



MINNESOTA INCIDENT COMMAND SYSTEM

2023 ANNUAL REPORT

Minnesota Incident Command System

2023 MNICS Board of Directors

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2023 MNICS Task Force

Greg Carlson (Chair)	Fire Management Officer Voyageurs National Park
Cory Berg	Fire Management Officer Bureau of Indian Affairs
Jacob Beauregard	Mutual Aid and Logistics Coordinator Homeland Security and Emergency Management
Darrin Franco (acting)	West Zone Fire Management Officer U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service
Nick Petrack	Forest Fire Management Officer U.S. Forest Service
William Glesener	Wildfire Operations Supervisor Minnesota Department of Natural Resources

MNICS Mission

To provide coordination, education and implementation of the Incident Command System in Minnesota and support fire and all-risk incidents nationwide.

MNICS Goals

- Provide timely, safe and cost-effective mobilization and demobilization of resources under the closest forces concept.
- Collect and disseminate intelligence data within specified local and national time frames.
- Assess capabilities within Minnesota to respond to critical emergency situations.



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Message from the Task Force

As 2023 draws to a close, I think about the partners and cooperators who played critical roles in establishing the Minnesota Incident Command System (MNICS). The founders of MNICS had the vision and motivation 39 years ago to develop an interagency system that made for safer, more efficient, and cost-effective fire response throughout Minnesota. What they achieved is a model unlike any other in the United States. Over time, MNICS has seen many changes – in equipment, training, and technology – but the core idea of what MNICS can achieve through interagency partnerships remains the same.

The motivation that drove our founding members is as strong today as when MNICS evolved. This year, we proudly mobilized several MNICS Type 3 Teams who effectively managed and suppressed wildfires in Minnesota and Montana. The strong participation is a direct result of the recruitment and training efforts you contribute to that enable us to keep rostering great people, strengthen team cohesion, and achieve MNICS goals like the Type 3 Team national availability goal achieved this season.

The Minnesota Wildfire Academy continues to provide a model training environment, ensuring quality development for our future wildland fire leaders. It is a strong reflection of our dedicated agency trainers and academy coordinators who put great effort into making a week of learning appear seamless.

Throughout 2023, the public messaging effort to inform the public about fire danger and restrictions proved effective. Minnesota Resources continued supporting national firefighting efforts and offered their incredible skills and abilities to help our fellow international Canadian firefighters during their historic fire season.

MNICS comprises many moving parts, from the Board of Directors, Task Force, Incident Management Teams, and Working Teams to the support positions and field responders. You all contributed to an incredible year in supporting wildland fire. Thank you. Because of the interagency work you carry out daily, MNICS continues to find the motivation to strive.

While no one can reliably predict the unforeseen challenges we may face in 2024, I am confident each of you will continue to rise above, as you always do, and meet the ever-evolving needs that allow MNICS to be a model of success.

*Greg Carlson (NPS)
MNICS 2023 Task Force Chair*



Gust Fire, Itasca County, Photo Credit: Karl Gaalaas, Minnesota Department of Natural Resources

Minnesota Incident Command System Fire Intelligence

Fire Situation Review

Record-setting snowfall followed by low precipitation with expanding drought and air quality extremes were notable throughout the 2023 wildfire season. As the record-setting snowpack delayed the onset of the spring fire season for the northern half of Minnesota, far southern Minnesota faced fire weather conditions influenced by the lingering Great Plains drought in early April. The official onset of Minnesota's 2023 wildfire season occurred on April 10. The spring fire season trended well below average, though activity steadily increased throughout May.

The season's largest fires were recorded in Marshall County, occurring between April 30 and May 3 within a 10-mile distance of each other. The Berg Fire (1,725 acres) was detected near the Agassiz National Wildlife Refuge on April 30, and the SE Thief Lake Fire (1,702 acres) was detected on May 3.



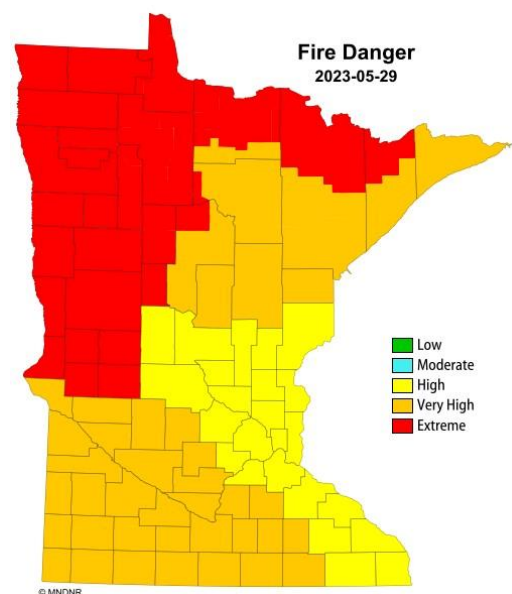
Smoke-filled sky at MIFC on May 16, 2023

By Mid-May, poor air quality settled across the region as smoke from the historic Canadian wildfires drifted in from the north and combined with a rise in ozone particulate matter and warm temperatures. The Minnesota Pollution Control Agency issued more than 50 days of air quality alerts from May through September.

Fire occurrence steadily climbed from late spring through the first half of summer as an extended dry pattern settled across north and central Minnesota, and fire levels nearly reached the 10-year average for June.

