

National Multi-Agency Coordinating Group

3833 South Development Avenue; Boise, ID 83705

NMAC Correspondence 2017-21

August 10, 2017

To: Geographic Area Coordinating Group Chairs

From: National Multi Agency Coordinating Group

Subject: August 21 Solar Eclipse – Communications Equipment, Cache Support, Operational and Logistical Considerations

On August 21, a total solar eclipse will travel across the United States. This will be the first time since 1979 that a total solar eclipse will be visible in the contiguous US. The most visible area for the eclipse will be a 70 mile wide “path of totality” (POT) or area where full eclipse will occur extending from the coast of Oregon through Idaho, Wyoming, Nebraska, Kansas, Missouri, Illinois, Kentucky, Tennessee, Georgia, North Carolina and South Carolina. Approximately 220 million people live within one day’s drive of the POT. It is anticipated that millions of people will converge into the POT to witness the rare celestial event. Please visit the following links for more information regarding the path and timing of the Solar Eclipse.

<https://eclipse2017.nasa.gov/eclipse-maps>

<https://svs.gsfc.nasa.gov/4314>

The National Interagency Incident Communication Division (NIICD) and the National Interagency Support Cache System (NISC) have received inquiries regarding the availability of communications and cache equipment in support of the August 21, 2017 eclipse. **Due to current and projected fire activity NMAC has determined that the NIICD and NISC will not provide support (communication and cache equipment) for eclipse operations that are not directly related to fire preparedness/suppression operations.**

NMAC would also like to make fire management personnel aware of potential impacts to fire operations as a result of the large number of people expected to visit communities and public lands along the eclipse path, and the associated logistical and operational impacts wildland fire managers may need to contemplate in advance. The following considerations are provided for planning purposes and potential mitigation in support of fire management:

SAFETY

- A total solar eclipse is a rare event and personnel will be tempted to look at the sun. This could lead to significant eye damage. Information on safely viewing the eclipse can be found at the following link <https://eclipse2017.nasa.gov/safety>. Ensure fire personnel are briefed on the danger.



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LOGISTICS

- **Traffic Congestion:** In addition to potential impacts to operations personnel associated with navigating congested road systems, a gridlocked transportation infrastructure may affect delivery of equipment and supplies. NISCS may not be able to provide same day or next day service in affected areas. IMTs are encouraged to plan ahead for cache orders, including consumables (e.g. AA batteries and MREs).
- **Sanitation:** It is anticipated that very few portable toilets will be available for incidents and/or Incident Management Teams (IMTs) mobilized 3-7 days prior to August 21. Fire contracting officers are encouraged to communicate with vendors ahead of time regarding potential needs and availability.
- **Fuel:** It is likely that fuel may be in short supply in areas close to the POT. Consider fueling at all opportunities.
- **Transportation:** Rental car availability may be very limited in areas near the POT. Commercial flights will be limited as well.
- **Security:** Lack of availability of Security Specialists for fire response due to commitments related to the eclipse.
- **EMS service:** Potential limited ALS/BLS ambulance availability coupled with longer response times due to eclipse-related traffic congestion. Aviation operations (e.g., Air Ambulance) will be interrupted in areas where darkness occurs.
- **Communication:** Cell tower saturation – possible need for satellite services, additional landlines etc.
- **Meals:** If national caterers are unavailable, local meal options (i.e. restaurants) may not be a viable alternative due to the population influx overwhelming the local establishments' capacity.
- **Lodging:** Most hotels are sold out. Note that many schools will be back in session (or going back in session) so the use of schools for ICPs and day sleeping may not be viable.

OPERATIONS

- Potential for short-term impacts to firing operations during the eclipse.
- Potential for initial attack and emerging fires in or near the POT due to the large-scale human presence there.
- Impacts to operations from cessation of aviation operations.
- Consider prepositioning resources for response to new starts, taking into account temporary congestion due to eclipse-related traffic.
- Pre-plan evacuations should they become necessary in areas not normally populated.



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AIR OPERATIONS

Flight Planning During the Eclipse

- It is predicted that daylight conditions will exist right up to totality and return immediately after totality.
- Because the transition to twilight conditions is anticipated to occur very rapidly and the level of brightness experienced during totality may be similar to normal sky brightness levels experienced at civil twilight, all mission flights within the POT will cease at least 15 minutes prior to totality.
- Outside the shadow of totality, sky brightness will remain at daylight levels and flight operations may proceed uninterrupted.
- Expect increased General Aviation (GA) traffic before, during and after the eclipse. GA aircraft may or may not be aware of TFRs or incident aircraft.
- Expect increased Unmanned Aircraft Systems or drone use before, during or after the eclipse.
- Further guidance and specific aviation information will be issued through an interagency aviation informational bulletin prior to the event.

This letter is to highlight potential hazards and logistical problems that could happen if incidents occur within the path of the solar eclipse and to emphasize pre-planning for these in advance. As with all our operations, safety of fire and aviation personnel and the public is paramount.

/s/ Dan Buckley
NMAC Chair

