

Southwest Area Mobilization Guide
Chapter 20 – Administrative Procedures
Section 26 – Preparedness Levels

2007 DRAFT (11-1-07)

26.1 Overview of the Southwest Area Preparedness Level Plan

a. **Purpose.** All wildland protection agencies are directed to protect life, property, and the natural and cultural resources they manage. These requirements require careful attention to the availability and use of firefighting resources. A system has been established to determine the preparedness levels that all fire management agencies within the Southwest Area will use. These preparedness levels will provide for pre-suppression and suppression capabilities suited to fire hazard, risk, and the overall situation complexity.

This plan will serve four primary functions:

- To coordinate workforce and equipment needs for wildfire suppression and fire use activities.
- To insure that fire protection and fire use responsibilities do not exceed area wildland fire management capabilities, and that such use is coordinated with area and national suppression needs.
- To insure prescribed fire activities are in accordance with smoke management regulations.
- To coordinate fire management resource utilization under the National Response Plan.

Preparedness levels are basically dictated by:

- Condition of the fuels protected and their resultant burning characteristics.
- Existing and forecast weather conditions.
- Fire activity, prescribed and wildland, both within and outside the Southwest Area.
- Resource availability, within and outside the Southwest Area.

b. Definitions.

1. **Five Day Average Severity Curve.** The Energy Release Component (ERC), derived from representative fire weather stations through the area, are averaged over each 5-day period to obtain an areawide 5-day average severity curve.
2. **Wildland Fire.** Any non-structure fire, other than prescribed fire, that occurs in the wildland. This term encompasses wildfires and wildland fire use fires, all managed using the Appropriate Management Response.
3. **Wildland Fire Use.** The management of naturally ignited wildland fires to accomplish specific pre-stated resource management objectives in predefined geographic areas outlined in FMPs. Wildland Fire Use is not to be confused with “Fire Use.”
4. **Fire Use.** Wildland fire use or prescribed fire applications utilized to meet fuel hazard reduction and resource objectives.
5. **Prescribed Fire.** Any fire ignited by management actions to meet specific objectives. A written, approved prescribed fire plan must exist, and NEPA requirements must be met prior to ignition.

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c. **Fire Preparedness Level Determination Procedures.** The Southwest Coordination Center Director will establish the overall preparedness level for the Southwest Area, [but consult with the SWCG during PL III-V](#). The following criteria will [help](#) determine preparedness levels. National preparedness level requirements may require the area preparedness levels to be raised. (Reference Appendix I):

1. Current and long range forecasted weather effecting:
 - a. Current and forecasted fire behaviors/potential.
 - b. Current and trend of 5 day average fire severity for the Southwest Area.
 - c. Comparison of current and trend severities to the seasonal Southwest Area Fire Severity Curve.
 - d. Resource commitments to activities (i.e., Projects, Prescribed Fire, Wildfire, [NRP](#)).
2. Individual agency reports [of fire activity](#).
3. National Preparedness Level.
4. [Smoke and](#) air quality considerations.
5. Fire suppression resource availability.

d. **Using the Plan.** Each preparedness level requires specific actions, assigned to certain Southwest Area positions. When a planning level has been established, the responsible individuals are to carry out their assignments without further notification.

General Preparedness Level Descriptions. [\(this section deleted, as the descriptions are repeated at the start of each PL level below and there were inconsistencies. All elements defined here were added below\).](#)

26.2 Severity Index and Reporting Procedures

The Southwest Area Predictive Services Group [at SWCC](#) will monitor the predetermined considerations daily. When the window for Preparedness Levels I and II are exceeded, the Predictive Services Group Leader will notify the SWCC Center Director, who will evaluate the situation and determine, based on written criteria, the appropriate action. In Preparedness Level III, when the preparedness window is exceeded, the SWCC Center Director will notify the SWCG Chairperson of the situation. Each member of the Southwest Coordinating Group will personally be advised of the pending situation.

Each SWCG member will be responsible [for coordinating](#) the restrictions imposed by the preparedness level upon the lands within their [agency's](#) jurisdiction.

26.3 Preparedness Level Action Plan

26.3.1 PREPAREDNESS LEVEL I

- a. Fire danger in the area is low or moderate, with no more than two zones being high.

