



# Southwest Area Multi-Agency Coordinating (MAC) Group Operating Guide

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## Introduction

The Southwest Area Multi-Agency Coordinating Group (SW MAC) Operating Guide provides detailed guidance on the procedures and processes that guide SW MAC activities, its relationship with the Southwest Coordination Center (SWCC), affected Agencies, the National Multi-Agency Coordinating Group (NMAC), Local Multi-Agency Coordination Groups (LMAC), Incident Management Teams (IMTs), and Dispatch Centers when critical fire danger or heavy resource mobilization requires continuous, daily interaction between agencies, and resource allocation may be an issue.

Each Geographic Area Coordination Center (GACC) establishes priorities for their incidents and wildland fires and reports this information to the National Interagency Coordination Center (NICC). When competition for wildland fire resources occurs among GACCs, the NMAC at the National Interagency Fire Center will establish national priorities and confirm drawdown levels.

Multi-agency coordination between wildland fire protection agencies is an ongoing process in the SW Area. The fire program managers of the various state and federal agencies involved in wildland fire protection meet regularly as the Southwest Coordinating Group (SWCG). This group serves as a forum to implement policy, direction, and coordination in the states of Arizona, New Mexico, and portions of Oklahoma and Texas, through a 2024-2029 Memorandum of Understanding: <https://gacc.nifc.gov/swcc/swcg/index.htm>

During periods of high fire activity or critical resource shortages, the SWCG activates the SW MAC. Typically, this occurs upon moving from Preparedness Level 3 to 4.

## Mission

The SW MAC provides a forum to discuss actions to be taken to ensure that an adequate number of resources are available to meet anticipated needs and to allocate those resources most efficiently during periods of heavy use or shortage. The SWA MAC Group activation occurs at Preparedness Levels 4-5 as per the Southwest Area Preparedness Level Plan which can be found in the [Southwest Interagency Standards for Resource Mobilization](#) Chapter 10.

Multi-Agency Coordination will ensure coordinated:

- Resource allocation, acquisition, and movement.
- Prioritizing critical needs and incident prioritization.
- Contingency planning.
- Federal and State incident response.
- Information provided to media and agency leadership.
- Identification and resolution of issues common to some or all agencies.

The single overriding fire management priority is the protection of human life. In setting Southwest Area (SWA) priorities and drawdown levels, the following criteria will be considered:

- Protecting values at risk to include communities and community infrastructure, other property and improvements, and natural and cultural resources.
- Maintaining initial action capability.
- Address agency fire management objectives in resource allocation.
- Support to other national response needs (National Response Framework).

## **SW MAC Membership**

The SW MAC consists of:

- SWCG members, or their designated alternate
- SWCC Center Manager and/or Deputy
- MAC Group Coordinator (MCCO)
- MAC Group Support Specialists
- Agency Administrators/Executives (invited as applicable)

## **SW MAC Authorities**

SW MAC Members are authorized through a Delegation of Authority from their respective Agency Executives to serve on the SWCG, which allows them to commit their agency to actions agreed upon during SW MAC deliberations.

### **Southwest Coordination Center, Center Manager**

The SWCC Center Manager, through SWCC as the GACC, has the authority to move resources across agency and zone boundaries to meet preparedness, incident, and fire management needs of the participating agencies. Such movement is limited to actions specified in the SWCG Operating Guide and the Southwest Interagency Standards for Resource Mobilization. The SW MAC shall be notified of resource movements.

### **Alternate SW MAC Members**

When an agency's fire program manager is not able to serve with the SW MAC, their alternate should have a delegation of authority from their Executive.

### **Non-Wildland Fire Representatives**

The SW MAC may also host representatives from other agencies with jurisdictional responsibilities not represented by one of the primary SW MAC agencies. The need for these representatives will be reviewed and agreed to by the SW MAC.

## **Roles and Responsibilities**

### **Agency Executives**

- Supports SW MAC decisions, including those that direct reassignment of resources.
- Collaborates with other Executives; resolves disagreements between the Agencies.

