



National Interagency Fire Center

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To: Geographic Area Coordination Groups, Geographic Area Coordination Centers
From: National Multi Agency Coordinating Group
Subject: Incident Name Protocols

As we enter the fire season it is timely to address the topic of fire naming conventions and protocols. When units, incident commanders, or dispatch centers name a wildfire, thought should be given to ensure it is relevant and appropriate.

Most agency policies and guidance recommend that fires be named after geographic locations or landmarks. Although most geographic place names have been around for a long time, and were probably created when little consideration was given to whether the name given to a place would offend anyone's sensibilities.

Regardless of what an agency's policy may be as to how a fire is named, sensitivity should be used in selecting a fire name that will not reflect negatively on the unit, fire organization, or agency. What may seem to be a purely innocent name to the local unit may in fact have negative repercussions far beyond the fire itself.

Be mindful of naming a fire something that may be construed as an offensive, derogatory or inappropriate name to any ethnic, religious or political group. Avoid using names that are considered slang or may be construed as unprofessional. If in doubt, use common sense and rename the fire.

The following are examples of fire names that should be avoided:

- Naming a fire after a person.
- Naming a fire after private property or a company (ex: "the Jeep fire", "Bar T Bar Ranch fire,")
- Naming a fire that includes the word "dead man," or "deadman."
- Naming a fire after another catastrophic fire (one that experienced fatalities, high property losses, etc.).
- Using cute or funny fire names, or using a play on words to name a fire. What may be funny to one person or group may not be to another.

The National Multi Agency Coordinating Group (NMAC) has established policy that the National Interagency Coordination Center (NICC) will follow regarding fire names. Any fire that is deemed to be inappropriately named or potentially offensive will not be reported in the National Incident Management Situation Report (IMSR) using the name, but will be reported using the incident number in block 4 of the ICS-209. It will continue being reported on the IMSR by the incident number until the name is corrected by the local unit.

/s/ John Segar
Chair, NMAC