

National Interagency Fire Center  
3833 S. Development Avenue  
Boise, Idaho 83705

*National Multi-Agency  
Coordinating Group*

*Preparedness Strategy 2008*

*Strategic Direction to Optimize Firefighting Capability*

*May, 2008*

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US Fire Administration  
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**DELEGATION OF AUTHORITY**  
**To the**  
**National Multi-Agency Coordinating Group**

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The National Multi-Agency Coordinating Group (NMAC) provides an essential management mechanism for national level strategic coordination to ensure that firefighting resources are efficiently and appropriately managed in a cost effective manner. The NMAC is responsible for establishing National and Geographic Area MAC business practices, ensuring timely national level incident information and firefighting resource status. The NMAC establishes national priorities among Geographic Areas, directing, allocating and reallocating firefighting resources among Geographic Areas to meet NMAC priorities. The NMAC also anticipates and identifies future firefighting resource requirements, and coordinates and resolves firefighting resource policy issues. The NMAC consists of representatives from the U.S. Department of Interior, Bureau of Land Management (BLM), Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA), U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS), National Park Service (NPS), U.S. Forest Service (USFS), U.S. Fire Administration (USFA), and the National Association of State Foresters (NASF).

The incumbents in the positions listed below constitute the membership of the NMAC and have the authority to manage wildland fire operations on behalf of the signatories to this delegation. Consistent with the responsibilities described above, the NMAC is the national level authority for directing and controlling firefighting resource allocations between Geographic Areas to ensure priority objectives are met, with full authority to take appropriate actions to implement their decisions.

NMAC membership:

- Chief, Division of Fire Operations, BLM
- Fire Director, NASF
- Assistant Director for Wildland Fire Operations, USFS
- Director, Branch of Fire Management, BIA
- Chief, Branch of Fire Management, FWS
- Wildland Fire Program Manager, USFA
- Chief, Division of Fire and Aviation, NPS

This authorization applies only to fire suppression resources including aircraft, equipment, Type 1 and 2 crews, Type 1 and 2 Incident Management Teams, NIMO teams, Area Command Teams, Fire Use Teams, smokejumpers, all military and international assets, overhead, and other national contract resources. This authorization specifically provides the authority to manage resource prioritization and allocation between geographical areas. Management of resources within a geographical area is the responsibility of Geographic Area Multi-Agency Coordinating Groups.

To ensure operational capability in the event the primary member is unavailable, members of the NMAC may authorize an individual to act on their behalf with full authority as described above. Such delegation shall be documented in writing in advance, or as soon as practicable in the event of an emergency or other urgent situation, and shared with all primary members.

The NMAC will develop a national strategy annually with a focus on operational efficiency which will consider the political, social and environmental conditions existing for the upcoming year. The strategy's supporting documents will be updated as necessary to meet changing conditions. In addition to the national strategy, NMAC will also develop and maintain an Operations Plan.

This delegation of authority will remain in effect unless changed or revoked by further direction.



\_\_\_\_\_  
Deputy Secretary  
Department of the Interior

MAY 24 2007

Date: \_\_\_\_\_




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Chief  
U.S. Forest Service

Date: 6/1/2007

\_\_\_\_\_  
Administrator  
U.S. Fire Administration

Date: \_\_\_\_\_



\_\_\_\_\_  
President  
National Association of State Foresters

Date: 6/07/2007

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The National Preparedness Strategy was finalized in May 2008. The Preparedness Strategy will be updated as activity warrants. Updates will be numbered and dated as they are added to this document.

## Introduction

The National Multi-Agency Coordination (NMAC) group consists of one representative from the following agencies: Bureau of Land Management (BLM), Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS), National Park Service (NPS), Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA), Forest Service (FS), National Association of State Foresters (NASF), and the Federal Emergency Management Agency – United States Fire Administration (FEMA-USFA). These representatives have delegated authority by their respective agency directors to manage wildland fire operations and support to the National Response Plan on a national scale when competition for resources is probable. The delegated authorities include:

- Providing oversight of general business practices between the NMAC group and the Geographic Area Multi-Agency Coordination (GMAC) groups.
- Establishing priorities among Geographic Areas.
- Directing, controlling, allocating and reallocating resources among or between Geographic Areas to meet national priorities.
- Implementing decisions of the NMAC.