## **SWCG Chair**

- Convene SW MAC.
- Works with the SW MAC Coordinator and SWCC Center Manager to facilitate meetings and help resolve issues.
- Identifies MCCO.

## **All SW MAC Members**

Before activation:

- Review and revise the SW MAC Plan, as required.
- Recommend SW MAC Coordinator and Support Specialists.

During activation, collaboratively:

- Identifies issues requiring immediate action.
- Contributes their agency's perspective during meetings/conference calls.
- Establishes priorities for allocation of incident resources.
- Recommends action on identified critical needs.
- Participates in resource contingency planning.
- Supports and implements NMAC recommendations or guidance.
- Re-allocates resources between incidents as necessary.
- Initiates special actions to alleviate resource shortages to meet anticipated demands.
- Keeps agency administrators and cooperating partners informed of the current and anticipated incident(s) status and SW MAC decisions.
- Identifies Media/VIP needs.

## **SWCC Center Manager**

- Assists the SW MAC Coordinator in MAC activation.
- Recommends issues needing SW MAC action.
- Works with staff to assemble intelligence information to support MAC activities, to include, but not limited to: resources committed (ICS-209 and IROC reports), outstanding resource orders and unable to fill status, resources available and projected, projected need by the incident, etc.
- Assists the MCCO in archiving all SW MAC permanent records.

## **SW MAC Coordinator (MCCO), as delegated (see also attachment 4)**

- Gathers appropriate intel, identifies issues, and recommends solutions to the SW MAC.
- Completes draft allocation, incident information, and incident prioritization charts before meetings.
- Ensures adequate and timely identification of Support Specialists needed to support SW MAC activities.
- Coordinates the work of both the SW MAC Support Staff and Decision Support Team Specialists, as delegated by the SWCG Chair.
- Acts as a facilitator of SW MAC meetings.

- Documents and distributes SW MAC decisions.
- Works with the SWCC Center Manager to maintain and archive the permanent records of SW MAC activities.
- Oversight is provided by the SW MAC Chair.
- Ensures SW MAC key decisions are documented and archived.

### **SW MAC Support Specialists**

Individual SW MAC Support Staff Specialists will be activated as needed. These positions may include, but are not limited to:

#### **Aviation**

- Coordinates with the SWCC Center Manager and SW MAC Coordinator to evaluate intelligence information and make recommendations to the SW MAC on the placement and allocation of aviation resources.
- Works closely with SW MAC Safety and incident aviation to provide aviation safety teams where needed.
- Maintains communication channels between incident aviation personnel, agency aviation managers, and the SW MAC.
- Tracks aviation resources - By Incident (On order, filled/unfilled, critical shortages).

#### **Fire Information**

- Works closely with IMT Information Officers to ensure good coordination and awareness exists between IMTs and SW MAC.
- Coordinates with SW MAC on SES/Executive visits to SW incidents.
- Provide intelligence and support when national media interest is high and/or when VIP are scheduled to occur.

#### **Logistics**

- Works closely with IMTs on any logistics concerns to include resource and cache shortages, critical supply needs.
- Coordinates with SWA caches on any issues or concerns.
- Assists dispatch centers with issues on IMT initial ordering as applicable.

#### **Operations**

- Operations has a separate Delegation of Authority from the SWCG established in Preparedness Level 3-5 to govern all crew movements and assist SWCC in resource allocation.
- Works closely with the IMT Operations Section, SWA Decision Support, and SWCC to obtain the most current information on resource commitments, needs, and availability.
- Makes recommendations to the SW MAC on how to allocate or re-allocate critical resources.
- Tracks critical resources - By Incident (On order, filled/unfilled, critical shortages).

## Planning

- Maintains the status summary for current project fires requiring prioritization.
- Provides administrative support to the SW MAC Coordinator and the SW MAC in general.
- Provides maps of incidents for SW MAC support.
- Maintains the SW MAC documentation package.
- Wherever applicable, supervises the Documentation Unit Leader, Situation Unit Leader, and/or Resource Unit Leader that may be assigned to SW MAC Decision Support Team functions.