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- b. SW Area fire severity 5-day mean average consistently below 30.
- c. Fire activity within the Southwest Area is light, and large fires are of short duration. There is little or no commitment of Southwest Area and/or national resources. [No significant support to the National Response Plan.](#)
- d. Five to 10-day weather forecast does not predict a sustained significant increase in fire severity (i.e., Red Flag watches and warnings, frontal passages).
- e. National Preparedness Level is I or II. (See Appendix I)

Special Prescribed Fire Direction. [The contingency plan is the portion of the Prescribed Fire Plan that considers possible but unlikely events and the contingency resources and actions needed to mitigate those events. The contingency plan will establish trigger points or limits that indicate when additional holding resources and actions are needed. The RX Burn Boss will verify and document the availability of identified contingency resources and response time on day of implementation. If contingency resources availability falls below plan levels, actions must be taken to secure operations until identified contingency resources are replaced. Once a contingency resource is committed to a specific wildland fire action \(wildfire, wildland fire use, or prescribed fire\), it can no longer be considered a contingency resource and a suitable replacement contingency resource must be identified or the ignition halted. The dispatch center should be included in the list of planned contingency resources.](#)

Responsibility – PL-I

Action Items

Responsibility – PL-I	Action Items
<i>Southwest Coordinating Group</i>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Select Type 1 Incident Management Teams. 2. As needed, review the State Joint Powers agreements. 3. Review SWCC operating plan and delegate authority to the SWCC Center Director to carry them out. 4. Review and revise the Board operation plan.
<i>SWCC Center Director</i>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Review Southwest Coordination Center operating guide with the SWCG.

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2. Pre-position National Fire Radio Cache systems at Silver City and Prescott.

3. Pre-position Air Transportable Mobile Unit (ATMU) in Albuquerque.

4. As needed, assist the SWCG in the revision of operating plans under the State Joint Powers agreements.

5. Review operating plans for mobilization centers in the Southwest Area.

6. Review, revise, and develop memorandums of understanding between the Southwest Area and other areas as needed.

7. Follow-up with zones to assure pre-season agreements are completed, provide assistance where needed.

8. Assure the Southwest Area Operating Plan and Mobilization Guide are complete and updated.

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9. Assure flight following practices are followed.

10. Monitor weekly situation reports.

11. Notify NICC, Southwest Area Dispatch Zones, and the [SWCG](#) of any major incidents.

12. Participate in zone fire preparedness staff inspections.

13. Monitor resource availability.

Zone Coordinating Group

1. Select Type 2 Incident Management Teams.

2. As needed, review operating plans under the State Joint Powers agreements.

3. Review zone operating plan; delegate authority to the zone center manager to carry it out.

Zone Center Manager

1. Review Zone Coordination Center Operating Plan with the Zone Interagency Coordinating Group.

2. Assist Zone Interagency Coordinating Group in revision of the operating plan of the State Joint Powers agreements, as needed.

3. As needed, review operating guides for local mobilization centers.

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4. As needed, initiate zone Interagency Hotshot Crew and Southwestern Forest Fire Fighter Crew rotation schedules.

5. Develop and maintain seasonal fire severity charts.

6. Assure pre-season agreements are completed, provide assistance where needed.

7. Assure Zone Operating Plan is complete and updated.

8. Keep SWCC informed daily if prescribed fires are planned or occurring, and all resource commitments to these activities.

9. Notify SWCC and other Southwest zones of major incidents via SWC Mail Group in DMS.

10. Assure flight following practices are adhered to.

11. Prioritize fire suppression actions to optimize suppression effectiveness within the zone by using appropriate strategies.

12. Update weekly situation reports.

26.3.2 PREPAREDNESS LEVEL II

- a. Numerous zones are consistently in high fire danger.

- b. SW Area fire severity 5-day mean average is consistently between 30 and 45. Predictive Service's 10-day FW/FD outlook indicates 4-6 whole or partial Predictive Service Area's at Class 4 or 5 (VH or extreme).

- c. Numerous Class A, B, and C fires are occurring and a potential exists for larger fires of more than one burning period duration. Resources within the zones are adequate. [Potential exists for frequent mobilization of additional resources from other zones. Some minor support to the National Response Plan may be occurring.](#)

- d. National Preparedness Levels between I and IV. (See Appendix I)

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e. Five to 10-day weather forecast does not predict a sustained increase in fire severity (i.e., Red Flag watch and warnings, frontal passages, etc.)