The purpose of this strategy is to optimize capabilities as the tempo and severity of fire activity and support to the NRF escalate. Likely scenarios include:

- Multiple large wildland fires are burning in several Geographic Areas simultaneously.
- Demand for firefighting resources exceeds supply.
- Fires are burning in “long interval” fire regimes where the probability of meeting suppression objectives is low, and costs and resource commitments are high.
- Contingency resources (military, National Guard, foreign specialists) are engaged or may become engaged.
- Social/political interest is increasing.
- Fireline and command leadership are becoming limiting factors in operational responses.
- Resources are requested and/or committed to National Response Framework (NRF) Tasking.
- Suppression costs will increase correspondingly with inflationary costs for items such as fuel and salaries.

Linked to this strategy is the Federal Fire and Aviation Direction for Leaders which defines operational expectations, reinforces performance, and clarifies existing policies and procedures. The Direction to Leaders paper also provides for consistent implementation of policy by Agency Administrators, Incident/Area Command Teams, and fire and aviation management personnel (Appendix 1).

The NMAC sets the National Preparedness Level (PL) to reflect the level of overall fire and/or all risk activity, and competition for resources. The National Preparedness Level

drives the appropriate actions necessary to respond to increasing severe situations (Appendix 2). The NMAC and Geographic Area MAC Groups (GMAC) will coordinate closely to assess the current situation and needs. These groups work with operational units such as incident management teams, local law enforcement, local fire service and State departments of emergency management to implement appropriate action (Appendix 3 provides a summary of the basic roles and responsibilities of these units).

The NMAC will issue direction based on:

- **Predictive Models:** Predictive Services units provide a general prognosis of expected fire weather, fuel conditions, and potential fire behavior including specific state-by-state evaluations that assist NMAC in anticipating critical fire situations.
- **Prioritization Criteria:** These criteria are developed by the NMAC to guide decision-making in setting national priorities for allocating critical resources to Geographic Areas with wildland fire activity or other emergencies.
- **Strategic Decision Points:** Strategic decision points will be established to emphasize critical needs and concerns. They will be based on time of year, overall level of activity, both current and predicted, overall level of resource commitment, both current and predicted, and drawdown levels established for critical resources.

## **National Priorities**

The primary responsibility of the wildland fire agencies is the coordinated, interagency response to wildland fire across the nation. When competition for the use of wildland fire resources occurs among Geographic Areas, the NMAC will establish national priorities. When competition for wildland fire resources occurs between wildland fire and non-wildland fire incidents, the NMAC will recommend priorities to national leadership in Washington, DC for the appropriate allocation of those resources.

The single, overriding priority in all actions is the protection of human life – both that of firefighters and the public.

In setting national priorities and developing drawdown plans, the NMAC will consider these criteria.

- Maintain Geographic Area initial attack capability.
- Protect communities and community infrastructure, other property and improvements, and natural and cultural resources.
- Manage costs without compromising safety.
- Meet local agency objectives.
- Support to NRF taskings.



## National Strategy

The outlook for 2008 indicates there will be above normal fire potential across much of the Southwest and Florida along with portions of the Southern California, Rocky Mountain, Northern Rockies and Alaska Areas early in the season. During this same time, below normal significant fire potential is expected in Arkansas, eastern Oklahoma, northern Mississippi, and southwest Tennessee. Later in the summer, significant fire potential is forecast to persist or increase in portions of the Southwest, Southern California, Northern Rockies, and Rocky Mountain Areas. Significant fire potential will decrease across Florida, eastern New Mexico, western Texas, and southeastern portions of the Rocky Mountain Area. NMAC will closely monitor projected fire weather, fuel conditions and fire activity to safely and effectively manage resources to meet national priorities (Appendix 4).

The national outlook is located at:

<http://www.nifc.gov/nicc/predictive/outlooks/outlooks.htm>

Risk management involves accurate hazard identification, managing current risk and anticipating potential risks associated with response capability. The NMAC emphasizes an ongoing re-examination of factors geared toward limiting exposure to hazardous situations, monitoring people and equipment for fatigue, and using our best skills on high priority incidents. Particular focus is required on fires where command is being transferred from one management level to another.

NMAC provides an essential management mechanism for national level strategic coordination to ensure that firefighting resources are efficiently and appropriately managed in a cost effective manner. The NMAC is responsible for establishing National and Geographic Area MAC business practices, ensuring timely national level incident information and firefighting resource status, setting national priorities among Geographic Areas, directing, allocating and reallocating firefighting resources among Geographic Areas to meet NMAC priorities, anticipating and identifying future firefighting resource requirements, and coordinating and resolving firefighting resource policy issues.

NMAC is the national level authority for directing and controlling firefighting resource allocations between Geographic Areas to ensure priority objectives are met, with full authority to take appropriate actions to implement their decisions.

