-line of 70% will be used for daily staffing of ground resources and overhead.

Aviation resources are typically under contract during the fire season to be

available 7-days per week. Aviation resources are highly mobile and will respond to fire activity with the greatest need; often, outside the local jurisdiction. Therefore, aviation resources are not included in the determination of staffing levels in this plan.

d) Geographic Prioritization and Political Influences

A larger jurisdictional footprint can allow for an internal ability to reassign resources from geographical areas that may not be affected by immediate threat or demand to others that may be in critical need of resources to address increased threat or activity levels. With calculated pre-planning and policy decisions, these agencies may opt to allow one area or region to operate in a low level of drawdown while it reinforces the available resource pool in another area where an increased level of activity is anticipated. These agencies typically employ a predetermined matrix of acceptable resource adjustments to balance real or anticipated response requirements. The complexities of political interaction between jurisdictions need to be managed in a manner that is beneficial to all agencies.

e) Interagency Cooperation & Commitment

Most wildland fire emergency communication centers provide dispatch services to multiple agencies. When multiple agencies respond to incidents on each other's jurisdiction – usually based on the closest available resource(s) – coordination amongst the affected agencies is essential to maintain interagency relationships and provide effective and efficient response to incidents.

f) Multiple Fires

Maintaining capacity to respond to a reported incident is the intended outcome of a Staffing Plan. However, when more than one incident occurs concurrently within the respective unit's response area, a unit's capacity is certainly diminished or exhausted.

F. Determination of Draw-down Levels

Local drawdown is established by the local unit and implemented by the Tucson Interagency Dispatch Center (AZ-TDC). The AZ-TDC office will notify the Geographic Area Coordination Center (GACC) of local drawdown decisions and actions.

1. Draw-down Resources

- Applicable to all draw-down resources
 1. Available to respond to any wildland fire within the local Dispatch Area
 2. Enroute within 30-minutes from base location
- Engines - Definition of a Draw-down Resource
 1. Type-3, Type-4 or Type-6 Wildland Fire Engines
 2. NWCG Engine Standards
- Squads – Definition of Draw-down Resource
 1. Squad – Minimum of 5 including one FFT1

2. Draw-down Actions

In the fire service, the term draw-down is generally used to describe the level of commitment of an agency's resources at a certain point in time. Most importantly, it defines the agency's ability to perform its basic service levels. Once a level has been reached where basic service levels cannot be provided, actions should be taken to "step up" the capacity to a level sufficient to provide anticipated services. The following table of supplemental preparedness actions and authorized funding provides this unit direction to make decisions in response to fluctuating draw-down levels.

Appendix A – Recommended Staffing Actions

A. Resource	Recommended Leadership and Duty Officer Staffing				
	SL 1	SL 2	SL 3	SL 4	SL 5
Unit Level					
Agency Leadership FMO or Deputy (with Duty Officer qualifications) Duty Officer (DIVS, ICT3, or RXB2 Qualified) ¹	1 Required	1 Required	1 Required	2 Required to provide 7-day coverage	2 Required to provide 7-day coverage
Minimum Unit Duty Officer Qualification	DIVS and ICT3 or RXB2	DIVS and ICT3 or RXB2	DIVS and ICT3 or RXB2	DIVS and ICT3 or RXB2	DIVS and ICT3 or RXB2
District Level					
District Duty Officer (TFLD, ICT3, or RXB2 qualified) ²	3 Required on Forest	3 Required on Forest	Required	Required	Required
Engine and IA Modules ³	Zoned – Minimum of 3 Modules on Forest	Zoned – Minimum of 3 Modules on Forest	1-2 per District	2 per District	2-3 per District
Minimum District Duty Officer Qualification	TFLD and ICT3 or RXB2	TFLD and ICT3 or RXB2	TFLD and ICT3 or RXB2	TFLD and ICT3 or RXB2	TFLD and ICT3 or RXB2

Table 4. Recommended Duty Officer and Leadership Staffing.

¹A trainee Duty Officer (DO) may be assigned provided the person, at one time, has been qualified in at least one of the minimum NWCG qualifications and have an open position task book for the remainder and must be supervised by a qualified DO. The trainee DO should remain in communications with the DO but does not have to be co-located.

² A trainee district level DO may be assigned provided the person at one time has been qualified in at least one of the minimum NWCG qualifications and have an open position task book for the remainder and must be supervised by a qualified DO. The trainee DO should remain in communications with the qualified DO but does not have to be co-located.

³ For the purpose of staffing, a Module is defined as a minimum of 3 personnel, one of which is a qualified single resource boss, or an Engine, Helitack, or Handcrew meeting minimum requirements based on resource typing.

Table 5. Staffing Level Recommended Actions.

Resource/Action Item	SL 1	SL 2	SL 3	SL 4	SL 5
Agency Leadership or Duty Officer	5 Day	5 Day	7 Day	7 Day	7 Day
District Leadership or Duty Officer	5 Day	5 Day	7 Day	7 Day	7 Day
Initial Attack Resource Staffing Days	5 Day	5 Day	5 or 7 Day	7 Day	7 Day
Patrols following high-risk events (Lightning, high visitation days, etc.)	No	No	Consider	Yes	Yes
Helicopter Resource Staffing	Available National	Available National	Consider restricting aircraft to Local Availability	Consider restricting aircraft to local availability.	Consider restricting aircraft to local availability; Consider ordering severity helicopters and crews
Aerial Detection	No	No	Consider aerial recon flights following lightning storms.	Consider aerial recon flights following lightning activity	Consider aerial recon flights following lightning storms
Prescribed Burning	Permitted with appropriate AA approvals.	Permitted with appropriate AA approvals.	Permitted with appropriate AA approvals.	Consider canceling planned Rx fire treatments.	Consider canceling planned Rx fire treatments.

Table 5. Staffing Level Recommended Actions (continued)

Action Item	SL 1	SL 2	SL 3	SL 4	SL 5
Managed fire to meet resource objectives			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review resource objectives when considering managing natural ignitions. Consider Zone PL, Geographic Area PL, and suppression resource availability. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review resource objectives when considering managing natural ignitions Consider Zone PL, Geographic Area PL, and suppression resource availability. Discuss potential resource impacts with resource specialists. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider implementing full suppression actions. Discuss potential resource impacts with resource specialists.
Project Work	Yes	Yes	Yes	Consider Postponing	No
Extended hours and/or additional resources activated due to Red Flag Warnings; lightning activity; or increased recreational activity on public lands.	No	Consider	Consider	Yes	Yes

Table 5. Staffing Level Recommended Actions (continued).

Resource/Action Item	SL 1	SL 2	SL 3	SL 4	SL 5
Type 3 IC on Standby (In addition to Forest and Zone Leadership)	N/A	N/A	Consider	1	1-2
Line Officer Briefings from DO or Fire Leadership	As Needed	As Needed	Weekly	Daily	Daily
Prevention	Signing	Signing	Signing & Field Contacts	Field Contacts Consider augmenting Prevention Staffing	Consider Augmenting Prevention Staffing
Fire Information	Normal	Normal	Press Release	Consider Dedicated PIO	Consider Information Team
LEO Staffing	Normal	Normal	Normal	Consider Augmenting LEO Staffing	Consider Augmenting LEO Staffing