The elevated fire occurrence and very high fire danger conditions during the progression of the spring dip throughout northeast Minnesota, along with the steady rise in summer recreation, prompted the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, Superior National Forest and the Boise Fort, Grand Portage and Fond du Lac Tribes to implement campfire and Class 3 burning restrictions for the four counties in the arrowhead region of northeast Minnesota. The restrictions remained in effect from June 13 – July 3.

By mid-July, sporadic but timelier precipitation helped ease fire danger, and the fire occurrence dipped below average for the remainder of the summer. More frequent precipitation events returned to Minnesota in mid-September, holding fire conditions stable throughout October and the first half of November.

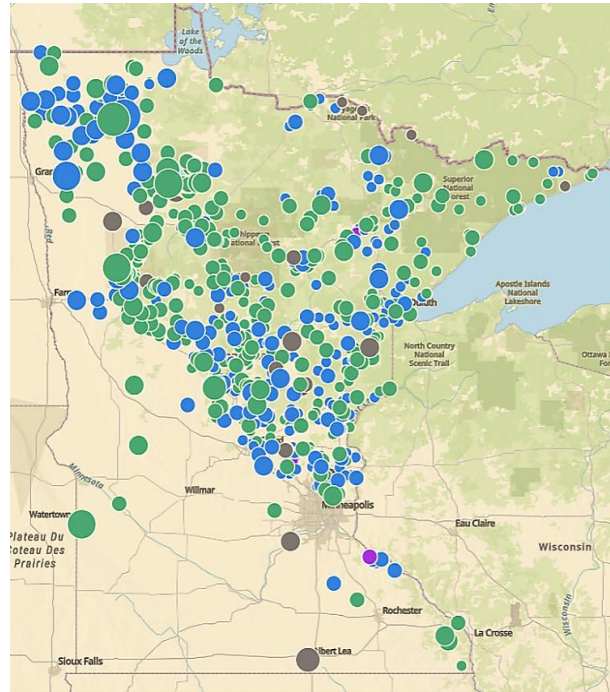


Minnesota Incident Command System Fire Intelligence

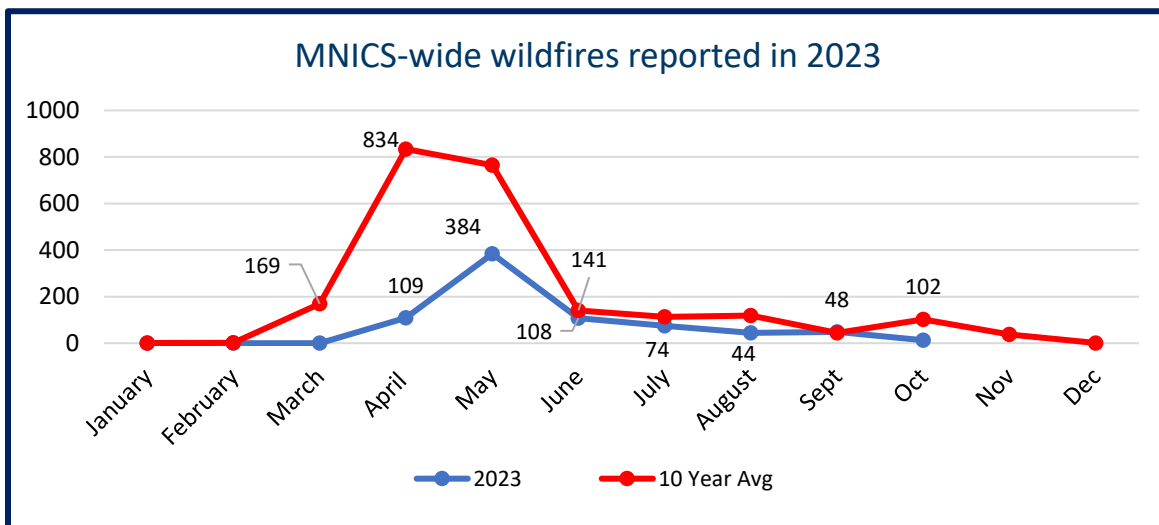
2023 Wildfire Activity

Agency	Wildfires	Acres
Bureau of Indian Affairs	178	1,180
USDA Forest Service	29	42
U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service	19	2,538
National Park Service	3	1
State	584	4,902
2023 Totals	813	8,663

