



TO: Erin Horsburgh, Chair, Fire Management Board
Frank Guzman, Chair, NWCG Executive Board
Josh Simmons, Chair, National Multi-Agency Coordinating Group

FROM: Jesse Bender, Chair, Incident Workforce Development Group

SUBJECT: The Agency Role in Implementation of Complex Incident Management Teams

Leadership and Support for Complex Incident Management

The implementation of a Complex Incident Management system will result in one configuration of Incident Management Team (IMT) for managing large, complex wildland fires. All existing Type 1 and 2 IMTs would be converted to Complex Incident Management Teams, with the ability to manage incidents at the Type 1 or 2 complexity level. This change requires commitment and coordination among the agencies, partners, and cooperators to align qualifications, expectations, and standards and to more efficiently manage the IMTs.

The Incident Workforce Development Group (IWDG) depends upon its representative members to initiate conversations and make decisions to enable change at all levels of the organization. Agency Administrators and executives must also actively engage in addressing these challenges and provide effective leadership for change. With the recent issuance of FMB Memo 21-001, Leadership and Support for Complex Incident Management, <https://www.nwcg.gov/sites/default/files/docs/eb-fmb-m-21-001.pdf>, the IWDG recommends issuance of agency-specific communication to ensure this change is widely understood and supported. This memo is intended to explain the new system and encourage support from agency leadership.

Actions Needed from Agency Administrators and Executives

Effective engagement of incident workforce issues requires a business environment that is supportive at all levels. Agency administrators and agency executives play a strategic role in creating an environment favorable to successful incident workforce management. Several critical actions were identified:

- Create agency administrator incentives for employee participation on IMTs.
 - Agency executives should commend Agency Administrators for allowing and even encouraging participation on IMTs. Achieving other priority resource management objectives should fall to a lower priority during critical fire response times. This should be a clear change in priorities supported at all levels.
 - Set IMT participation as a possible way to achieve leadership and management performance goals for all employees.
 - Incentivize participation and qualifications for non-fire employees, and identify opportunities to recognize fire qualifications and fire management positions as successional crosswalks within the agency.
- Rebuild local capacity that will support incident management teams.
 - Agency decisions to centralize finance, acquisition, fleet, and other support services force IMTs to bring that capability with them. This puts IMTs in direct competition for agency resources, particularly during the western fire season when agency fourth quarter accounting occurs.

- The Coordinating Group Advisory Council (CGAC) is already investigating remote situation units, remote decision support units, and other functional modules that can reduce capability gaps on IMTs. Incorporating this sort of management capability into local workforce planning will strengthen and sustain this effort.
- It takes several years to reach Command and General Staff (C&G) level, resulting in employees also holding high-level management positions in their day job while committing to IMTs. The competing demands and responsibilities make participation challenging. Mandatory retirement ages compound this situation for permanent fire employees.
- Develop the skills and tool sets necessary for scaling incident management appropriate to the incident.
- Build agency administrator capacity for managing a changing incident management/incident workforce environment.
- Collaborate with IMTs to establish mutual standard expectations for operations and engagement.

What Incident Management Experience Gives Back

The performance and benefits of IMT members extends beyond the fireline. Individual members of IMTs bring back valuable experience and skills to their local unit:

- IMT assignments allow employees to expand their communication, teamwork, and leadership skill sets beyond what they may be able to accomplish on their home unit or in their day job.
- The ability to apply the same initiative and problem-solving capability practiced for incident management and response to all management circumstances for mutually beneficial solutions.
- Fire experience and assignments provide holistic perspectives on resource management.
- Provide organizational management to unexpected or unique circumstances requiring a coherent and organized response.
- Experience in all-hazard communications and response. This includes recent mitigation and prevention efforts directly related to COVID-19. IMTs have been actively engaged in planning and responding to incidents and operations impacted by COVID-19.

Background

The challenge to staff Type 1 and 2 IMTs is only a partial indicator of a greater decline in incident management capability among the land management agencies and their partners and cooperators. The existing model for interagency IMTs was created in a different business environment. Critical challenges in rostering and managing IMTs is leading to a decrease in the number of teams available for an increasing number of complex incidents.

- The wildland fire environment is increasingly severe and highly complex incidents are more frequent.
 - The number and duration of assignments creates serious fatigue and resilience issues. Assignments often last longer to allow for more modified suppression tactics and complete suppression repair.
 - Between 2009 and 2018, there were 1,908 total IMT assignments national.
 - Type 2 IMTs absorb the bulk of the assignments, accounting for 66% of the total number of Type 1 and Type 2 assignments in the last 10 years.
- In recent years, the number of personnel available for teams has decreased, impacting the number of teams available geographically and nationally.
 - There is an observed individual reluctance to commit to IMTs if one will not or cannot be available for every rotation and/or multiple two-week assignments.
 - The social and cultural values of agency employees have changed over time.
 - The reduction of agency staffs nationally has resulted in fewer non-fire employees being available to support fires.
 - Agency priorities may not support or incentivize IMT participation.
 - Pay limitations for both current and retired employees hamper participation.