Responsibility – PL-II	Action Items in addition to Level I
<i>Southwest Coordinating Group</i>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Initiate T1 IM Team Southwest on-call schedule. 2. Coordinate the issuance of press releases that highlight interagency current conditions and a brief outlook.
<i>SWCC Center Director</i>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. As needed, activate 7-day operation for SWCC. 2. Expand SWCC operations to provide proper staffing of the Resource and Intelligence desks to cover 13 to 16 hour Coverage, as needed.
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. Activate lead plane agreements. 4. Initiate submission of daily area situation report. 5. Compile and distribute resource availability within the Southwest Area, daily or weekly, as necessary. 6. Contact National Weather Service offices to activate twice daily Fire Weather Forecasts. 7. Initiate and maintain Area Severity Chart, SIT300 (overhead & crews), and SIT300 (aviation).
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 8. Utilize SWCC staff to perform and distribute pre-season risk assessment during periods of escalating risk going into the fire season.
<i>Zone Coordinating Group</i>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Determine activation of availability of Type 2 Incident Management Teams. 2. Consider activating an intelligence specialist(s) for zone activities. 3. Coordinate the issuance of press releases that highlight current interagency conditions and a brief outlook.
<i>Zone Center Manager</i>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Activate 7-day operation of the zone as requested by the center director.

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2. Expand zone coordination center operations to provide proper staffing as needed.
3. Assure management systems provide sufficient support to keep computers and telecommunications fully operational.
4. Compile and submit zone situation report daily or weekly, as necessary.
5. Initiate conference calls to members of the Zone Coordinating Group to discuss the situation. Frequency of conference calls and/or meetings to be determined by the Board.
6. Monitor Area Severity Index with increased attention in an upward trend.

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26.3.3 PREPAREDNESS LEVEL III

- a. Most zones experiencing high or greater fire danger.
- b. SW Area fire severity 5 day mean average is consistently between 46 and 59. Predictive Service’s 10-day FW/FD outlook indicates 7-9 whole or partial Predictive Service Area’s at Class 4 or 5 (VH or extreme).
- c. High potential exists of fires becoming class D and larger. [There is a potential for two or more units to experience incidents requiring a major commitment of area/national resources.](#) Numerous additional resources are being ordered through SWCC; competition exists for resources between zones. [Support of area resources to the National Response Plan may be moderate.](#)
- d. National Preparedness Level from I-IV. (See Appendix I)

Special Prescribed Fire Direction. Units considering prescribed fire activities must be prepared for the event that contingency resources may not be available when requested due to fire activity with the area. Constant communications must be maintained with the dispatch office.

Responsibility- PL-III

Action Items in addition to Level I & II:

Responsibility- PL-III	Action Items in addition to Level I & II:
<i>Southwest Coordinating Group</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Consider establishing interagency public information specialist(s) for SWCC on 24-hour basis as needed. 2. Initiate requests for severity funds. 3. Consider activation of MAC Group. 4. Consider funding and use of cooperative fire prevention/ education team(s) (NIMG 22.5.10).
<i>SWCC Center Director</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. As needed, operate SW Area Coordination Center on a 24 hour basis as needed. 2. Prioritize fire suppression actions to optimize suppression effectiveness by using appropriate logistical strategies. 3. Assure management systems provide sufficient support to keep computers and telecommunications fully operational. 4. Monitor the implementation of fire restrictions throughout the Southwest Area. 5. Monitor release of incident information through the SWCC. 6. Initiate conference calls to members of the SWCG to discuss the current situations. Frequency of conference calls and/or meetings to be determined by the Group. 7. Maintain one-half of contract helicopters within the Southwest Area for initial attack.

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8. Attempt to locate four heavy airtankers within the Southwest Area for initial attack.
 9. Maintain at least two hotshot crews per state for new start support.
 10. Activate a Fire Behavior Center in SWCC as needed, based upon need and severity.
 11. Coordinate teleconference with all zone center managers.
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12. Maintain daily communication/coordination calls with IC's on T1, T2, and Fire Use Teams on active incidents.
 13. Contact SWFF crew coordinator and determine seasonal availability dates of T2 crews.
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| <i>Zone Coordinating Group</i> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Initiate request for severity funds. 2. Consider implementation of fire restrictions within the zone. 3. Maintain close coordination of all fire use activities. |
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| <i>Zone Center Manager</i> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. As needed, operate zone coordination center on a 24-hour basis. 2. Through Zone Coordinating Group monitor the implementation of fire restrictions. 3. Prepare daily morning management briefing paper. |
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26.3.4 PREPAREDNESS LEVEL IV

