



**Interagency Communication Plan
for the
Interagency Dispatch Implementation Project (IDIP)**

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PURPOSE

The purpose of this Communication Plan is to guide the Interagency Dispatch Implementation Project (IDIP) team in coordinating timely and appropriate communications among all parties interested in the IDIP. Potentially interested parties include but are not limited to U.S. Forest Service (FS) and Department of the Interior (DOI) leadership, dispatch center employees, the interagency wildland firefighter workforce, federal, state and local government cooperators, private industry, Congress and other oversight organizations.

This Communication Plan for the IDIP provides a framework for effective communications among those working on the IDIP teams and Subject Matter Expert (SME) working groups, those potentially affected by the project, and others concerned about or interested in the IDIP.

OVERVIEW

The focus of the IDIP is to improve program delivery of dispatch services while meeting the mission needs of the FS and DOI, States and their stakeholders. It provides a long-term strategy toward improving safety, efficiency and cost effectiveness in the dispatch and coordination system. The Project Plan serves as a planning document for the overall IDIP process. It defines the project's scope, assigns roles and responsibilities, provides a general project plan and budget, and proposes a communications approach with external and internal audiences.

Initially, a core working group for each of the primary emphasis areas will work under the IDIP oversight team to lead efforts to standardize dispatch in the following areas:

- Computer Aided Dispatch Standardization (CAD),
- Dispatch Governance, Funding and Staffing, and
- Interagency Dispatch Operational Guidance (IDOG)

All communications related to their efforts or to the overall IDIP will be guided by this Communications Plan for the duration of the effort.

This plan identifies strategies and methods to ensure timely and appropriate conveyance of IDIP-related information to the right people at the right times and through the proper means, with a goal of keeping people informed throughout the process. Implementation of this plan will reduce misunderstandings and misinformation flow and will clarify means for interested parties to submit feedback on the IDIP efforts.

BACKGROUND

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Forest Service (FS) and the Department of the Interior (DOI) began in 2005 to explore ways to improve dispatch efficiency. This effort was implemented to comply with the Federal Wildland Fire Management Policy: The 1995 Federal Wildland Fire Management Policy and the subsequent 2001 Federal Wildland Fire Management Policy act. In 2008, the Management Efficiency Assessment (MEA) of the Interagency Wildland Fire Dispatch and Related Services was signed by both Department Under-Secretaries and approved the immediate action by functional area. The MEA included 42 changes to be implemented within 24 – 36 months. The Fire Executive Council assigned 6 of the 42 departmentally approved changes as action items for NWCG. These items were generally relating to the Information Technology recommendations to upgrade ROSS and create iRWIn. In 2009, the Interagency Interoperability Oversight Group (IIOG) review of Dispatch found the remaining action items were not completed.

The IIOG sponsored the Interagency Dispatch Improvement Project (IDIP) Steering Committee who chartered the Interagency Dispatch Pilot Project (IDOPP) to look at how to optimize dispatch operations in two geographic areas. These management assessments conducted by the FS, DOI, and state, local, and Tribal partners, each presented alternatives intended to improve dispatching for fire, law enforcement, and resource management personnel. Thematic across these assessments were recommendations for information technology (IT) consistency among the agencies and

partners, standardized governance/funding including written standard operations guidance, and a staffing modeling methodology to determine workload-based staffing for the various dispatch offices.

The focus of the IDIP is to improve program delivery of dispatch services while meeting the mission needs of the FS, DOI, States and their stakeholders. It provides a long-term strategy toward improving safety, efficiency and cost effectiveness in the dispatch and coordination system. The signed Project Plan/Charter is a planning document for the overall IDIP process. It defines the project's scope, assigns roles and responsibilities, and proposes a general communications approach with external and internal audiences.

The IDIP charter provides the authority and sets the framework for establishment of three core working groups funded by the DOI and FS. The working groups will review the previous studies and assessments recommendations and implement them nationally using the most cost effective methods. There remain additional dispatch improvement findings that the agencies will address in IDIP Phase II.

To bring together the work of the three working groups, an IDIP Oversight Team will provide overall project management and ensure that the three core sub-teams use consistent assumptions, approaches, and methodologies and produce comparable deliverables for implementation. The Oversight Team will provide a means to concurrently look at and compare dispatch workload and activities in the three project areas using one methodological approach. The Oversight Team will consolidate the findings into a single report for each study topic that will serve as blueprints for implementation of dispatch improvement throughout the Agencies and contribute to a template for future interagency dispatch optimization projects in other areas.

