

# MNICS News

Minnesota Incident Command System

Spring 2012

## The new kids on the block – Introducing the IT Team

by Paul Olson

It was no surprise to me that information technology (IT) topics came up during our December MNICS/IMT meeting. Our ability to establish an incident network, connect to the internet, and provide printer and computer support wasn't adequate. We needed to do IT differently.

Out of that meeting, came a motivated group of staff who devised a plan and solutions. Thus began the IT Working Team.

### Our plan of attack

**1 – Include a Computer Technical Specialist (CTSP) with the IMT – a person who understands fire camp IT issues and is familiar with MNICS PC kits and ISuite software.**

To build depth, we held a Webinar over the winter. IT staff learned about living in fire camp, IT issues,

IMT assignments and the expectations of a CTSP position.

During a hands-on readiness workshop, IT staff tested PCs and network equipment, and installed and configured ISuite.

We set weekly rotations, assigned an experienced and a trainee CTSP to each team and contacted team Plans Section Chiefs to ensure quick CTSP dispatch.

### **2 – Update and improve MIFC PC kits, Internet connectivity and networking equipment.**

- Network routers and switches were replaced with new and faster equipment. A cellular router was purchased for quick, temporary internet connection in areas with cellular coverage.
- Multi-function printer contracts were established and

two large format plotters were readied as mobile resources.

- The USFS installed satellite internet service and network equipment at the Seagull Ranger Station, making this remote station ready as an incident command post.
- As DNR purchases new laptops, the old ones will go to MIFC to rebuild PC kits. After that, a mid-season prep and readiness session will be needed.

### **3 – Build for “the Future of the Future” of the IT Working Team**

OK, so I stole that one from Don McCleod. We need to keep our network and PC kits updated and functional. I am confident that as CTSPs gain experience, they will bring in creative, new solutions.

We will continue developing CTSP standard operating procedures (SOPs) as the CTSPs understand the issues and problems.

If you or any of your staff are interested in being a CTSP or being involved on the IT working team, let me know. This is an organizational year for the team and we're just getting started.

**IT initial members:** Chair Paul Olson, Ann Sampson, BJ Glesener, Shelly Sentyrz, and Tom Kaase. Task Force Liaison Scott Bressler



Keeping connected during incidents has been a challenge especially in remote areas. The IT Working Team is addressing these issues. Photo: Pagami Creek Fire, 2011



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## MNICS staff changes

### US Forest Service

The new Fire Management Officer for the Superior/Chippewa National Forests, located at MIFC, is Douglas Ottosen. He is currently the Deputy Fire Staff Officer on the Kaibab NF in Arizona. He will start June 17. He replaces Henry Goehle. He will be on the MNICS Task Force.

Replacing Superior National Forest Supervisor Jim Sanders is Brenda Halter-Glenn. She will start in mid-May and will serve on the MNICS Board of Directors.

### Minnesota DNR

Air dispatch has two new dispatchers: Ginger Humphrey and Anna Hines (former seasonal dispatcher for the DNR NE Region).

Paul Wannarka, most recently with the MN DNR Northwest Region, Red River Valley planning, is the new fixed-wing specialist at MIFC.

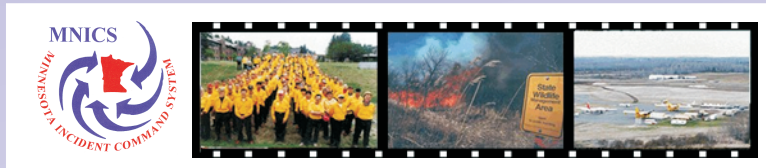
Cynthia Sage is the new NE Region Dispatcher. She has been working at MIFC in information, dispatch, and as MNICS Task Force recorder.

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# [www.MNICS.org](http://www.MNICS.org)

## Check it out



## Information Management Working Team

by Jean Bergerson

The [www.MNICS.org](http://www.MNICS.org) site is officially on the Wordpress format and the old Dreamweaver site has been archived.

For the second year in a row, a series of training sessions was held to assist users in learning the new format. This included an onsite session at the Spring Fire Information Officers meeting and a series of four Webinars.

Shelly Sentyrz hosted the sessions. The Webinars were recorded so those who want to review the sessions can do so later. Contact Shelly for information on how to access the recorded version.