Totals recorded from January 1 through November 15, 2023



2023 recorded locations of wildfire activity

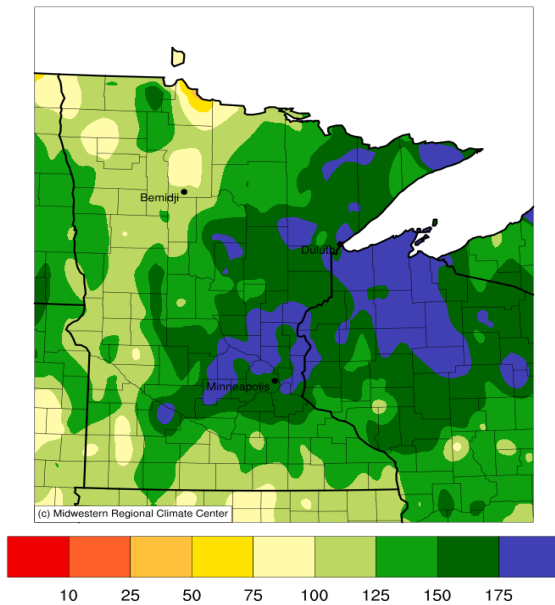


2023 Fire Season Weather Summary

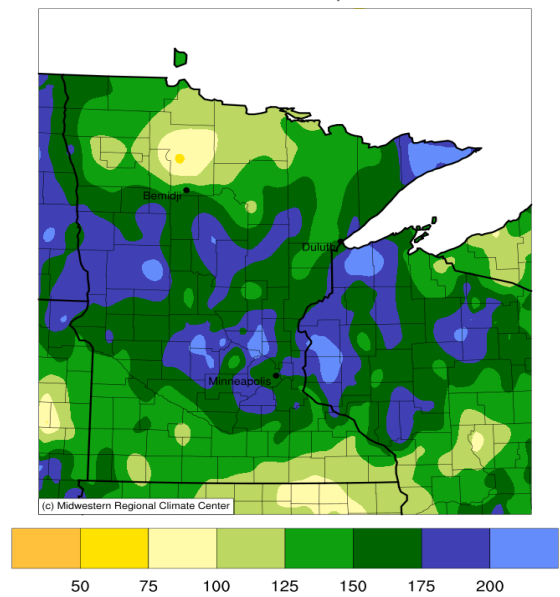
Minnesota was dominated by three distinct precipitation patterns in 2023. Winter and early spring were wet and snowy. Late spring and summer were dry. Wet conditions returned in the fall.

The fire season began with near-record snowfall over the winter that transitioned into a spring of flooding on all the major river systems throughout Minnesota. The wet weather did not last, as summer rains vanished by the height of the growing season. Long stretches of no precipitation and well above-normal temperatures marked the weather conditions from May through August. The driest conditions ranged from Bemidji to Duluth and south. Several locations across southern Minnesota experienced precipitation deficits exceeding 10 inches during this time.

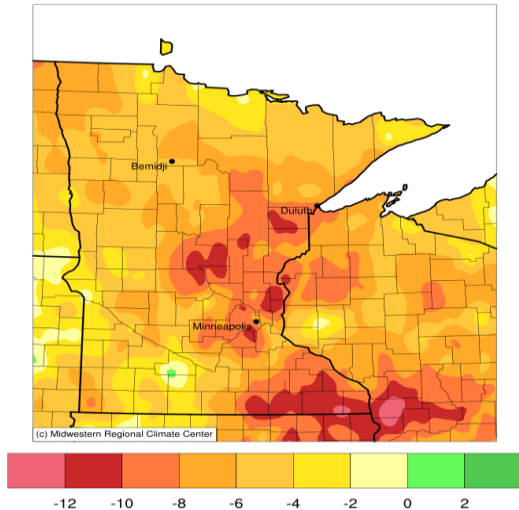
Accumulated Precipitation (in): Percent of 1991-2020 Normals
November 01, 2022 to April 30, 2023



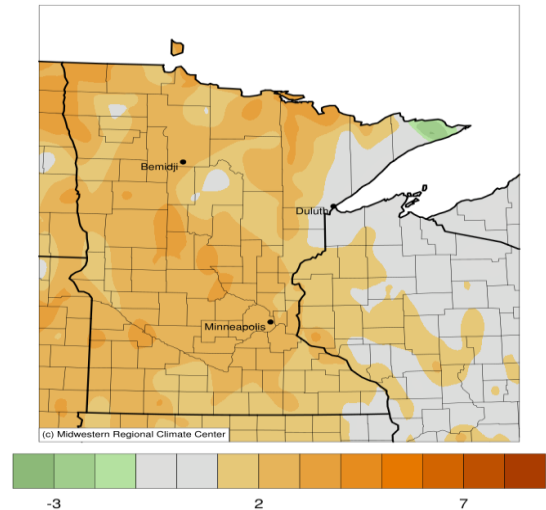
Accumulated Snowfall (in): Percent of 1991-2020 Normals
November 01, 2022 to April 30, 2023



Accumulated Precipitation (in): Departure from 1991-2020 Normals
May 01, 2023 to August 31, 2023

