

Billings Dispatch Center Media Guide 2008

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Internet Addresses:

Billings Interagency Dispatch Center: <http://www.blm.gov/mt/st/en/prog/fire/bdc.html>
Northern Rockies Coordination Center: <http://gacc.nifc.gov/nrcc/>
National Interagency Fire Center: <http://www.nifc.gov>
National Interagency Coordination Center: <http://www.nifc.gov/nicc/>
Weather Service: Billings--<http://www.wrh.noaa.gov/byz>
Glasgow--<http://www.wrh.noaa.gov/ggw>
Great Falls--<http://www.wrh.noaa.gov/tfx>

KEY TELEPHONE NUMBERS

Billings Interagency Dispatch Center
Intelligence Coordinator
Mark Heppler, Center Manager
24-hour number

406-896-2903/2900
406-896-2903/2900
406-896-2901
406-896-2900 or
406-855-0979 (cell)
888-256-3473 (800-BLMFIRE)

Bureau of Indian Affairs
Robert LaPlant
Rick Stefanic

406-247-7949 (Billings)
406-247-7911
(Billings non-fire incidents)

Bureau of Land Management

Mary Apple, Incident Information Officer, 406-896-5258 (Billings)
Jack Conner, Incident Information Officer, 406-896-5201 (Billings)
Craig Flentie, Incident Information Officer, 406-538-1943 (Lewistown)
Mark Jacobsen, Incident Information Officer, 406-233-2831 (Miles City)

US Forest Service

Babete Anderson, Incident Information Officer, 406-657-6200 ext 239 (Billings)
Jeff Gildehaus, Incident Information Officer, 406-446-2103 (Red Lodge)

Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation

Paula Rosenthal, Public Information Officer, 406-542-4235 (Missoula)
prosenthal@mt.gov

Southern Land Office (Billings)

Dick Moore, Area Manager, 406-247-4401
Darrell Kurk, Area Fire Program Manager, 406-247-4406

Northeastern Land Office (Lewistown)

Clive Rooney, Area Manager, 406-538-7789
Jerry Buhre, Area Fire Program Manager, 406-538-7789

Eastern Land Office (Miles City)

Rick Strohmyer, Area Manager, 406-232-2034
Randy Sanders, Area Fire Program Manager, 406-232-2034

PROCEDURES:

In the event of a going wildfire of 100+ acres or other type of incident, the Billings Interagency Dispatch Center (BDC) will either contact your newsroom directly or contact the Associated Press and ask them to spread the word to news media. For more information on an incident, contact one of the agency contacts listed on the previous page or the BDC.

TO VISIT THE INCIDENT:

If you wish to visit the incident, first call the the BDC. Someone there can put you in contact with an Incident Information Officer. With advance notice, he/she will be better able to set up interviews and determine the best areas for photos. The information officer can also tell you how to get to the incident and arrange for your escort. **You will need an escort at all times.**

TO FLY THE INCIDENT:

On large fires, there are usually intensive aerial fire suppression activities. There may be a combination of aircraft involved with the incident, e.g., smokejumpers, helicopters, air tankers, and smaller fixed-wing aircraft. A Temporary Flight Restriction (TFR) will most likely be in effect. This is an official FAA-ordered air closure of approximately 3,000 feet above the fire and five nautical miles around it. Talk to your pilot about those FAA flight restrictions under 91.137a. To arrange permission for flying within the TFR, contact the Incident Information Officer assigned to the incident. He or she will attempt to coordinate your flight with the Incident Air Operations. If operations can allow access through the TFR, a radio frequency will be provided for continual contact with the Incident Air Coordinator during your flight over the incident. By radio, that Air Coordinator may tell your pilot when to enter the TFR, set a direction to approach, and assign an altitude. The Air Coordinator will also provide directions for leaving the fire area. Pilots should contact the FAA directly before takeoff.

SAFETY:

While visiting the incident, your escort will be with you at all times. You will need to wear fire-resistant clothing (nomex) when at the fire. With advance notice, the information officer may be able to loan you a nomex shirt and pants, along with hard hat, leather gloves, and fire shelter. You must provide your own eight-inch leather boots with vibram soles. Natural fiber clothing is recommended for wear under the nomex.

HOW TO CONTACT PEOPLE AT DIFFERENT LEVELS:

When a major incident (e.g., wildfire, flood) occurs in eastern Montana, a group of experts, called an **"Incident Management Team,"** is dispatched to the incident. Either the appropriate agency's Public Affairs/Incident Information Officer or the Billings Dispatch Center can put you in touch with the team's Information Officer.

Once the Incident Management Team is in place, the **Incident Information Officer** will begin setting up the information center. The **Incident Information Officer** is your point of contact about the incident. His or her job is to develop complete and accurate information about the cause, size, status, people, and equipment involved, as well as to respond to other matters of general interest.

In summary, there are usually three contact points during the evolution of a major incident:

Local Public Affairs/Information Officer: He or she is your contact before the Incident Management Team is in place. This person is usually located in the office of whichever land management agency is initially responsible for the incident (Forest Service, Bureau of Indian Affairs, Bureau of Land Management, Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation, etc.)

Incident Information Officer: Once the Incident Management Team is in place, this person can usually be reached in person or by phone at the Incident Command Post.

Multiple Agency Coordination: Multiple incidents in the same vicinity are called a "complex" and a **Multiple Agency Coordination Group (MAC)** may be established with additional Information Officers working in a common location for all incidents. This group will be the focal point for media contact during multiple incidents and will most likely be located at the Billings Interagency Dispatch Center.

SERVICES YOU CAN EXPECT:

If you want to visit the incident, the Incident Information Officer will coordinate that visit and provide you with an escort. They will orient you to the facilities and help by providing:

- Access to Incident Management Team members for interviews
- Maps, incident action plans, special interest items, general information
- Contacts or coordination with law enforcement or security personnel
- Sanitation facilities and wash area
- Protective clothing to enable you to visit the fire line (with advance notice)

FEATURE STORY POSSIBILITIES:

The Incident Command System has considerable flexibility and can either expand or shrink to meet the needs of the incident. Incident Management Teams may be assigned to emergency or non-emergency situations. Some examples are:

- Fires, hazardous materials, and multi-casualty incidents
- Multi-jurisdiction and multi-agency disasters
- Wide area search and rescue missions
- Pest eradication programs
- Oil spill responses and recovery incidents
- Single and multi-agency law enforcement incidents
- Air, rail, water, or ground transportation accidents
- Planned events; e.g., celebrations, parades, concerts
- Private sector emergency management programs
- State or local major natural hazards management

Other newsworthy events may include:

- Fire prevention/education
- Rehabilitation of natural resources after wildland fire or flood
- Staging of crews and engines
- Incident command post (camp life)
- Aircraft
- Special events
- Human interest stories

[GLOSSARY](#)