## Safety/Medical

- Monitors the overall safety situation for the SWA.
- Makes recommendations to the SW MAC Coordinator or the SWCG Chair on the activation of SAT/FAST, ASTAT, etc.
- Coordinates safety conference calls among incidents to identify and address safety concerns from the field.
- Serves as the point of contact for activated ground safety teams.
- Coordinates and/or supports incident medical/illness-related issues.

## SW MAC Decision Support Team (DST)

The purpose of the DST is to assist the SW MAC, MCCO, and deployed IMTs, by providing technical support to inform decision-making. The DST will be assigned to the SW MAC as needed and may include SWCC PS, FBAN, LTAN, SOPL, and/or GISS.

The DST provides technical analysis and intelligence to the SW MAC, such as:

- Current and emerging incident intelligence
- Current and expected weather
- Modeled Fire Behavior/Values-At-Risk/Safety Considerations
- Incident Prioritization Score
- GACC Preparedness Level

## DST Core Responsibilities:

- Supports MCCO and participates in SW MAC meetings.
- Creates a draft prioritization of incidents based on relative intelligence including both near and long-term assessments evaluation of emerging incidents with potential scenarios, and recommendations of daily Preparedness Levels.
- Provides enhanced visual displays of data and incident intelligence at the regional scale for rapid assessment by SW MAC members. This will facilitate a swift transfer of information, inform SW MAC discussions/decisions, and

allow SW MAC members to quickly obtain Situational Awareness on the current GACC priorities.

- Supports incidents with fire modeling and decision support as appropriate.

### **Dispatch Center Managers / Local MAC Chairs**

- Provides intelligence and information to support SW MAC activities as necessary.
- Implements actions associated with SW MAC decisions.

### **Complex Incident Management Teams**

- Provides complete information on the SW MAC IC Reporting Form.
- Participates in IC portion of SW MAC meetings/conference calls.
- Assists in the timely reallocation of resources in coordination with the SWCC.
- Implements actions associated with SW MAC decisions as appropriate.

### **Pre/Post-MAC Actions**

- **MAC Exercise** SWCG will conduct a pre-season MAC Exercise annually typically in March to ensure readiness and practice the established MAC process.
- **In Preparedness Level 3**, incident activity and resource movement may warrant that the SWCG holds weekly calls to plan for increased fire activities while continuing to work on routine interagency fire coordination business. The SWCG Chair is responsible for facilitating these calls, although an MCCO may also be involved in advance of a standing MAC if conditions are changing rapidly. While in PL3, if the predicted fire activity is expected to continue or escalate, the SWCG must identify/order an MCCO in preparation for MAC activation and facilitate the ordering of additional support specialists.

### **SW MAC Activation and Procedures**

- SW MAC will be activated upon moving from PL3 to PL4.
- SWCG Chair will contact the SWCG members.
- SW MAC will identify the MCCO and/or request SWCC to place an MCCO request.
- MCCO will work with SW MAC on Support Specialist assignments and needs.

### **SW MAC Daily Schedule**

- 0900 MT – Morning IC Meeting (SW MAC, Support Specialists, and ICs)
- 1300 MT– Draft Prioritization Meeting (Ops, SWCC/DST, MCCO)
- 1700 MT – MAC Meeting (SW MAC, Support Specialists, DST)

### **Meeting Management and Protocols**

- Roll call will always be conducted to ensure known participation (in any setting).

- SW MAC members, SWCC Staff, SW MAC Support Specialists, SW MAC DST, or others may be asked to provide situational awareness updates.
- An opportunity will be provided for all agencies to comment and identify issues.
- Side discussions will be limited, and electronic devices turned off to minimize distractions.
- When voting on MAC decisions, the roll call format will be followed.
- Only SW MAC members will collaborate on decisions.
- SW MAC will move to Executive Sessions as needed for sensitive discussions. Only SW MAC members will be allowed, and others will be asked to leave the meeting.