Bringing the Twitter site up and keeping it updated is the next project on the team's priority list.

The fire public information officers (PIOs) now have a site to share information and handy tools. It is located on the password-protected side of [www.MNICS.org](http://www.MNICS.org) under Information Management. Templates for information plans, certificates, narratives and other "tools of the trade" are available for PIOs to access as needed.

To add information, load it on the page using your Wordpress log-in. Or, send the information to site administrators or editors so they can load it for you. Fire PIOs welcome any information that would be helpful while working on an incident.

*Information Management  
Chair Jean Bergerson  
Task Force Liaison Ron Stoffel*



Fire prevention billboard for St. Croix Valley Blowdown in Pine County. See [www.mndnr.gov](http://www.mndnr.gov) and search for "blowdown"

## Unusual December – Boxing Day Fire

The Minnesota DNR responded to over 40 wildfires during December alone – more than any of the last 29 years, except for 2002.

The largest Minnesota fire in December 2011 was the Boxing Day Fire near Gully in Polk county. It started Dec. 26, 2011.

Some 70 fire staff battled the fire and the elements to extinguish the 795 acre fire.

Of those acres, 200 were in peat. “Peat fires are especially difficult to put out in the winter,” said Brian Pisarek who served as IC.

Weather conditions limited water use and threatened frostbite.

Hoses, pumps and other equipment froze. Water sources were iced over so flooding peatlands didn’t work. Also, much of the active peat fire was under

timber, which required work with heavy equipment.

Another challenge was an underground gas pipeline that cut the fire in half. The peat fire threatened to burn into the pipeline. The line was 30 inches deep and heavy equipment needed to stay off of the line.

The fire was contained and put on patrol status on Jan. 3, 2012.



*Upper left: Warroad Smokechasers Leif Eidsmoe and Wayne Thompson, along with roughly 70 other firefighters, battled the Boxing Day Fire under miserable conditions. Upper right: Snow and ice made getting around treacherous, but helped firefighters locate hot spots. Below: Firefighters relied heavily on equipment.*



## *Air Operations Working Team* by Bill Schuster

For 2012, the Air Operations Working Team identified 20 work issues and has completed 15.

Early this year, the Eastern Area Aviation Training Academy was held in Duluth. Previously this training was only available in Boise, Idaho. The training included 36 classes – 69 students attended, for a total of 424 classroom seats filled.

Ten agencies provided instructors and/or students: US Forest Service, National Park Service, US Fish and Wildlife Service, Minnesota DNR, Bureau of Land Management, Office of Aviation Services, Bureau of Indian Affairs, Wisconsin DNR, US Geological Survey and New Jersey Forest Fire Service.

Duluth was also the site of the Annual MNICS/GLFFC Aviation Meeting in March. MNICS agencies and staff from Ontario, Manitoba and Wisconsin shared information and updated agreements.

The 2012 spring fire season began early, with the USFS Exclusive Use Helicopter at Ely responding to a DNR Central Region fire on March 9.

With no snow cover and frozen lakes, the DNR used SEATs and helicopters during the early season.

The BIA CL-215 started March 30 in Bemidji, two State CL-215s on April 1 in Brainerd, the Fire Boss on April 3 in Anoka and two federal contract tankers on April 20 in Bemidji.

As of April 22, aircraft provided the following support: CL-215s – 12 fires (one in the Michigan Upper Peninsula), SEATs – 12 fires, Fire Boss – 1 fire, helicopters – 102 fires statewide.

In April, training with the Minnesota Army National Guard Chinook and Blackhawk helicopters, an ATGS and the Heli-well tank took place at Camp Ripley. Two Blackhawks were used on the Jeep Fire near Nimrod.

The Minnesota State Patrol has Type III helicopters available to support fire suppression efforts. Patrol pilots are receiving wildfire flight instruction.

Another issue under study is whether tanker bases in Minnesota can host Modular Airborne Firefighting Systems (MAFFS) which use a tank system mounted in Military C-130 airplanes. Hosting one would be valuable because only a few large retardant air tankers are available nationwide.

*Air Operations Chair Bill Schuster  
Task Force Liaison Ron Stoffel*

## *Dispatch Working Team*

by Ken Guith

Approximately 56 dispatchers and fire team leaders attended the spring MIFC Dispatch Meeting in Grand Rapids on March 15.