This authorization applies only to fire suppression resources including aircraft, equipment, Type 1 and 2 crews, Type 1 and 2 Incident Management Teams, NIMO teams, Area Command Teams, Fire Use Teams, smokejumpers, all military and international assets, overhead, and other national contract resources. This authorization specifically provides the authority to manage resource prioritization and allocation between Geographic Areas. Management of resources within a Geographical Area is the responsibility of Geographic Area Multi-Agency Coordinating Groups (GMACs).

The primary responsibility of the wildland fire agencies is response to wildland fire. In accordance with the National Response Plan, wildland fire agencies may receive requests for resources for non- fire incidents. In general, resources necessary to respond to wildland fire will receive first priority. When competition for wildland fire resources occurs between wildland fire and non-wildland fire incidents, the NMAC will recommend priorities for the appropriate allocation of those resources.

- Agency Administrators, with advice from the NMAC and GMAC will evaluate and balance the competing requirements for wildland fire resources for NRF and fire management incidents. NMAC will recommend a course of action to the Fire Executive Council (FEC) who may also choose to coordinate with the Department of the Interior and the Department of Agriculture.
- All firefighting efforts and strategies are coordinated with states, tribes, local governments and other key entities.
- Resources will be focused on initial attack. Effective initial attack is still the best way to prevent large, costly, and dangerous wildfire.
- GMACs must develop geographic strategies based on the current and anticipated fire situation. These strategies focus on the entire scope of the wildland fire situation within the Geographic Area rather than individual fires.
- GMAC projections must include potential to impact population centers, contingency plans and their associated decision points, critical resources required to mitigate the threat and plans for managing the drawdown of resources.
- Wildland fire response actions will consider the full range options based on the objectives identified in resource and fire management plans. Multiple tactics on a single incident such as confine, contain, point or zone protection may be employed to manage the fire in the most effective, efficient, and safest means possible.
- Fire managers and incident commanders will constantly evaluate the fire situation and initiate actions based on the likelihood that the selected tactics will be successful.
- Key to our success will be allocating the right resource, to the right place, at the right time based on priorities and the achievement of specific objectives.
- Allocating significant scarce resources to projected long-duration fires or those that have minimal probability of early containment should not be considered unless there is a direct threat to a community.
- Interagency prevention and education programs are encouraged and supported to reduce unwanted ignitions.

- It is imperative that a ready mobile reserve force be on hand and positioned according to weather forecasts and other intelligence. The reserve, consisting of critical resources for responding to national priorities, will be maintained as necessary (Appendix 6).
- Emphasis will be placed on maintaining proficient and highly qualified agency and agency cooperator resources. Mobilization priorities will be adjusted as appropriate to ensure that experience goals and objectives are attained. This is particularly important in assuring that IFPM standards are met.
- Critical national resources are managed nationally for maximum flexibility. Information from Predictive Services and the Geographic Areas will be used to anticipate fire danger and fire occurrence probability. Resources will be prepositioned to respond to these threats. Aviation assignments will be validated daily and aircraft will be reallocated as necessary (Appendix 7).
- It is important that GMACs recognize the credible threat that domestic as well as international terrorists pose for intentionally ignited wildfires.

## **Actions**

These actions are necessary to implement the national strategy.

- NMAC will coordinate with the GMACs for setting priorities and placement of critical or short supply resources including Area Commands and Incident Management Teams (IMTs). Centralized management and control of critical resources will be implemented as appropriate.

NMAC will coordinate with the GMACs to balance competing demands between Geographic Areas, and wildland fire and all-hazard incidents.

- National Incident Management Organization (NIMO) teams will be deployed according to procedures in the National Interagency Mobilization Guide. NMAC will assess their value in addressing our wildland fire and all-hazard workload. Areas should identify assignment opportunities for NIMO as they implement the Wildland Fire Situation Analysis.
- High priority tactical assignments are appropriate even if a resource is available for less than the usual 14-day rotation. For example, if a Type 1 crew is available only for five days but could make a significant contribution on a fire during that time, the crew should be assigned to the incident. Resources should be used most effectively keeping in mind national priorities. National shared resources will be managed to maximize their availability and flexibility for all assignments including all-hazard assignments. Manage fatigue in achieving this objective.
- For national mobilization, teams will configure to the national standard as described in the National Interagency Mobilization Guide. Teams ordered will be filled in the long or short configuration as requested.
- Additional short teams may be organized to manage incidents.
- Geographic Areas will maintain Type 3 organizational capability to meet current and projected Geographic Area requirements.
- The primary mission and priority of the Interagency of Fire Use Management Teams (FUMT) is to provide land managers with skilled and mobile personnel to assist with the management of Wildland Fire Use (WFU) and prescribed fires.  
  