COMMUNICATION SITUATION

This Communication Plan is designed to establish or enhance communication protocols, networks and strategies to better address concerns and questions from all interested parties and to maintain appropriate communication as the IDIP progresses.

There is a high level of interest in the IDIP among the interagency dispatch community as well as firefighters, external cooperators and contractors who work for or with the Forest Service and DOI in interagency wildland firefighting. It is critical that IDIP oversight team communicate related information appropriately to the field to correct misinformation that may have entered the information channel.

The IDIP oversight team will advise team members and subject matter experts (SME) not to discuss or otherwise release deliberative information outside of the IDIP teams until implementation recommendations are completed. The oversight team will provide recommendations from the IDIP to wildland fire governance entities and agency management in the Forest Service and Department of the Interior for review, approval, and implementation as appropriate.

GOALS

The oversight team will:

- Ensure clear, timely, and direct communication of appropriate information, and prompt response to misinformation, regarding the IDIP;
- Keep employees, customers, and oversight organizations informed about the IDIP, including progress, timelines and recommendations;
- Keep updated information about the IDIP for internal and external audiences at the IDIP website (<http://www.forestsandrangelands.gov/WFIT/applications/IDIP/index.shtml>);
- Maintain the project inbox, IDIP@fs.fed.us by responding to queries, considering suggestions and appropriately incorporating information into the frequently asked questions posted to the websites; and
- Provide information to Executive Leaders so they are able to discuss the IDIP with potentially affected employees and cooperators, and help explain changes that may occur within the FS and DOI.

AUDIENCES

Internal

Wildland Fire Information and Technology (WFIT) Program and Executive Board

The Computer Aided Dispatch Standardization (CADS) team will develop business case and investment proposals for WFIT to review and approve.

USDA and DOI

Leadership from USDA and DOI need information on the implementation plan and strategy developed by the Interagency Dispatch Implementation Project team. Timely information dissemination and clear demonstration of benefits will facilitate support from the Forest Service and DOI wildland fire management agencies.

Forest Service Executive Leadership Team (ELT)

The ELT sets goals and makes recommendations to the Chief, who is the final decision-maker. The ELT must fully understand the implementation plan and strategy developed by the Interagency Dispatch Implementation Project team, as well as the internal and external effects of implementing the recommendations.

DOI Deputy Assistant Secretary and Executive Leadership Team

The DOI leadership set goals and makes recommendations to the Assistant Secretary, who is the final DOI decision-maker on the Interagency Dispatch Implementation Project implementation plan.

The DOI and the Forest Service National Leadership Teams (NLT)

The national leadership of each agency (generally line officers or agency administrators) is responsible for setting the organizational tone for implementation. The team needs significant ownership and buy-in of the implementation plan in order to set that tone. They play a key role in reviewing the IDIP and need to support the implementation, including providing resources.

DOI and Forest Service Regional and State Fire Management Leadership

Fire managers must be able to articulate the results of the IDIP to local governments, cooperators and contractors. The IDIP will ensure this capability by providing timely and relevant information on the website and through telephone and in-person briefings as requested.

Forest Service and DOI Supervisors and Managers

Supervisors and managers need to have significant knowledge and buy-in concerning the IDIP implementation plan in order to manage and direct agency actions regarding dispatch.

DOI and Forest Service Employees

Forest Service and DOI employees, especially those whose jobs may be subject to organizational changes and/or modifications, need information from official and trustworthy sources to minimize misunderstandings and understand the intent of the IDIP implementation plan.

Forest Service Partnership Council (FSPC)

The Forest Service will move forward on recommendations and action items consistent with the provisions of the master agreement with the intent of having the FSPC engaged along the way. To enable this process, there is a FSPC advisory member on the IDIP team.

Fire Executive Council (FEC)

The FEC is the federal fire and aviation leadership council with oversight of National Wildfire Coordination and may be responsible for implementation of a number of key recommendations resulting from the project. The FEC is represented by DOI Director of the Office of Wildland Fire Coordination, the Associate Director of the Aviation Management Directorate, the Director of the BIA Office of Trust Services, Assistant Director of the FWS National Wildlife Refuge System, the Assistant Director of the NPS Visitor and Resource & Protection, the Director of the Forest Service Fire & Aviation Management and the Department of Homeland Security Chief of the U.S. Fire Administration.