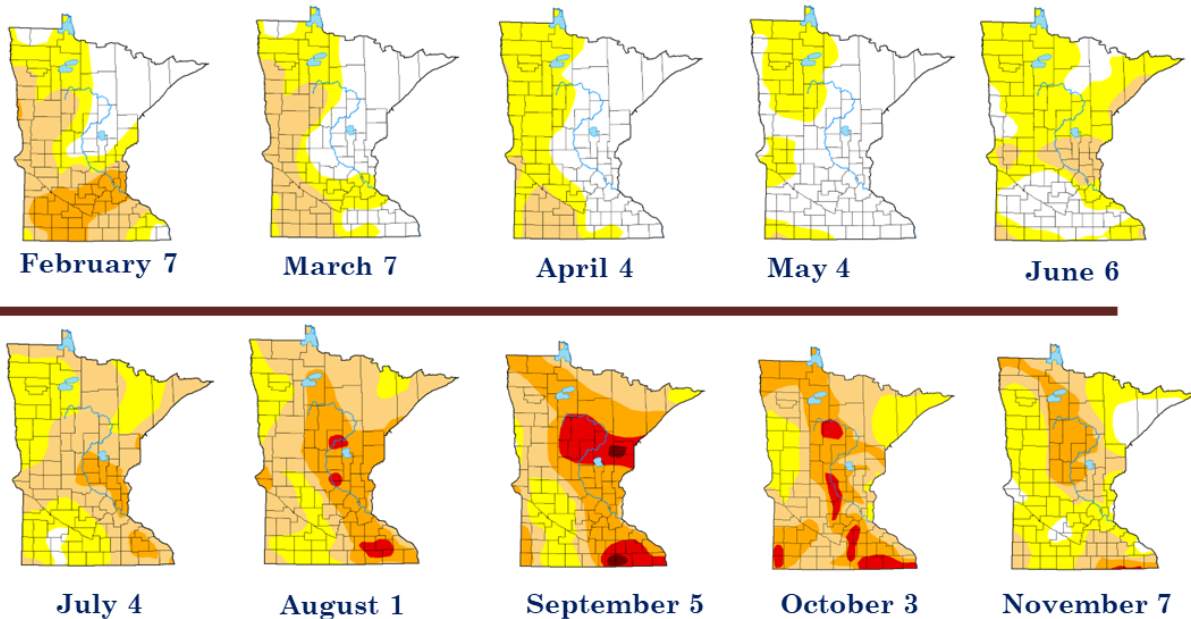


Average Temperature (°F): Departure from 1991-2020 Normals
May 01, 2023 to August 31, 2023



National Weather Service

2023 Minnesota Drought Progression

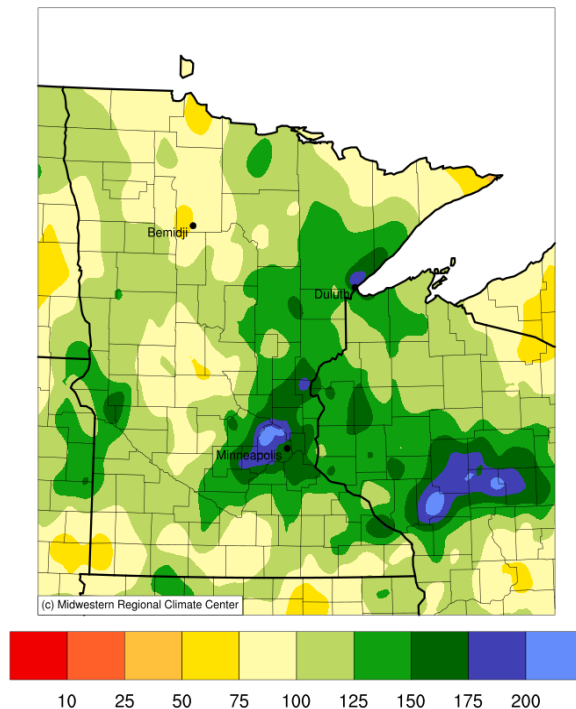


Drought Impact

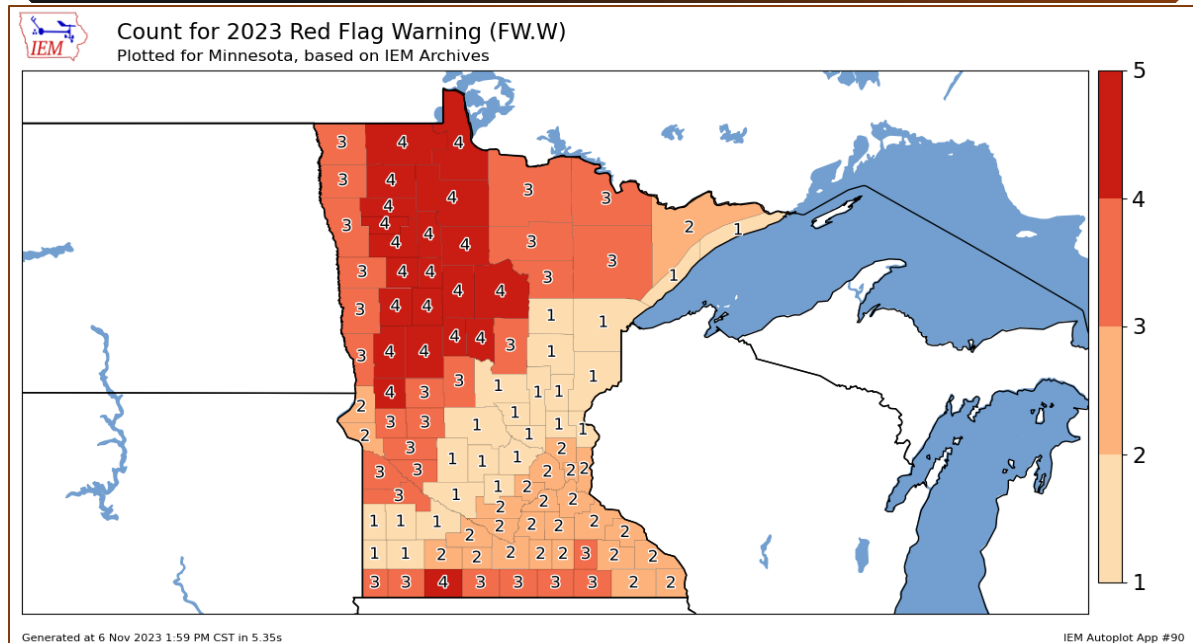
Drought conditions steadily increased throughout Minnesota as dry conditions combined with above-average temperatures from June through mid-September. The drought peaked on September 12, with 98.5% of Minnesota covered by D1 moderate drought. A few pockets in Minnesota – southwest of Duluth and southwest of Rochester – reached the maximum D4 exceptional drought level.