Each FUMT offers the full range of appropriate management response to wildland fire occurrence and large complex prescribed fire applications
- It is important to monitor the effects of both short-term and cumulative fatigue. It is critical that fire personnel receive adequate rest and that supervisors watch for signs of fatigue and act to mitigate it.

- Attention should be given to balance assignment opportunities for tactical resources and IMTs on a national basis.
- NMAC will consider alternatives to maximize the effectiveness of resources. Concepts such as branching an incident should be evaluated as an alternative to assigning additional IMTs and Buying Teams.
- NMAC will effectively share information with Federal and State elected officials, media, Agency Administrators, and the fire management community.

## **Firefighting Resource Allocation Principles**

- National Shared Resources (NSR) are managed nationally, with oversight and support provided locally. Each Geographic Area will continue to optimize utilization of resources they manage.
- NMAC intervenes as necessary to meet national priorities. The level of control exercised nationally may vary according to specific resources – ie; some local incident management teams with significant state and local memberships are often less mobile.
- Control of firefighting resources will transfer to a higher level authority at National Preparedness Levels 4 and 5, and may occur at lower levels. Enhanced decision support is necessary to achieve success. Mission priorities for firefighting resources (fuels, all-hazard, WFU, suppression) will depend on quality decision support.
- Mission priorities and resource allocation is exercised by Geographic Area MAC Groups and NMAC according to delegations of authority. Field offices or unit level offices may use similar management practices to manage initial attack resources.
- Resources are assigned after consideration of potential initial attack requirements.
- All resources should be considered in limited supply. Tie additional allocation to defined results.
- Tactics not delivering results must be adjusted.
- Consider assigning a minimal number of resources to an incident or unit, and pool additional resources for anticipated needs. This allows the local unit to maintain initial attack capability, since these resources won't be tied up on incidents and promotes less complexity for teams.
- Consider branching from existing teams to cover emerging incidents as appropriate.

### **Initial attack:**

- Can the fire be suppressed within the first operational period with resources on hand or nearby?
- What flexibility or options in terms of tactics are feasible?
- When could additional help arrive to conduct effective work on the incident?
- If success is not likely, why should additional or specific resources be requested?

**On scene-escaped fire:**

- Is there a potential urban interface threat? Quantify that threat.
- What alternatives are reflected in the WFSA?
- When could additional help arrive to conduct effective work on the incident?
- How would specific or additional resources make a difference?
- What are the alternative tactical options to accomplish the goal stated in the WFSA?

**Geographic Area MAC Group Considerations:**

- Why is investing resources into the incident a sound decision?
- Can the investment return primary initial attack resources to IA status more quickly? Can certain resources operate from a pool and not be assigned to specific incidents?
- What is the Geographic Area's initial attack capability? Can it be supplemented from outside the Area?
- Where is the next risk situation to occur?

**National MAC Group Considerations:**

- Why is investing resources into the Geographic Area a sound decision?
- Can the investment return primary initial attack resources to IA status more quickly? Can certain resources operate from a pool and not be assigned to specific incidents?
- What is the nation's initial attack capability? Have supplemental resources been engaged?
- Where is the next risk situation likely to occur?

## **NMAC / GMAC Coordination**

The NMAC, GMACs, and Agency Administrators will coordinate and cooperate to provide resources for national deployment by considering innovative management strategies for allocation and re-allocation of scarce resources.

The NMAC will initiate conference calls with GMACs as the situation warrants.

The NMAC requires information from the GMACs to prioritize and allocate resources in accordance with the national strategy. GMACs will provide a description of their decision processes in setting priorities and an assessment of the current and projected situation including an analysis of whether conditions should improve or deteriorate over the next seven days. A complete description of the threat risk that specific incidents may pose to communities or critical infrastructure is paramount.

When situations warrant, NMAC will require justification and information for assignment of Type 1 IMTs and Area Command Teams (Appendix 8).

Once an Area Command Team is assigned to a Geographic Area, the GMAC is responsible for providing management oversight in coordination with the agency administrator.

At National Preparedness Levels 4 and 5, GMACs will list specific resources required to accomplish priority incident objectives and describe whether those needs can be met from within the Geographic Area (Appendix 9,10).

Updates are to be provided as the situation warrants.