- a. Numerous zones are experiencing very high or greater fire danger.
- b. SW Area fire severity 5-day mean average is consistently between 60 and 78. Predictive Service's 10-day FW/FD outlook indicates 10 or more whole or partial Predictive Service Area's at Class 4 or 5 (VH or extreme).
- c. Class D and larger fires are common. The potential exists to exhaust Southwest Area and national resources. [There is competition for area/national resources. Support to the National Response Plan may be causing competition for firefighting resources.](#)
- d. National Preparedness Levels I-V. (See Appendix I)
- e. Numerous periods of severe air stagnation are occurring in sensitive airsheds.

Responsibility – PL-IV

Action Items in addition to Level I - III

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| <i>Southwest Coordinating Group</i> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Notify NICC and all SW Area zone coordination centers of MAC Group members, telephone numbers. |
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2. Prioritize fire suppression actions to optimize suppression effectiveness within the SW Area. Encourage units to effectively utilize the Appropriate Management Response.
 3. Wildland Fire Use and prescribed fire applications can be continued or be initiated if the proposed action is approved by an agency at the Regional or State Office level. This approval must be based on an assessment of risk, impacts of the proposed actions on Area resources and activities, and include feedback from the SWCG. The SWCG members will provide information or perspectives to agencies wishing to proceed with or implement a Wildland Fire Use or prescribed fire application. The final decision to implement resides with the implementing agency.
 4. The Southwest Area MAC Group will manage the allocation of all Incident Management teams within the area.
- SWCC Center Director*
1. Request SWCG activate the MAC when multi-agency fire problems exist.
 2. Notify NICC and all SWA zone coordination centers when MAC Group is operational.
 3. Pre-position additional initial attack resources in strategic locations.
 4. Coordinate resource needs with SWCG /MAC.
 5. Coordinate interagency need for specific area closures.
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- Zone Coordinating Group*
1. Coordinate with agency heads the SWCG direction to carefully consider, and receive Regional or State Office approval, for any continuance of prescribed or wildland fire use fires.
 2. Determine interagency need for area closures and restrictions.
 3. Coordinate prescribed or wildland fire use activity suspensions.

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26.3.5 PREPAREDNESS LEVEL V.

- a. Several Zones are experiencing major fires, and critical national resources are exhausted. Additional firefighting resources and support are not available, or their arrival is delayed for multiple operational periods.
- b. Multiple Incident Management Teams are committed to incidents within the Southwest Area. Support to the National Response Plan may be high.
- c. Burning conditions are severe enough that control efforts are often compromised due to extreme spotting and/or fire behavior.
- d. The military may be tasked for assistance.

Responsibility – PL-V	Action Items in addition to Level I - IV
<i>Southwest Coordinating Group</i>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Add Military Liaison to MAC Group if military is activated 2. Pre-position Incident Management Teams as needed.
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. Take additional steps to assure that all line officers and Agency administrators are advised of all current and predicted activities.
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4. Conduct close monitoring of Southwest Area resources to assure that they are getting appropriate rest and recovery time.
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 5. Wildland Fire Use and prescribed fire application can be continued or initiated if the proposed action is recommended at the Regional or State Office level. The incident agency Representative will assess risk and impacts of the proposed actions and discuss with the SW MAC. This group will have an opportunity to provide information or perspectives to agencies wishing to proceed with or implement a WFU or prescribed fire application. The final decision to implement resides with the implementing agency.
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 6. Encourage Agency Administrators to make all non-critical fire qualified staff available for wildland fire support.
<i>SWCC Center Director</i>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Identify and staff additional staging areas for IMTs and other resources as needed.

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APPENDIX I

The following comparison chart will be used to assist the Southwest Area [Center Director](#) in determining the SW Area preparedness levels, based upon the national situation. [The SW PL level may be higher than the recommended minimum.](#)

National PL Level

**Recommended Southwest Area PL Level
 (minimum)**

I	II	III	IV	V
I	I	II	II	III

Note – Southwest Area preparedness levels are determined by the criteria in SW Mob Guide, Chapter 26.3. During periods of high fire danger/activity, the Southwest preparedness level may be higher than the National PL Level.