Then, as quickly as the drought set in, it departed as very wet conditions descended upon Minnesota in September and October, spanning from the Twin Cities to Duluth. After peaking in early September, the percentage of Minnesota covered by at least the D1 drought had reduced to 44% in early November, and the D4 drought concerns vanished.

Accumulated Precipitation (in): Percent of 1991-2020 Normals
September 01, 2023 to October 31, 2023



National Weather Service



Number of times a county was included in a Red Flag Warning in 2023

Fire Weather

What did all of this mean for fire weather conditions in 2023? The snowy winter followed by spring flooding crammed the spring fire weather season into the last few weeks of April and May. By the end of May, a typical count of Red Flag warnings occurred, with every county in Minnesota receiving at least one Red Flag Warning. Most of the Northwest counties received four warnings this year.

The Red Flag Warnings were clustered into three distinct periods this spring. The first occurred on April 12, when Red Flag Warnings from the Central Plains extended north to the I-90 corridor. The Red Flag Warning expanded on April 13, covering the southeast third of Minnesota. The second round of active fire weather occurred on May 1 and May 2. The Red Flag Warnings issued on May 1 included the northwest region. The following day, the warning expanded nearly state-wide. The final stretch of active fire weather occurred on May 27 and again on May 29, with Red Flag Warnings covering portions of northern Minnesota both days.

The dry weather periods throughout the summer resulted in more wildfire activity than usual during June, but no Red Flag weather days occurred in the summer months. Heavy rains moved into the region in September and October and shut down the potential for a fall fire season.

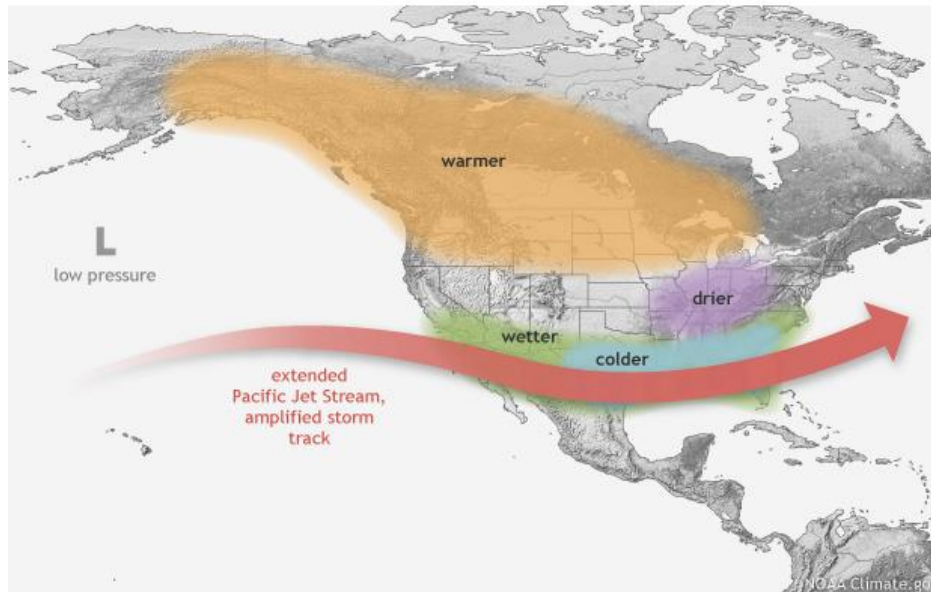
El Niño Winter Forecast

We head into the winter of 2023 and 2024 with an El Niño climate pattern in place over the tropical Pacific Ocean. Minnesota's El Niño weather pattern tends to tilt heavily toward above-normal temperatures and below-normal snowfall. However, El Niño winters in Minnesota have often brought winter rain. A warmer winter is likely to result in an earlier onset of a spring fire season.

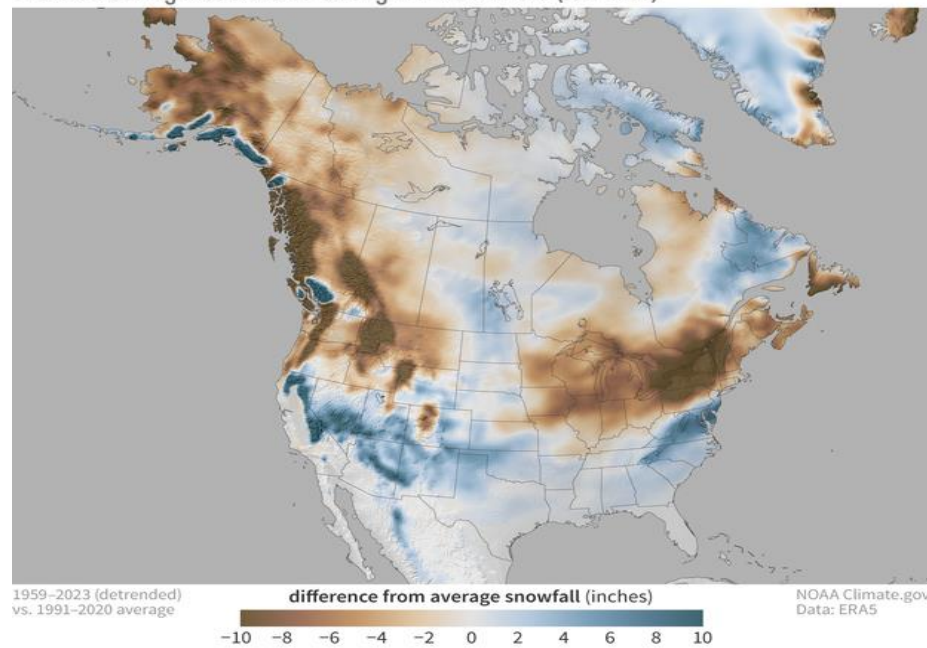


National Weather Service

WINTER EL NIÑO PATTERN



Snowfall during moderate-to-strong El Niño winters (Jan-Mar)