National Wildland Fire Coordinating Group (NWCG)

The National Wildfire Coordinating Group (NWCG) is made up of the USDA Forest Service; four Department of the Interior agencies: Bureau of Land Management (BLM), National Park Service (NPS), Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA), and the Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS), and State forestry agencies through the National Association of State Foresters. The purpose of NWCG is to coordinate programs of the participating wildfire management agencies so as to avoid wasteful duplication and to provide a means of constructively working together. Its goal is to provide more effective execution of each agency's fire management program. The group provides a formalized system to agree upon standards of training, equipment, qualifications, and other operational functions.

External

Office of Management and Budget (OMB)

The OMB supports the DOI/Forest Service implementation of the IDIP actions as previous studies and assessment evidence based recommendations have been presented to them and has been incorporated into the Administration's budget direction.

US Congress

The Congress has oversight for all federal agencies including the Forest Service and those in the DOI. It will be important for Congressional members and staffs to receive information about how the DOI and the Forest Service will implement the IDIP recommendations, and what the agencies will gain from proposed changes.

Other Cooperators

Since many local and volunteer responders participate in interagency firefighting efforts, they need to know the recommendations of the IDIP and any changes in operations that may affect them.

APPROACH

For internal communications, the employees and leadership of Forest Service and the DOI need consistent communication. The DOI Assistant Secretary for Policy, Management, and Budget, Forest Service Chief, DOI Directors and other Senior Executives will inform employees about the IDIP through written materials, conference calls or meeting invitations. They will be able to articulate the steps and decisions specifically and, in general, the comprehensive strategies aimed at operating more efficiently and effectively.

For external communications, representatives from Forest Service Fire and Aviation Management and the DOI Office of Wildland Fire Coordination will contact cooperators and the contracting community, as needed. The IDIP project team will coordinate with FS and DOI Legislative Affairs offices as appropriate.

Project information and updates will be posted to the IDIP web page <http://www.forestsandrangelands.gov/WFIT/applications/IDIP/index.shtml>. An email account (IDIP@fs.fed.us) is available for individuals to ask questions or provide input.

TACTICS

Internal

Web Page

The IDIP website: <http://www.forestsandrangelands.gov/WFIT/applications/IDIP/index.shtml>

The web site includes project information, links to previous studies, monthly briefing updates, and frequently asked questions.

Briefings

USDA and DOI leadership receive quarterly status reports from the IDIP Program Manager. The IDIP oversight team will provide updates to leadership, employees, and cooperators through personal briefings, teleconferences, or briefing papers. The IDIP teams will provide executive level talking points to senior leadership.

E-mails

The IDIP@fs.fed.us inbox is available for questions and input to the IDIP project. It will be monitored daily throughout the life of the project.

External

Hill Briefings

The Interagency Dispatch Implementation Project team leads will coordinate with the FS and DOI Legislative Affairs Staffs to schedule briefings. The legislative affairs staffs will prepare and manage a congressional contact plan and implement the plan as needed.

News Media

It will be important to continuously communicate to the public and media any organization changes made as a result of the Interagency Dispatch Implementation Project that will positively affect the ability of the Forest Service and DOI wildland fire management agencies to safely implement the agencies' missions. All media releases and responses will be approved and coordinated with the Fire and Aviation Management (FAM) and Office of Wildland Fire (OWF) Directors. No other channels of media releases or responses are authorized.

Other Cooperators

State and local fire management organizations will be informed of any implementation actions as a result of the Interagency Dispatch Implementation Project. A representative from the National Association of State Foresters (NASF) will be appointed as a member of the project team. Forest Service and DOI leadership will continue the ongoing dialogue to address continued coordination.

PROJECT PLAN

The Project Plan Specifics are available at <http://www.forestsandrangelands.gov/WFIT/applications/IDIP/index.shtml>.

KEY MESSAGES

The focus of the IDIP is to execute the three key deliverables tasked by the Charter which will improve program delivery of dispatch services while meeting the mission needs of the FS and DOI, as well as state, local, and Tribal stakeholders.

Interagency partners have agreed to collaborate on IDIP to ensure the continuation of an effective dispatch organization.

The working groups and subject matter experts for IDIP include representation from the various agencies and states involved in dispatch and field operations.

IDIP will provide implementation recommendations to appropriate wildland fire management governance entities and agency management in the Forest Service and Department of Interior for review, approval, and implementation.

FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Project information and updates are available at <http://www.forestsandrangelands.gov/WFIT/applications/IDIP/index.shtml>.

Individuals are welcome to ask questions or provide input by emailing IDIP@fs.fed.us.