### **SW MAC Decision Model**

All issues brought before the SW MAC will be resolved by consensus and result in one of the four (4) following actions:

- **Option 1:** Make a collaborative decision and assign responsibility and expectations of implementation.
- **Option 2:** Delegate a decision with expectations of intended outcomes or results to an SW MAC member, the coordinator, or staff.
- **Option 3:** Defer the decision for consideration later (e.g., defer for more information or defer for further development of fire situation).
- **Option 4:** Determine that the issue is outside the scope of the SW MAC's responsibility and refer the issue to the appropriate organization or individual.

### **Incident Prioritization Overview**

#### **Sit 209**

- Dispatch Centers or CIMTs (if assigned and taken command) will submit ICS 209s in accordance with the established guidelines found in the [Southwest Interagency Standards for Resource Mobilization](#) Chapter 60.
- An ICS-209 for the incident must be received to be prioritized. This ensures incidents are prioritized based on information provided directly by the Incident Commander as official documents.
- Once a fire is 100% contained, it will no longer be listed on the SWA Daily Large Fire Priorities. Any requests for additional resources will be processed using normal incident ordering procedures.

#### **Process for SWA MAC Incident Prioritization**

- Incident prioritization is based on the ICS-209 information and information conveyed in the Morning IC Report/Southwest Area MAC IC Report Form. Submitted ICS 209s must be complete, accurate, and timely.
- Once the ICS-209s are received by the SWCC, the Intelligence Section will provide copies to the SWA MAC Group Coordinator.



- All CIMT and Type 3 Incident Commanders (to include T3 Ad hoc organizations) will complete a Southwest Area MAC IC Report and submit it daily to the SWA MAC Group Coordinator by 0800 MT.
- The SW MAC Coordinator will complete the SWCC Incident Prioritization Worksheet for all incidents that meet the prioritization requirements noted above. This serves as the main guiding factor for incident prioritization.
- The MAC Group reviews and validates incident priorities.

**Priority Decision Values at Risk Ranking Elements include:**

- Residences
- Infrastructure/High-value sites
- Commercial
- Historic/Cultural Resource Values
- Natural Resources
- Other Structures/Outbuildings
- Social, Economic, and Political Impacts/Concerns

Other considerations may not adequately be captured by the Incident Prioritization Worksheet, therefore the Total Priority Points alone, do not determine the Priority Ranking.

**Resource Allocation and Re-Allocation**

Initial Attack and emerging potential large fires are the highest priority for resource allocation. Keeping a new incident small is preferable, rather than having the incident become a large fire with the potential to have significant longer-term resource commitments. The SW MAC utilizes a resource allocation and re-allocation process that distributes resources among all incidents in the SWA based on orders placed, values at risk, and the number of operational shifts needed by a scarce resource to meet an incident's objective. When resource competition is high, even the highest priority incidents may not get all needs met. Incidents on the SWA Daily Large Fire Priorities are not the only incidents that will receive resources. If an incident is not one of the higher priority incidents on the SWA Daily Large Fire Priorities list, this does not mean the incident will not receive any resources.

**SW MAC Daily Incident Priorities and Decisions**

Decisions of the SW MAC will be disseminated to appropriate state and federal agencies by the SW MAC Coordinator and the Southwest Coordination Center through the coordination system. These decisions and priorities, as well as information about MAC resources, are posted on the Intelligence Operations page of the SWCC website.

- The SW MAC Chair or MCCO will share decisions with the NMAC Representative, especially if they are not on the call.
- The SWCC Center Manager will be the normal contact with NICC on any issues that have national coordination implications.
- Tactical or specific operational information, or other information that might be sensitive, will not be released. All such information must be approved for release by the SW MAC Coordinator, SW MAC Chair, and/or involved Agency Representative(s), as appropriate.

### **Modification of SW MAC Group Plan**

The SW MAC Group Plan will be reviewed annually by the SWCG and modified as necessary.

### **ATTACHMENTS (Available in SWA MAC Files)**

- **Attachment 1: Incident Prioritization Workbook**
  - Incident Information
  - Values at Risk Assessment
  - Critical Resource Allocation Assessment
  - Incident Ranking Table
- **Attachment 2: Incident Commander Reporting Form**
- **Attachment 3: MAC Daily Incident Priorities and Decision Document**
- **Attachment 4: SW MAC Coordinator, Delegation of Authority**