



IWDG Memorandum 23-01

17 March 2023

TO: Chris Wilcox, Chair, Fire Management Board

FROM: Chad Stewart, Chair, Agency Administrator Subgroup
Jesse Bender, Chair, Incident Workforce Development Group

SUBJECT: Expectations of Agency Administrators in Implementation of Complex Incident Management (CIM)

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The challenge to staff interagency Incident Management Teams (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 IMT model is a traditional model developed under different circumstances. Critical challenges in rostering and managing IMTs have led to a decrease in the number of teams available for an increasing number of high-complexity incidents. Complex Incident Management (CIM) is a more sustainable model which will ensure the availability of teams in sufficient number to meet the needs of the future.

The implementation of CIM as the new business model results in one configuration of IMT for managing incidents at either the Type 1 or 2 complexity level by scaling up or down to respond to the needs of the incident in the necessary functional areas.

Agency Administrators and executives must actively engage in and provide effective leadership for more efficient management of the individuals and teams responding to large wildland fire incidents. Effective engagement of incident workforce issues requires a business environment that is supportive at all levels. Agency Administrators play a strategic role in creating an environment favorable to successful incident workforce management.

Agency executives can promote a successful transition to Complex IMTs (CIMTs) in a variety of ways:

1. Supporting line officers and supervisors for allowing and encouraging participation on CIMTs.
 - a. This includes support for training and refreshers outside of the local fire season.
2. Providing leaders' intent ensuring safe and effective wildfire response is the highest priority during critical fire response periods.
3. Encouraging CIMT participation as a path to achieve leadership and management performance goals for all employees.
4. Incentivizing participation and qualifications for non-fire employees and identifying opportunities to recognize fire qualifications and fire management positions as successional crosswalks within the agency.
5. Rebuilding local capacity that will support Type 3 IMTs and local incidents as well as CIMTs.
6. Building Agency Administrator capacity for managing a changing incident management/incident workforce environment.
7. Collaborating with CIMTs to establish mutual standard expectations for operations and engagement.
 - a. Use standard processes and tools to ensure consistency across agencies and geographic areas.

Agency leadership is essential to this successful transition. System change requires collaboration and communication. Your support helping teams and individuals take action prior to publications all being fully updated is critical. This is a system wide change that requires a push from leaders at all levels.

Contact:

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Distribution:

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Resources:

IWDG StoryMap: <https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/9d3aea07bbdb4e23a734ba3fcacc6217>
IWDG Webpage: <https://www.nwcg.gov/partners/iwdg>

Frequently Asked Questions:

Why is the model changing from Type 2 and 1 IMTs to Complex IMTs?

- The demand for IMTs has been on the rise for the past decade as larger, longer duration, and more complex wildland fires occur. In the past seven 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.

Why aren't there enough IMTs?

- Longer fire seasons and multiple back-to-back assignments impact mental health and resiliency, work/life balance, and fatigue.
- In recent years, employee participation has lagged for a variety of reasons including competing priorities and a changing workforce culture.
 - 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.
- The decreasing number of personnel available impacts the number of teams available geographically and nationally.

How does the CIMT model address the problems and create efficiencies?

- CIMTs enable efficiencies in the management and mobilization of teams for incidents.
- Rostering multiple types of teams creates additional competition for qualified team members. Equitably assigning all qualified personnel on geographic area rosters results in fewer Command and General Staff (C&G) shortages and spreads qualified personnel over a great number of IMTs.

- CIMTs are scalable in size and scope to meet the needs of the incident, enabling a single type of team to manage fires of either Type 1 or Type 2 complexity and resulting in fewer transitions, particularly on incidents that rapidly change in complexity.
- This model will improve the ability to fill team rosters by focusing on a smaller core roster, reducing the instances when teams are unavailable due to members being unavailable to fill key positions and increasing opportunities for personnel to be assigned to fires when they are actually available.
- Fewer team types allow for more efficient management of team rotations, assignment lengths, duration of transitions, and frequency of availability periods, creating a more equitable spread of assignments and personnel days assigned for all teams and individuals.

What does this change mean for supervisors and Agency Administrators?

- This is a significant change in management and the oversight of teams. It represents a culture shift for current stakeholders, including agency leaders, IMT members, and land managers. However, it is a necessary change to ensure the resiliency of our workforce.
- A simplified workforce model allows more effective management of Agency Administrator and/or public expectations relative to standard IMT staffing and capabilities.
- The new model streamlines training, reduces timeline to qualification, standardizes capability, and improves delivery of qualified personnel to fill a sufficient number of IMTs, including Type 3 IMTs.
- Transitioning to CIM team will offer unit and program level leadership more staffing flexibility for both internal staffing and IMT participation.

Who is the Incident Workforce Development Group (IWDG)?

- IWDG is jointly chartered by the Fire Management Board (FMB), National Wildfire Coordinating Group (NWCG) Executive Board, and the National Multi-Agency Coordinating Group (NMAC) to provide national leadership to enable long-term development and sustainability of a national interagency incident workforce. Its membership is comprised of representatives from chartered subgroups under each entity along with agency representatives.
- The IWDG Agency Administrator Subgroup is composed of line officers representing the U.S. Forest Service and the Bureaus of the Department of Interior.