In 2010, the team recommended scheduling D-310, D-311, and D-312 at the Minnesota Wildfire Academy.

All three courses will be offered in the next couple of years:

- D-310 *Expanded Support Dispatcher*, June 4-8, 2012
- D-311 *Initial Attack Dispatcher*, 2013
- D-312 *Aircraft Dispatcher*, 2014

D-110 *Expanded Dispatch Recorder/Basic ROSS* will be held each year in February or March. This March, 17 students attended Dispatch Recorder and 20 attended Basic ROSS.

The Dispatch Working Team is coordinating with the Prevention Working Team to plan an Open House at MIFC for late summer.

*Dispatch Chair Ken Guith  
Task Force liaison Tom Fasteland*



*Above: A CL-215 prepares to scoop water from a river.*

*Left: The Heli-well 5,000-gallon steel tank is an option for use with a portable retardant plant, used here with a Blackhawk helicopter.*

# Jeep Fire

On Easter Sunday, April 8, 2012, DNR Forestry, the Wadena Sheriff's Office and fire departments from Sebeka, Verndale, Staples, Menahga and Wadena responded to the Jeep Fire, three miles south of Nimrod, Minnesota. Their efforts were supported by 13 Type-6 wildland engines, nine dozers, five all-terrain track vehicles, three helicopters and three CL-215 water scooping aircraft.

Initial attack and early suppression were hampered by difficult access to much of the fire, heavy fuels, warm temperatures, strong gusty winds and low relative humidity.

By that evening, MNICS Incident Management Team A (IC Mike Aultman) was on its way to the fire. The Wadena County Sheriff evacuated several homes to protect citizens. By early morning line had been constructed around most of the perimeter

Monday and Tuesday's efforts focused on extinguishing areas of burning peat and mopping up smokes within 150 feet of the fire perimeter. Fire crews were assisted by two National Guard Black Hawk Helicopters. Cooler temperatures and calmer winds helped firefighters achieve full containment (mineral soil fire break around entire perimeter) on Tuesday.

Work to rehabilitate dozer lines began on Wednesday. Fire Crews continued to work on hot spots and smokes.

There were no injuries to the public or firefighters. Property losses included a permanent residence with attached garage, three outbuildings at that residence, a mobile home being used as a hunting cabin, a portable camper, an outbuilding and an outhouse.

The fire burned 1520 acres.



*Above: Firefighters dowse hotspots in heavy fuels. Center: Conservation Corps Minnesota crew gridding. Below: Aerial view of Jeep Fire.*





**25 Seconds:** During one spring refresher (right), warm weather brought students outside to deploy shelters. Amanda Graning, National Weather Service, Duluth, deployed her shelter within the required 25 seconds under the watchful eye of instructor Harlow Thompson and media cameras.



## Training Working Team by Barb Meyer

2012 is off to a busy start for the MNICS Training Working Team. To date, the following courses have been completed:

- RX-341 Prescribed Fire Planning – Jan. 23-27; 23 students
- S-203 Introduction to Incident Information – Feb 6-10; 17 students
- S-390 Fire Behavior Calculations – Feb. 27-March 2; 19 students
- D-110 Dispatch Recorder – March 5-8; 15 students

The MNICS Priority Trainee list has been compiled and submitted to MIFC Dispatch for 2012. This list will be used during the fire dispatch season to identify priority needs and move trainees through the task book process.

Registration is well under way for the 2012 Minnesota Wildfire Academy June 4-8. Please use the

registration materials in the academy brochure. Registration is through Mesabi Range College at <http://mesabi.fire.project.mnscu.edu/>

The Team is planning for 2013. To help with long-term strategy, each July we put out a Training Needs Assessment. The assessment goes to all agency fire management officers. The results help us plan for training in 2013 and 2014.

Please let your agency fire management officer know what training you need to meet goals.

Check the Minnesota Combined Training Calendar for information about upcoming courses. <http://www.dnr.state.mn.us/forestry/fire/training/calendar.html>

*Training Chair Brenda Miles  
Task Force Liaison Scott Bressler*

## GIS Working Team by Shelly Sentryz

The MNICS pool of Geographic Information Systems Specialists (GISS) is flush after a well-attended spring refresher. There are now eight qualified GISSs and 14 trainees. Darryl Holman, USFS, has stepped down from Team C to the alternate pool. Carl Hardzinski, BIA, has taken his place on the team.

