



# U.S. Forest Service Fire and Aviation Management Briefing Paper



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**Topic:** National Incident Management Organization (NIMO)

**Issue:** What is NIMO and how can they be used?

**Background:** The NIMO program is used on and off incidents to help wildland fire agencies address issues and improve current and future fire management. As seven person teams of command and general staff positions, they can be dispatched as a short team to manage incidents that need a more customized approach such as long-term fires in remote locations, which can reduce cost and provide consistency that allows for an additional level of safety; coordination support at regional or national Multi-Agency Coordinating (MAC) group levels; specialized incidents within an incident such as an aviation accident; or as an advisory group to assist a Type 2 team in handling complex situations for a short period time so transitions don't have to occur during critical periods on an incident. Their small size makes them agile while their fulltime status makes them available at any time.

Though the NIMO teams have seven members, they can also be called out in a long team configuration. When ordering a NIMO team to manage a fire assignment, NIMO functions the way the Incident Command System was originally intended by expanding or contracting the size of the team using "call when needed" resources as well as trainees.

## Key Points:

- NIMO is flexible, responsive and adapts to emerging issues using limited resources on the ground. This is all done using a small and agile organization, new technology and integrating the management of fire with other ecosystem benefits.
- Though the NIMO teams have seven members, they can also be requested out in a long team configuration
- Although NIMO can be tasked to work with any wildland fire agency, they are a Forest Service resource and are intimately involved with national level Agency issues. As fulltime fire professionals, NIMO is the operational arm of policy development and implementation.
- NIMO teams can remain on an incident for longer periods of time, reducing the cost that can be incurred through transition of teams. It varies depending on the size and location of the fire and the team assigned, but this can be an average cost savings of \$250,000 per transition. Limiting team transitions also provides consistency and an additional level of safety by reducing exposure and risk with fire team leadership consistency during the time of transition.
- NIMO can also free up critical resources by managing long-term incidents and reducing the time that key call-when-needed personnel are away from the home unit. The NIMO program has worked with a number of federal and non-federal traditional wildland fire agencies to roster long teams and trainees to be available in supporting NIMO missions, while getting valuable training and exposure that they can't receive in a classroom.
- Risk adverse behaviors and operating by the use of *Precautionary Principles* causes most teams to operate in a "just in case" mode, using tactics and a huge number of resources to get the job done. NIMO employs current research and technology and has the opportunity to field test less conventional tactics that could potentially have the same result using fewer resources and costing less.
- The NIMO teams are empowered to work directly with line officers and others to offer advice, find solutions and look outside the box when assigned to incidents.
- Since large fire management is a primary NIMO job, they are held accountable through performance reviews and job standards.

NIMO is available to work locally, regionally, nationally and internationally on special projects, and can be requested by completing the project request form on the NIMO Web site at [www.nifc.gov/nimo/](http://www.nifc.gov/nimo/). For incident dispatch, the NIMO teams can be ordered through the same process any team is ordered. The teams have a rotation and can respond at a moments notice.

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