

OPERATIONS COMMITTEE WORKING GROUP

MARCH 15, 2007

Working Group Participants:

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Issue:

Not so many years ago, the Northern Rockies had the capability to field 9 Type II IMTs and 2 Type I IMTs. In 2006, the geographic area was capable of fielding 6 Type II IMTs, 2 Type I IMTs and 2 FUMTs. Currently, there are 5 Type II IMTs, 2 Type I IMTs and 2 FUMTs. Over the last couple of team rotations, the Northern Rockies have been experiencing some difficulty in maintaining a standing number of teams. The overarching issue is our ability to perpetuate, sustain and maintain the integrity of the number and type of teams across our geographic area.

Objective:

The Operations Committee was asked to address the above issue, and develop some options and recommendations for the future number, types, and configuration of teams that could be perpetuated on an annual basis beginning in 2008 and into the future (3 to 5 years) to meet the needs of the Northern Rockies.

Options:

Option I – Maintain 9 Wildland Fire Teams (WFT). There would be 2 levels of WFTs. Five of the WFTs would maintain the highest level of skills and be capable of responding to Type I, II and/or wildland fire use events. Four WFTs would be capable of responding to Type II and/or wildland fire use events.

Option II – Maintain 6 Wildland Fire Teams (WFT). All six WFTs would maintain the highest level of skills and be capable of responding to Type I, II and wildland fire use events. In addition, these WFTs would configure either short or long to meet the needs of the hosting agency.

Option III – Maintain 9 teams (current situation). There would be 5 Type II IMTs, 2 Type I IMTs, and 2 FUMTs, and they would all respond to events as they have done in the past based upon complexity and type of event.

Option IV – Maintain 8 WFTs. One WFT would consist of only the Command and General Staff and maintain the highest level of skills, and be capable of responding to Type I, Type II, and wildland fire use events, and provide management oversight and assistance to the other 6 WFTs on incidents of the highest complexity and/or risk. Six WFTs would work towards acquiring and maintaining the highest level of skills, and becoming capable of responding to Type I, II and/or wildland fire use events. One WFT would maintain the capability of responding to wildland fire use events. All of the teams would be capable of configuring to the response.

Option V – Investigate the potential and possibilities associated with developing “Contract Teams” to increase capabilities across the geographic area and increase our capabilities at the Type III level of incident management.

Recommendations:

Based upon our current capabilities, it is our recommendation to implement Option IV. Maintain 8 WFTs in 2008. One WFT would consist of only the Command and General Staff maintaining the highest level of skills, and be capable of responding to Type I, Type II, and wildland fire use events, and provide management oversight and assistance to the other 6 WFTs on incidents of the highest complexity and/or risk. Develop six WFTs that would work towards acquiring and maintaining the highest level of skills, and be capable of responding to Type I, II and/or wildland fire use events by 2013. From 2008 to 2013, the six WFTs would actually be capable of responding to Type II and wildland fire use events. One WFT would maintain the capability of responding to wildland fire use events and provide management oversight to the six WFTs when they were managing WFU events and building their skills in that area. All of the teams would be capable of configuring to the response.

In lieu of contract teams, we recommend using the alternate team member pool to staff and support Type III events across the geographic area when the need arises. In addition, we recommend the R-1 Smokejumper program develop a Type III organization to provide additional oversight and support to our area.

For future consideration, we would recommend to the NRCG Training Committee that S-520 Advanced Incident Management and S-580 Advanced Fire Use Applications be combined into one session. Also, locally we would like to redesign Local Fire Management Leadership for our geographic area.

Assignments:

Prior to the next Operations Committee meeting, we need to hold a similar meeting to this one to ensure we are being as efficient as possible as a committee. We ask that the respective NRCG agencies query their qualifications data bases for command and general staff, and unit leader positions using a course filter that would allow an individual to only fill one position so the number of available people is not skewed. Bob Cunningham and Carrie Errecart will take the lead regarding this assignment.

We recommend a white paper be developed to address the potential of tapping into non-traditional agencies, such as the large city fire departments, to fill team positions. Bob Cunningham and Mike Kopitzke will take the lead on this assignment.

Both of these assignments are scheduled to be completed and presented at our winter meeting.