



Southwest Coordinating Group/Three Tier Committee



July 16, 2008

Directed to: Southwest Coordinating Group

From: Three-tier Dispatch Committee

Topic/Issue: Summary of Converting from Four-tier to Three-tier Fire Dispatching

Introduction: The SWCG has been directed by agency administrators through the Southwest Strategy Regional Executive Committee (SWS) to facilitate the transition of the remaining fourth-tier fire dispatch centers to three-tier fire dispatch centers to further increase safety and reduce risk to our firefighters. USFS, BLM and F&W are mandated to transition to three-tier. Although BIA and NPS are not mandated, they are strongly supportive of this change. The States of Arizona and New Mexico have supported this endeavor to the extent possible.

Background: The Three-tier committee was created in 2004 to study and come up with recommendations on how the Southwest Geographic Area could move fourth-tier dispatch offices to a three-tier concept. The committee initially met in February 2004, and discussed several options and alternatives to implement the three-tier concept. However, the momentum created during that initial meeting was short lived as the committee was inactive from 2004 through 2005. In 2006, the committee was revived and was tasked with accomplishing a formal letter to be sent out to line officers that were affected by the three-tier proposal. The letter required that each agency affected would formulate a transition plan of how they would move their four-tier dispatch office to a three-tier office. The letter sent to the various agencies created several alternatives and initiated actions that are currently underway throughout the Geographic Area in the transition of some offices.

Action: The overall mission of this committee was to conduct a study of the opportunities and propose changes to move the Southwest Geographic Area from a four-tier dispatch system to a safer, more efficient and effective three-tier organization. It should be noted that a significant amount of work was accomplished in 2007 and 2008 by several agencies to convert their Fourth-tier dispatch centers to Three-tier centers. Each agency involved should be commended for their hard work on seeing this endeavour through. Below is a table of initiated transition plans throughout the Southwest Geographic Area, and their status.

Table A.

Dispatch Name	Transition Plan	Action Taken	Status	Agencies in Transition
Arizona Interagency Dispatch Center	Yes	Yuma Dispatch moved to AIDC	Fully Operational	USFWS, AZSF, BLM, BIA
Southern Plains Fire	Yes	South Plains to Albuquerque Dispatch Center	Proposal for equipment to be procured and installed to connect Southern Plains with Albuquerque Dispatch or becoming stand-alone.	NPS
Pecos Valley Dispatch	Yes	Pecos Valley to Alamagordo Dispatch	Fully Operational	BLM, USFS, USFWS, NPS
White Mountain Dispatch	Yes	White Mtn. Dispatch move to Show Low, AZ	USFS moved dispatch operations to Show Low end of 11/07, w/ BIA possibly moving in future.	USFS, BIA
Phoenix Interagency Dispatch Center	Yes	Tonto Dispatch moving to Williams Gateway	Fully Operational	USFS, BIA
Four Corners Dispatch	No	Four Corners Committee initiated options for dispatch. Conversion to Taos Dispatch.	Fully Operational	BLM, USFS
Yuma Dispatch	Yes	Yuma Dispatch transitioned with AIDC.	Fully Operational	BLM, BIA, AZSF, USFWS
Prescott Dispatch	Yes	Prescott Dispatch lost BLM and BIA on the Colorado River. Prescott Dispatch became a stand-alone center.	USFS stand alone dispatch. Proposed plan is for the possibility of Prescott Center dispatching for local fire departments.	USFS
Safford Dispatch	Yes	Safford Dispatch transitioned to Tucson Dispatch.	Fully Operational	BLM, USFS

It is the intent of the Southwest Coordinating Group to facilitate these transitions by supporting these partnerships, assisting the ongoing three-tier transitions, and fostering future partnerships. It will be beneficial that the Three-Tier committee and the Dispatch committee in the future monitor these transitions and report on their success or short-comings to the SWCG annually or in a timeframe identified by the SWCG. It should be noted that the states of Arizona and New Mexico are not mandated to go three-tier. The state of Arizona, however, dispatches statewide resources from AIDC, which is a three-tier center. The state of New Mexico for the most part is dispatched out of established centers. The BIA is in support of moving all BIA agencies in both regions to a three tier dispatch organization in the future. Obstacles are funding for communication links for two-way radio communications, fair-share cost obligations to help the dispatch centers, and funding for staffing a position(s) at the dispatch center. Therefore, the BIA is taking small steps to move to a three-tier dispatch system where possible. Below is a list of BIA agencies and their status:

Table B.

Agency Name	Status	Possible Future Action
Navajo	Stand-alone	Move to Flagstaff
Jicarilla	Local dispatch	Move to Taos
Zuni	Local dispatch	Move to Navajo or Flagstaff
Northern Pueblos	Local dispatch	Move to Taos or Santa Fe
Truxton Canon	Local dispatch	Move to Williams
Papago	Local dispatch	Move to Tucson
Hopi	Local dispatch	Move to Flagstaff or Navajo

Recommendations:

The committee recommends that the actions listed in Table A continue and be supported to every extent possible by the SWCG. The committee also supports the BIA in their efforts to move forward with the three-tier issues and will continue to monitor the status of these possible moves.

Recommendations for future operations in regards to the southwest three tier situation include:

- Combining staff from the Three-tier committee with staff from the southwest Dispatch committee to implement future monitoring and evaluations of proposals. With turnover of staff from the Three-tier committee has resulted in significant short-comings in the monitoring of projects. By incorporating assistance from the Dispatch committee it will provide expertise with dispatching issues as well as alleviate staffing shortcomings associated with the Three-tier committee.
- In the fall of 2008 the Three-tier/ Dispatch committee members will review transitioned dispatch offices that are operational to observe and document any issues that have occurred during the fire season. The group will also review and assist where needed the Southern Plains transition as well as any BIA transitions and ensure that operations are consistent with agency standards.
- One issue that has evolved during the committee’s discussions with the various dispatch centers in Arizona is the need for a more geographic dispatching system. Currently, the State of Arizona dispatches all state resources, including local fire departments under agreement, from one single dispatch center located in Phoenix, Arizona (AIDC). The Three-tier/Dispatch committee along with the State of Arizona will continue to monitor and analyze this issue and determine the feasibility of converting some of the dispatching responsibility to various geographic dispatch centers across the state.

Kelly Castillo
 Three-Tier Committee Chair