MNICS Type 3 Teams Reach National Mobility Goal

The MNICS Type 3 Incident Management Teams have envisioned expanding their availability to reach beyond Minnesota since their formation in 2019. The collective thought centered on greater opportunity to exercise the teams when fire conditions were low in Minnesota, fostering stronger team cohesion, and seeking out training opportunities to broaden skills and stretch abilities beyond every team member's comfort zone.

On August 1, 2023, the MNICS Teams achieved their goal. A combined MNICS Type 3 Team, led by Incident Commander Jeb Backe, mobilized to the nearly 7,000-acre Bowles Creek Fire by Philipsburg, Montana.

"Having the opportunity to pull this team together and watching it progress into a great assignment was incredible," said Jeb Backe, MNICS Type 3 Incident Commander assigned to the Bowles Creek Fire. "I believe it helped build people's comfort with our teams and strengthened our camaraderie overall."

With Minnesota's fire conditions stabilizing by late July, the MNICS teams had an opportunity to test-run a one-week availability for a national assignment starting in early August. Backe worked with the Minnesota Interagency Coordination Center to reach out to the Eastern Area Coordination Center to better understand current national needs as he built an ad-hoc roster of team members from all three MNICS teams.



Photo credit to InciWeb Bowles Creek Fire

The Team immediately received a request for an international fire assignment in Alberta, Canada. Due to the complexity of international agreements that limited team membership to federal employees, Backe chose to decline the international assignment.

Soon after, a request to manage the Bowles Creek Fire came through for the MNICS Team. With the Eastern Area Incident Management Team on assignment in Alberta, Canada, the Team was short a few key positions in logistics and public information. Once the Team arrived in Montana, these positions were successfully filled with resource orders.

The Bowles Creek Fire was an ongoing incident when the MNICS Team arrived. They assumed management of the fire from a Northern Rockies Type 3 Team.

"While this felt like a traditional fire out west, we quickly recognized the logistical challenges we were working with. We had to improve the limited fire camp infrastructure, ensure we stayed within the Type 3 caterer's limitations while managing up to 300 people assigned to the fire, and adapt to the Starlink Satellite Internet network," said Backe. "Having the MNICS working relationships in place was a huge part of our success on this assignment, and the amount of training we accomplished and the interest that grew in our team's capabilities was fantastic."

The Team managed the Bowles Creek Fire for 14 days before transferring management to a Type 3 Great Basin Team. Backe shared that every team member walked away from this assignment with an incredible experience that will improve the team dynamics in Minnesota and beyond. When asked if he would do it again, his simple answer rang loud and clear – YES.

Interested in joining the MNICS Type 3 Teams? Contact your local fire management officer or fire team leadership to learn more about the available team opportunities and how to apply.



Minnesota Interagency Coordination Center



MNCC Season Review

The 2023 fire season was one of the slowest – nationwide – in nearly 25 years. Despite the potential for an active fire season early this summer, Minnesota didn't produce fire activity like the 2021 season we all anticipated was upon us. While the season was statically slower, the Minnesota Interagency Coordination (MNCC) dispatching efforts were far from slow.

Staffing

MNCC started the year off wishing former Center Manager, Mike Mackey, many thanks and well wishes as he transitioned into a new fire position on the Chippewa National Forest. MNCC also welcomed Ryan Johnson, assistant center manager – operations, Angela Harvieux, operations lead dispatcher, and Jerrod Hegwood, aviation lead dispatcher. Nationally, dispatch positions have reached critical short falls. MNCC recognizes the immense value of the robust staff we have supporting dispatching needs for all MNICS partners.

Shout Out! – Thank you to all the in and out-of-state dispatchers who accepted short-term assignments to support MNCC during the critical shortfalls this season.

Technology Upgrades

The nationwide roll out of WildCAD-e occurred mid-2023, and MNCC has incorporated operations and aviation into a centralized computer-aided dispatching (CAD) system. Efforts are underway to rollout the centralized CAD system throughout Minnesota for the 2024 season. The transition to WildCAD-e paves the way for unified coordination and documentation for all initial attack dispatching efforts.

MNCC Viewpoint Survey

Help guide MNCC toward the center of excellence you expect and deserve. Scan the QR code and fill out the brief five-question MNCC Viewpoint Survey. The feedback we receive from all of you is vital in guiding our efforts to improve our service in the best ways possible.

Change leads to success. As we approach 2024, MNCC aims to focus on solutions and celebrate success as we improve our service to you.



Ryan Kingsley, MNCC Center Manager

Minnesota Interagency Coordination Center

MNCC Logistics

Mobilizations and Requests

The 2023 wildfire season started slowly, but resource requests remained steady as the season progressed. MNCC Logistics coordinated over 1,500 personnel, equipment, and module resources from Minnesota, supporting incidents in 28 states.