- Team rosters that reserve large numbers of individuals in shared positions limit the ability to staff a greater number of IMTs. Rostering multiple types of team creates additional competition for qualified team members.
- Most recently, COVID-19 has impacted the availability of individuals and IMTs for fire assignments. This is pushing IMTs to carry out business in virtual and remote capacities, responding to operational assignments in a unique way.
- In the past five years there have been multiple occasions where all available IMTs have been assigned to large fires. Local units have had to face the consequences of managing a complex incident without the services of an IMT.

Contact

For more information, please feel free to reach me at jbender@blm.gov or 208.534.1238.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jesse Bender". The signature is written in a cursive style and is placed on a light-colored, slightly textured background.

Jesse Bender
Chair, IWDG

Attachments: IMT Use Data_2009 – 2018

2009-2018 – IMT Assignments by Geographic Area

Filtered by Team Type:

Geographic Area	Type 1 Team	Type 2 Team	NIMO	Area Command	All- Hazard	Total Assignments
National	0	0	7	0	0	7
Alaska	16	19	0	0	0	35
Eastern Area	0	67	0	0	0	67
Great Basin	53	166	14	6	0	239
North Ops (CA)	156	102	0	0	3	261
Northern Rockies	43	133	0	0	0	176
Northwest	88	289	27	3	0	407
Rocky Mountain	26	107	2	2	2	139
Southern Area	55	60	30	3	0	148
South Ops (CA)	71	143	0	0	7	221
Southwest	56	121	18	10	3	208
Totals	564	1207	98	24	15	1908

Filtered by In GACC vs Out of GACC Assignments:

Geographic Area	In GACC	Out of GACC	Total Assignments
National	1	6	7
Alaska	24	11	35
Eastern Area	44	23	67
Great Basin	166	73	239
North Ops (CA)	162	99	261
Northern Rockies	132	44	176
Northwest	342	65	407
Rocky Mountain	101	38	139
Southern Area	85	63	148
South Ops (CA)	136	85	221
Southwest	134	74	208
Totals	1327	581	1908

2009-2018 – IMT Assignments by Geographic Area
In GACC vs Out of GACC Assignments Filtered by Agency

National	In GACC	Out of GACC	Total Assignments
DOI	0	1	1
USFS	1	5	6
State	0	0	0
County & Local	0	0	0
			7
Alaska			
DOI	6	2	8
USFS	0	7	7
State	18	1	19
County & Local	0	1	1
			35
Eastern Area			
DOI	0	3	3
USFS	14	5	19
State	20	4	24
County & Local	0	0	0
FEMA	0	12	12
Pre-Position	1	7	8
Tribal	1	0	1
			67
Great Basin			
DOI	35	8	43
USFS	84	45	129
State	26	6	32
County & Local	9	7	16
FEMA	0	3	3
Pre-Position	11	3	14
Tribal	1	1	2
			239
North Ops (CA)			
DOI	6	6	12
USFS	89	45	134
State	65	30	95
County & Local	0	14	14
FEMA	0	2	2
Pre-Position	0	0	0
Tribal	1	0	1
Military	0	2	2
All-Hazard	0	1	1
			261
Northern Rockies			
DOI	21	9	30
USFS	78	25	103
State	32	4	36
County & Local	1	0	1
FEMA	0	1	1
Pre-Position	1	4	5
			176
Northwest			

2009-2018 – IMT Assignments by Geographic Area

National	In GACC	Out of GACC	Total Assignments
DOI	78	12	90
USFS	165	24	189
State	92	13	105
County & Local	3	1	4
FEMA	0	7	7
Pre-Position	4	8	12
			407
Rocky Mountain			
DOI	28	5	33
USFS	35	25	60
State	7	4	11
County & Local	28	0	28
FEMA	0	2	2
Pre-Position	3	1	4
Military	1	0	1
			139
Southern Area			
DOI	32	1	33
USFS	19	38	57
State	27	8	35
County & Local	0	0	0
FEMA	6	11	17
Pre-Position	3	3	6
			148
South Ops (CA)			
DOI	17	11	28
USFS	86	60	146
State	18	8	26
County & Local	13	0	13
FEMA	1	3	4
Pre-Position	0	1	1
Military	1	0	1
Canada	1	1	2
			221
Southwest			
DOI	23	7	30
USFS	85	52	137
State	26	7	33
County & Local	0	0	0
FEMA	0	2	2
Pre Position	0	6	6
			208