Those who attended the GISS spring refresher discussed a creative way to supplement the lead GISS on an incident: remote assistance. If there are short periods of high needs, ordering a second GISS, but allowing them to work remotely from their home unit, may prove more efficient than the GISSs traveling to the ICP.

The GISS staff on the roster have

the tools and skills to implement this immediately. Plans Section Chiefs, Situation Unit Leaders, Dispatch, and the Task Force have been informed of this possibility.

Several technology issues the GIS Working Team has focused on have moved to the new IT Working Team (printer contracts, CTSP support and updating laptop kits).

The GIS Working Team is now focusing efforts on new regional and statewide datasets, Canadian data sharing agreements, GIS software configurations, GPS background map, and knowledge of the US National Grid.

*GIS Chair Shelly Sentryz  
Task Force Liaison Roy Holmes*

## Prescribed Fire/Fuels Working Team

by BJ Glesener

The Prescribed Fire/Fuels Working Team approved and created a process to phase in electronic reporting of prescribed fire notifications on [www.MNICS.org](http://www.MNICS.org).

Practitioners won't see any change to notification of intent to burn. They will, however, need to be aware of one change – reporting of black acres for completed burns.

This reporting can be done online by going to the Prescribed Fire and Fuels Working Team page and selecting *Prescribed Burn Accomplishment Reporting*.

Initial reporting is handled at MIFC or the DNR regions. Post burn reporting is done by the responsible agency on an online spreadsheet.

Excerpts from the **Rationale page**:

*“... there is an increased need to accurately report “black” acres that are the result of prescribed burning ... Each agency has had their own process for collecting data and providing numbers to MIFC ... for the Smoke Management Plan (SMP) ... Often these numbers are agency total acreage which lacks the resolution to identify specific events ... [which] may need to be investigated thoroughly if a non-attainment event should occur.*

*... a single ... data-set for [all] agencies ... can be queried quickly to identify events ... [and] can be distributed to ... EPA and MPCA to more accurately model future National Emissions Inventories (NIEs).*

*The MNICS Prescribed Fire Working Team will annually ... collect and review information on acres burned by fuel type with prescribed fire and/or wildland fire use ... review acres of prescribed burns by fuel type and any associated air quality issues ... provide information on acres burned and complaints registered and provide other pertinent information to the MNICS Task Force and the state Air Quality Director ...*

To report your black acres, follow the post burn instructions on the **Rationale** page at [http://mnics.org/wordpress/?page\\_id=5097](http://mnics.org/wordpress/?page_id=5097)

The Working Team monitors the needs and requirements in the SMP to keep it a valid working document. If you have questions or thoughts, please contact your MNICS representative on the team.

*Prescribed Fire Chair BJ Glesener  
Task Force Liaison Greg Peterson*

## Finance Working Team

The Finance Working Team is looking for representatives from other agencies to fill out the team. Right now, they have members from the USFS, MN DNR and National Park Service.

Finance courses S-260 and S-261 are scheduled for the Minnesota Wildfire Academy in June.

The team is working on updating the mini-Incident Business Management Handbook. They will submit a request for assistance to the Task Force for printing if needed. In addition, they will post the handbook on [www.MNICS.org](http://www.MNICS.org).

Brenda Miles, team member, is on the Eastern Area Incident Business Working Team. As a result of some issues experienced with Ads last year, that team has drafted a Payment Toolkit. These documents should help vendors and ADs from the US Department of Agriculture and the US Department of Interior clarify procedures they need to follow for payment.

*Finance Chair Randee Olson  
Task Force Liaison Brian Jenkins*

## Logistics Working Team by Don Lantz

The Logistics Working Team had a large turnout at the MNICS Annual Meeting. The team elected a chair and set goals for the year.

Because of a shortage of logistics personnel for MNICS teams and nationally, recruitment for logistics positions is particularly important.

The team is designing a portable display to take to meetings and other events to show people what logistics has to offer.

Thanks to Deb Bruyere, we have a

template for the display. The team is working on the details and looking for funding. We hope to have the display completed before the next MNICS Annual Meeting.