Minnesota Incident Resource Requests

Resource Type	Local Requested	Local Filled	Non-local Filled
Overhead	324	220	269
Equipment	82	73	54
Type 1 Interagency Hotshot Crew	-	-	5

Requests occurred between 10/1/2022 – 9/30/2023

Minnesota-filled resources for Non-local Incidents

Resource Type	Requested	Filled
Overhead	627	389
Equipment	86	33
Equipment Support	373	167
MNICS IMT	1	1

Requests occurred between 10/1/2022 – 9/30/2023

International Support

- 19 – overhead resources ordered through the Canadian Interagency Forest Fire Center (CIFFC) supported incidents in Alberta, British Columbia and Quebec, Canada.
- 59 – hand crew resources mobilized through the Great Lake Forest Fire Compact (GLFFC) agreement in support of wildfires in Manitoba, Canada.

MNICS Type 3 IMT Mobilizations

Local

- Team B – Braun Fire Delano, MN, November 6, 2022
- Team A – Berg Fire, Agassiz National Wildlife Refuge, May 1, 2023
- Team B – Spice Lake Fire, BWCAW, Superior National Forest, June 15, 2023
- Team B – County Road 11 Fire, Willow River, MN, September 8, 2023

Non-local

- MNICS Team C – Bowles Creek Fire, Philipsburg, MT, August 4, 2023



LAT drops fire retardant on to the Bear Lake Fire

MNCC Aviation

Between April 25 through November 16, 2023, the MNCC Air Desk received 147 initial requests for fixed and rotor-wing aircraft support on 52 fires in Minnesota. As needs were reassessed between the initial call and aircraft arrival to a fire incident, 32 requests were canceled. MNCC Air Desk also recorded 18 wildfires in Minnesota and one in Michigan were supported by MNICS-coordinated air attack.

Throughout the 2023 fire season, the MNCC Air Desk coordinated with 37 fixed and rotor-winged aircraft. This coordination included a mutual aid quick-strike from Ontario, Canada, to the County Road 11 Fire near Cloquet, Minnesota. The quick-strike fleet comprised a bird-dog and two CL-415 water-scooping aircraft.

The State of Minnesota provided four Fire Boss aircraft to support fire needs in Ontario, Canada, delivering 125,695 gallons of water, 39,600 gallons of gel and 3,845 gallons of retardant.

From April 30 through June 27, the Brainerd Airtanker Base hosted a Large Airtanker (LAT) for the Eastern Area. The LAT was utilized on one Minnesota wildfire. On May 25, it was dispatched to the Bear Lake Fire near Hibbing, Minnesota.

Minnesota Interagency Coordination Center

MNCC Aviation

Single-engine aircraft

Agency	SEAT EU	SEAT CWN	Fire Boss EU	Fire Boss CWN
BIA	1	1	1	-
DNR Forestry	2	2	4	5
USFS	-	-	-	2
Total	3	3	5	7

Tankers and other aircraft

Agency	LAT	CL 215/ 415	ATGS	Lt F/W	UAS
BIA	-	-	1	-	-
DNR Forestry	-	-	2	15	-
USFS	1	2	1	2	5
DNR Enforce.	-	-	-	1	-
US FWS	-	-	-	-	4
Total	1	2	4	18	9

Rotor-wing

Agency	T3 EU	T3 CWN	T2 CWN	T1 EU	T1 CWN
BIA	1	-	-	-	-
DNR Forestry	8	3	-	-	-
USFS	1	2	-	2	-
Total	10	5	-	2	-

EU - exclusive use

CWN - call when needed

SEAT - Single Engine Airtanker

LAT - Large Airtanker

CL - Canadair amphibious firefighting aircraft

ATGS - Air Tactical Group Supervisor

Lt F/W - Detection flights including Beavers

UAS - Unmanned Aircraft System mission

T1 - Type 2

T2 - Type 2

T3 - Type 3

MNCC Operations

Incident Support Summary

Agency	Wildfires	Rx	SAR	WRTT
Superior NF	20	87	24	100
Chippewa NF	24	21	-	-
Grand Portage	3	2	-	-
MN DNR	13	-	-	-
Total	60	110	24	100

*Prescribed Burn (Rx), Search and Rescue (SAR), Wilderness Ranger Trip Tracking (WRTT)

MNCC Operations hosted:

- 10 - Initial Attack Dispatcher (IADP) trainees and Expanded Dispatch Recorder (EDRC) trainees from Minnesota, Mississippi, Oregon, Washington, and West Virginia
- 9 - IDAP from California, Louisiana, Michigan, Montana, North Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, West Virginia and Wyoming

MNCC dispatchers accepted non-local dispatch assignments supporting California, Missouri, Oregon, North Carolina and the Southern Area Coordination Center in Georgia.

Congratulations to our dispatchers in MNCC and MNICS-wide who earned qualifications this season.