2009-2018 – IMT Assignments by Geographic Area
In GACC vs Out of GACC Assignments Filtered by Team Type

National	In GACC	Out of GACC	Total Assignments
Type 1	0	0	0
Type 2	0	0	0
NIMO	1	6	7
			7
Alaska			
Type 1	6	10	16
Type 2	18	1	19
NIMO	0	0	0
			35
Eastern Area			
Type 1	0	0	0
Type 2	44	23	67
NIMO	0	0	0
			67
Great Basin			
Type 1	28	25	53
Type 2	136	30	166
NIMO	2	12	14
Area Command	0	6	6
			239
NOPS			
Type 1	76	80	156
Type 2	85	17	102
NIMO	0	0	0
All-Hazard	1	2	3
			261
Northern Rockies			
Type 1	27	16	43
Type 2	105	28	133
NIMO	0	0	0
			176
Northwest			
Type 1	76	12	88
Type 2	250	39	289
NIMO	16	11	27
All-Hazard	0	3	3
			407
Rocky Mountain			
Type 1	11	15	26
Type 2	89	18	107
NIMO	0	0	0
Area Command	1	3	4
All-Hazard	0	2	2
			139
Southern Area			
Type 1	36	19	55
Type 2	46	14	60
NIMO	5	25	30
All-Hazard	0	3	3

2009-2018 – IMT Assignments by Geographic Area

National	In GACC	Out of GACC	Total Assignments
South Ops (CA)			
Type 1	35	36	71
Type 2	95	48	143
NIMO	0	0	0
All-Hazard	6	1	7
			221
Southwest			
Type 1	39	17	56
Type 2	92	29	121
NIMO	1	17	18
Area Command	2	8	10
All-Hazard	0	3	3
			208

2009-2018 – IMT Assignments by Geographic Area
Out of GACC Assignments Filtered by Team Type

Geographic Area	AK	EA	GB	NOPS	NR	NW	RM	SA	SOPS	SW
National										
Type 1										
Type 2										
NIMO				5				1		
Alaska										
Type 1			2		4	3			1	
Type 2						1				
NIMO										
Eastern Area										
Type 1										
Type 2	2		2		5	2	2	9		1
NIMO										
Great Basin										
Type 1				2	3	3	12	1		4
Type 2	2	1		2	5	12	2	6		
NIMO	2			1			5	1		3
Area Command					2	1	1			2
NOPS										
Type 1		1	1		1	7	3	1	66	
Type 2			2		1	2		1	11	
All-Hazard						2				
Northern Rockies										
Type 1		2		2		7				6
Type 2	2	2	6			3	10	2		2
NIMO										
Northwest										
Type 1	2				2		1	4		3
Type 2	10		13	2			7	5		2
NIMO		1	1	2	1		2	2	2	
Area Command					3					
Rocky Mountain										
Type 1			7			6		1	1	
Type 2	2	1		1	3	8		3		
All-Hazard			1	1	2					1
Southern Area										
Type 1		3	2		4	8			1	
Type 2	2	6			1	2	3			
NIMO		2	3	5		5	2		5	3
Area Command			1			1				1
South Ops (CA)										
Type 1	1	1	1	22	2	2		2		2
Type 2			2	31	1	8	2	3		1
All-Hazard				1						
Southwest										
Type 1			1		3	10		1	1	1 (at NICC)
Type 2	2		5		7	9	4		2	

2009-2018 – IMT Assignments by Geographic Area

Geographic Area	AK	EA	GB	NOPS	NR	NW	RM	SA	SOPS	SW
NIMO		1	4	2	2	2	2	2	1	
All-Hazard Area Command			3	1				2		
TOTAL	27	21	57	84	55	104	58	47	91	32
										576

2009-2018 – IMT Assignments by Geographic Area
Total Number of Assignments filtered by Incident Agency

Geographic Area	DOI	USFS	State	County & Local	FEMA	Pre-Position	Military	Canada	Tribal	All-Hazard	Total
National	1	6	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	7
Alaska	8	7	19	1	--	--	--	--	--	--	35
Eastern Area	3	19	24	--	12	8	--	--	1	--	67
Great Basin	43	129	32	16	3	14	--	--	2	--	239
North Ops (CA)	12	134	95	14	2	--	2	--	1	1	261
Northern Rockies	30	103	36	1	1	5	--	--	--	--	176
Northwest	90	189	105	4	7	12	--	--	--	--	407
Rocky Mountain	33	60	11	28	2	4	1	--	--	--	139
Southern Area	33	57	35	--	17	6	--	--	--	--	148
South Ops (CA)	28	146	26	13	4	1	1	2	--	--	221
Southwest	30	137	33	--	2	6	--	--	--	--	208
Totals	311	987	416	77	50	56	4	2	4	1	1908