Another assignment was to create a logistics page on [www.MNIC.org](http://www.MNIC.org). That is complete. We now want to add useful material to the page. We hope to have that completed by the end of the year.

Our last assignment is to make a trailer available for the medical unit on incidents within the state.

This will provide a more secure place for treating patients and for storing medical records and supplies. That request has been brought to the MNICS Task Force.

We also would like to get people with logistics task books out on training assignments. This year is shaping up to provide such opportunities with the weather and dry fuel conditions.

*Logistics Chair Terry O'Connor  
Task Force Liaison Roy Holmes*

## Operations Working Team

by Aaron Mielke

The Operations Working Team has two main projects on the agenda this year.

The first is to make sure the MNICS Type-2 IA crews have enough leadership for four crews to begin rotation June 11 after the Minnesota Wildfire Academy.

Applications for crew members went out in January and four crew bosses were selected in February. Then crew bosses selected leadership for each crew.

Crew bosses are Mike Maki, USFS; Jared Culbertson, USFWS; Craig Shultz, MN DNR; and Dan Oberg, AD. Crew positions include an alternate crew boss, crew boss trainee, and three FFT1/ICT5s.

Crews will have a cohesion meeting May 10 to review expectations, procedures and logistics and to participate in team building.

Another project is a *Fire Suppression Field Pocket Guide*. Many crew members have received reference guides while on assignments in other geographic areas. The guides include information on fire in that particular area.

The *Minnesota Fire Suppression Field Pocket Guide* has Minnesota-specific topics such as hazards, equipment, communication, fire behavior and tactics unique to fire in Minnesota.

The Guide is designed for incoming resources that may not be familiar with fire fighting in Minnesota, but it also provides good information for the seasoned Minnesota firefighter.

The pocket guide is available at [www.MNICS.org](http://www.MNICS.org) under the Operations Working Team.

*Operations Chair Aaron Mielke  
Task Force Liaison Brian Jenkins*

## Communications Working Team

by Marv Nygaard

The Communications Working Team is working on several issues

### **Issue 1: Availability of repeaters**

The team suggested replacing two of the state (C-1, C-2) Daniels repeaters with a current model that has UHF link capabilities. Pat Coughlin initiated the paperwork to move this forward. It is currently being reviewed by DNR purchasing authorities.

### **Issue 2: Personnel and equipment for upcoming season**

The Team is working on a spring communications refresher course to prepare for the upcoming fire season. Discussions with the Training Working Team and Task Force would enhance the opportunity for equipment provisions from NIICD.

The team is also working on making sure communications trailers have proper equipment for the upcoming season, along with check out and operation of the two portable communications trailers.

### **Issue 4: Efficient deployment of 100' and 50' portable towers**

The team is investigating the viability of using a 12V DC winch to put up the towers.

### **Issue 5: Positioning of repeaters**

The team is also identifying tower locations for improving radio coverage in marginal areas and investigating the possibility of pre-positioning/mounting antennas and cables at strategically located tower sites throughout the state for timely response to incidents.

**Mission:** The Communications Working Team (CWT) is an interagency group made up of individuals from various state and federal agencies tasked to enhance the safe operation of incidents by optimizing the communications capabilities of all personnel involved in an incident.

*Communications  
Chair Marv Nygaard  
Task Force Liaison Don Lantz*

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## Prevention Working Team

by Mimi Barzen

The Prevention Working Team has two project goals for 2012.

The first is the annual MIFC Open House in late summer or early fall in conjunction with the Dispatch Working Team.

The second project is Fire Prevention Day at the Minnesota Twins game on June 9 when the Twins meet the Chicago Cubs at 1:10 pm. Smokey Bear and fire prevention will be a part of the game mix that day.

The Prevention Team will hand out promotional items prior to the game and then set up a kiosk to play a game and educate fans. We will ask attendees a question about fire prevention and they will receive a prize, regardless of their

response. If they answer correctly, they go directly to the next station. If their response is incorrect, they will hear less than 30-seconds of information on that question. The prize they receive is determined by the spin of a wheel, indicating prizes.



Please visit Smokey at the **Minnesota Twins** game June 9.

*Prevention Chair Pegg Julson  
Task Force Liaison Jean Goad*