

National Multi-Agency Coordinating Group

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July 8, 2016

To: Geographic Area Coordination Group Chairs

From: National Multi-Agency Coordinating Group

Subject: Preparation for the Unexpected Loss of Information Technology Systems

The recent outage of the Resource Ordering and Statusing System (ROSS), which is a highly dependable information technology system used throughout the wildland fire community, serves as a reminder to us all to be prepared for unexpected events.

Coordination Center, Dispatch Center, and Incident Management Team Continuity of Operation Plans (CoOP) are an important component of preparation for just such an event. The ability to maintain operational capability if any system goes down is incumbent on all of us. We are fortunate to have many electronic systems that help us prepare for and respond to incidents. However, we need to be prepared to revert to alternate processes or backup systems when necessary.

This recent outage created challenges for many, yet card stock was dusted off, fax machines brought into play, and resources were mobilized. NMAC encourages all organizational levels to take this opportunity to learn what worked in your CoOp and what did not work. In many ways this incident can be viewed as a good training opportunity for those in our organization who have always conducted their work via the electronic system. Ensuring that we are prepared to revert to alternate processes or backup systems will be critical when any system becomes unavailable for any reason.

This memo is not meant to downplay recent challenges. Actions are being taken by the ROSS team to learn what went wrong, take immediate corrective actions and prevent a recurrence. It is our intent to recognize the good work completed at many levels and to ensure organizationally we are prepared for just such an event within any of the systems we use to do our work. The emergency response work that we do is of vital importance and we cannot afford to rely on any single system or tolerate single points of failure; backup plans, redundancies and practicing for Continuity of Operations will ensure future success.

On behalf of the NMAC,

/s/ Dan Buckley
Chair, NMAC

CC: National Wildfire Coordinating Group
Wildland Fire Information Technology Program Board

