



IWDG Memorandum 23-02

29 September 2023

TO: Jeff Arnberger, Chair, National Multi-Agency Coordinating Group (NMAC)
FROM: Chad Stewart, Chair, IWDG Agency Administrator Subgroup
SUBJECT: Complex Incident Management Team (CIMT) Mobilization Roster Negotiations

The IWDG Agency Administrator (AA) Subgroup has reviewed the Coordinating Group Advisory Council (CGAC) response to NMAC Tasking Standardization of Geographic Area Procedures. CGAC did not recommend a “standard processes for GA Coordinating Groups to participate in CIMT mobilization roster negotiations between [AAs] and Incident Commanders (ICs)” and recommends revisiting the topic after 2024. The AA Subgroup highly encourages NMAC reconsider this timeline and establish a consistent third-party participant in the mobilization roster negotiations to ensure perspective is given to on-going fire activity and resource availability geographically and nationally, to account for resource allocation, and advocate for overhead reassignments between incidents at draw down levels.

The involvement of a non-biased perspective in these negotiations was recommended by the AA Subgroup as a means of supporting the AA role and creating consistency in scaling CIMTs. This recommendation is based on several concerns:

1. Local AAs have a unit bias which will limit their ability to adjust for competing external resource demands. Similarly, an IC may have a traditional bias towards mobilization. An objective third party would bring both a broader perspective on resource availability as well as a non-traditional IMT view while considering resource allocations across multiple incidents based on risk.
2. Few AAs have the experience necessary to balance the priorities with the matching resource needs. Although ICs will possess greater knowledge of resource capabilities, they will not have the operational awareness of the local AAs. There is a need for an expert to help the AA bridge the gap between expectations and availability.
3. It is unreasonable to burden an AA with an expectation that they obtain or maintain a level of situational awareness of the current demands and availability of specific resources to apply this information during a negotiation, as their focus should be applied internally.
4. Right-sizing IMTs is a challenge. While there are many experienced AAs who have hosted IMTs on large fires, an increasing number have not, are unfamiliar with the processes and interactions, and do not possess the experience necessary to right-size a team composition with any given situation on the ground. Many AAs would not feel comfortable weighing in on what an IC should need on their team to successfully carry out a delegation of authority, nor would it be prudent for us to expect them to do so competently. Getting into the minutia of team compositions should be left to the fire professionals, with input from the AA when they possess the necessary experience to do so.

The AA Subgroup highly recommends adopting best practices for AAs in negotiation mobilization rosters:

- Participation in the initial mobilization call between AAs and ICs by one of the following:

The Incident Workforce Development Group (IWDG) is jointly chartered by the National Multi-Agency Coordinating Group (NMAC), the National Wildfire Coordinating Group (NWCG) Executive Board, and the Fire Management Board (FMB) to provide national leadership to enable long-term development and sustainability of a national interagency incident workforce.

- Geographic area coordinating group or operations group representative, either of the host agency or the CIMT.
- State/regional/equivalent-level Fire Management Officer (FMO) for the host agency.
- CIMT Coordinator, if in place.
- Utilization of the *NWCG Risk and Complexity Assessment (RCA)*, PMS 236, to guide the discussion, specifically Part D: Functional Complexity.
 - Continued use of Wildland Fire Decision Support System (WFDSS) is equally important for those agencies who do so.
- Documentation of the agreed upon mobilization roster in the delegation of authority, with guidance for how further scaling will be communicated and accomplished during the team's assignment.
- Peer feedback and information sharing after incidents.
 - Most agencies have existing AA groups and/or communications pathways; for those that don't, consider establishing them.

Acknowledging the fire environment is dynamic and personnel needs will change over the course of the incident, the AA Subgroup supports development of tools, training, and employing objective fire management officials with current situational awareness into decision making that collectively contribute to the strategic management of fires and right-sizing incident support.

For more information, please contact Chad Stewart, chad.stewart@usda.gov, or your agency representative to the AA Subgroup.

CC: Sarah Fisher, Chair, Fire Management Board (FMB)
Shane McDonald, Chair, NWCG Executive Board