



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

## *National Multi-Agency Coordinating Group*

# *Preparedness Strategy 2012*

*Strategic Direction to Optimize Firefighting Capability*

*May, 2012*

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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.

*P Lynn Scarlett*

Deputy Secretary  
Department of the Interior

MAY 24 2007  
Date: \_\_\_\_\_

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Chief  
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Date: 6/1/2007

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Date: 6/19/07

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Date: 6/6/2007

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The National Preparedness Strategy was finalized in May 2012. 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.
- There are competing demands for firefighting resources.
- 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 be requested.
- 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.

Linked to this strategy are Key Issues which define operational expectations, reinforce performance, and clarify existing policies and procedures. This 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

Above normal significant fire potential is expected along the East coast from near Wilmington, North Carolina, to near Panama City, Florida, including all of the Florida peninsula; much of eastern Colorado and Wyoming, southwestern South Dakota, western Nebraska, and northwestern Kansas; much of northwestern Nevada; and the west side of Hawaii's Big Island. Significant fire potential will increase to above normal in the spring in the Sierras and southern mountains of California; most of Arizona except the southwest corner; southern Utah along the Arizona border; western New Mexico; western Colorado; and southwestern Wyoming. Below normal significant fire potential is expected for Alaska; much of the Ohio and Tennessee Valleys; the middle and lower Mississippi Valley; and Puerto Rico. The rest of the country will have normal significant fire potential.

La Niña has all but disappeared as oceanic trends point to a neutral pattern for the equatorial Pacific through spring with a possibility of weak El Niño conditions developing by early summer. Warmer than normal temperatures are expected across the eastern three-fourths of the U.S. Below normal temperatures are expected across the Northwest and southern Alaska in April. Precipitation is expected to be below median for most of the Southwest; the Gulf and East coasts to North Carolina including all of Florida; part of the Northwest and northern Rockies; and southern Alaska. Above median precipitation is expected for the Great Lakes region, and the Ohio and mid-Mississippi valleys. Drought will persist through much of the lower Atlantic and Gulf coasts; most of the Southwestern from west Texas to Arizona; most of central and southern California; and the Great Basin. There will be some improvement in northern California, the upper Midwest and the southern and central Plains. 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>

Managing risk is essential to the mission of NMAC. Risk management involves accurate hazard identification, managing current risk and anticipating potential risks associated with response capability. The NMAC emphasizes an ongoing assessment 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 among 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, Wildland Fire Management 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 GMACs.

The primary responsibility of the wildland fire agencies is response to wildland fire. In accordance with the National Response Framework (NRF), 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 priorities to national leadership in Washington, DC for the appropriate allocation of those resources.

The following principles will guide NMAC decisions:

- All firefighting efforts and strategies are coordinated with states, tribes, local governments and other key entities.
- Effective initial attack prevents large, costly, and dangerous wildfires.
- 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.
- Decisions on prioritization and resource allocation should be made with full utilization of Predictive Services tools such as Wildland Fire Decision Support System (WFDSS) to evaluate potential values at risk and the probability of success. The assessment of risk is required to add clarification in determining resource allocation.
- Decisions must reflect the goal of using available resources to manage the fire situation in the most effective, efficient, and safest means possible over the long durations. Areas with multiple fires must consider the development of strategies that optimize success over time.

- Wildland fire response actions will consider the full range of options based on the objectives identified in resource and fire management plans. Multiple strategies 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 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.
- 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).
- Risk assessment processes should help add clarification in determining resource allocation.
- 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 and Washington leadership as appropriate to balance competing demands between Geographic Areas, wildland fires, and all-hazard incidents.

- National Incident Management Organization (NIMO) teams will be deployed according to procedures in the National Interagency Mobilization Guide. Assignments outside of the national forests designated for continuous improvement and large fire management will be considered by NMAC on a case by case basis.
- 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.
- Maximize opportunities to organize resources in a module or task force concept with the goal of accomplishing priority objectives on multiple fires. These resources are best managed geographically by the GACC or Area Command.
- 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.
- 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 – i.e.; 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, and 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 and a risk assessment process.
- 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?

**Local Resource Allocation Decisions:**

- What alternatives are reflected in the WFDSS output?
- What are the alternative tactical options to accomplish the goal?
- How would specific or additional resources make a difference? Will they be able to arrive at the incident in a timely manner?
- What is the rationale for additional resources?

**Geographic Area MAC Group Considerations:**

- Why is investing resources into a particular incident a sound decision?
- Can certain resources operate from a pool and be assigned to priority missions or work instead of assigned to one incident for the duration of that incident?
- Where is the next threat of increased fire activity likely to occur and what resources are needed to preposition for the threat?
- Have risks been addressed for preferred actions in the field?

**National MAC Group Considerations:**

- Why is investing resources into a Geographic Area a sound decision?
- Can certain resources operate from a pool and be assigned to priority missions within a GACC rather than incidents?
- What is the nation's initial attack capability? Have supplemental resources been engaged?
- Where is the next area of increased fire activity likely to occur and what resources are needed to preposition for that occurrence?

## **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 reallocation of limited 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 Area Command, NIMO, Type 1 IMTs and nationally available Type 2 IMTs (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.