Minnesota Interagency Aviation Coordination

Minnesota DNR

Interagency Trainings and Projects

- Provided cadre for A-219 at the Pennsylvania Wildfire Academy
- Annual MN Aviation Workshop at Camp Ripley
- ATGS Simulations in Hibbing
- A-312 Water Ditching and Survival completed for 54 students in October
- MN Wildfire Academy - S-270 Basic Air Ops (Two Sessions with MNICS Partners)

Aerial Projects

- 3,664 acres of aerial seeding was completed on state and county land
- The state-wide wetland monitoring aerial photography project was completed in 2023
- 303,000 tree seedlings were distributed to remote sites by sling load

Out-State Assistance (3/21—9/19)

- Supported the Wyoming Bureau of Land Management and Wyoming State Forestry SEAT Base in Casper, WY with staff holding the following qualifications
 - 1 – ATBM – Airtanker Base Manager
 - 7 – FWPT – Fixed-wing Parking Tender
 - 3 – MXMS – Mix Master
 - 5 – RAMP – Ramp Manager
 - 5 – RTCM – Retardant Crew Member
 - 6 – SEMG – Single-engine Airtanker Mgr.
- Minnesota sent Air Tactical Group Supervisor (ATGS), Aircraft Base Radio Operator (ABRO) and Aircraft Dispatcher (ACDP), Helicopter Base Manager (HMGB), and Helicopter Crew Member (HECM) provided support aviation needs in Alaska, Arizona, California, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, South Dakota, Texas, Utah, and Washington

USDA Forest Service

Interagency Trainings and Projects

- S-271 Hosted by USDA Forest Service in June

Beaver Program

- Initial attack on Slate Lake and August Lake Fires
- Firefighter transport to Spice Lake and Kekekabic Lake
- Supported two Minnesota DNR lake surveys.
- Stocked fish from the air on 27 lakes
- DHC-2 Beaver conducted a recon and detection flight in Missouri

Superior Helitack

- Fully implemented cargo freefall operations, cross training completed between Superior helitack & forest ground units
- Completed seven aerial ignition units on Mark Twain NF and one unit in Region 8.
- Provided staffing assistance to three other EU helitack programs from MT & OR (BLM & USFS) for a total of 77 days

Out-State Assistance (3/21—9/19)

- Helicopter Crew Member (HECM) supported incidents in AK, ID, OR, WA, MT and MO

Bureau of Indian Affairs

- Red Lake Helitack assisted local prescribed fire and initial attack, and season-long support of the Billings and Crow Helitack
- ATGS personnel trained on multi mission intel gathering platforms
- Provided RAMP trainee to National Aerial Supervision Academy
- Supported the MNICS Type 3 Team with an ASGS trainee

Non-Local Aviation Support to Minnesota (1/1—10/30)

- 1- ATBM, 1-RAMP, 2-MXMS, 2-FWPT, 5-HMGB, 3-HECM and 4-ATGS and 6- ACDP

Northeast Interagency Support Cache & National Symbols Cache

Northeast Interagency Support Cache



During the 2023 fire season, the Northeast Interagency Support Cache (NEK) supported the MNICS Type 3 Teams on four incidents and processed and shipped 3,842-line items of supplies (approximately \$2.3 million) throughout the Eastern Area. A total of 2,016-line items (approximately \$1.7 million) were returned to NEK and processed.

The National Cache System supplemented NEK with over \$1 million in supplies and equipment that were distributed to fires in the Eastern Area. During the height of the western fire season, NEK distributed approximately \$2 million in supplies and equipment to caches in California, Colorado, Montana, Idaho, New Mexico, Kentucky, and Alaska. The NEK pump shop refurbished pumps for the Southern Area and Rocky Mountain Caches. Supplies to eight contract helibases and four tanker bases. Over \$509,000 of training equipment and supplies were distributed to the following training sessions held in Minnesota:

- Minnesota North College's (ICC) Natural Resources Program – S-130/190, L-180 firefighter courses
- Vermillion Community College – S-211 Pumps class
- Minnesota DNR – S-212 Chainsaw and S-130/190, L-180 firefighter courses
- Lake Superior College – S211 & S-212 courses
- The Nature Conservancy – Crew Boss Academy
- Minnesota Wildfire Academy

In 2023, the NEK staff provided Assistant Cache Manager, Supply Technician, Small Engine Mechanic, and Equipment Manager support for western fire efforts. The staff mobilized on seven western fire assignments, and one 21-day international fire assignment to Quebec, Canada.

National Symbols Program



The National Symbols Cache processed 2,500 orders totaling \$1,112,000 in sales. Above the \$1 million in average sales. Currently, the National Symbols Program offers 109 products in stock, and 47 digital products available online for download. New Smokey Bear products include four eclipse products, a fanny pack, and the Smokey's Friends activity book. New products for Woodsy Owl include a Natural Inquirer Woodsy Owl edition.



Smokey Bear will turn 80 years old in 2024! To celebrate this milestone, the National Symbols Cache will carry several new inventory items. These new products, along with our standard product line, are available online at www.symbols.gov.

Staffing Updates

The NEK Cache welcomed Jim Tschida, small engine mechanic. Supply Technicians – Amber Jackson and Ryan Kingsley - accepted new fire positions at the Minnesota Interagency Fire Center. Thank you and best wishes, Ryan and Amber. The long-time NEK Materials Handler, Jay Lauer, promoted to the Assistant Cache Manager position. Jay has been with the NEK since it opened in 1991 and brings a wealth of knowledge and experience to the position including extensive experience working with Incident Management Teams in Minnesota and nationally.

Bureau of Indian Affairs

Season Review

The MNICS partnerships are part of the foundation that allows for safe and effective wildland fire operations in Minnesota and throughout the United States. The Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) and Tribal Fire Programs of Minnesota Agency and Red Lake are proud to serve their communities and assist our interagency partners.

Even though local fire numbers and acres burned were lower than average, the Minnesota Agency and Red Lake had a busy season. Many BIA and Tribal firefighters took on multiple assignments throughout the year, supporting tribes in Oklahoma, Arizona, New Mexico, Montana, and Washington. The Midwest Region organized a BIA-Tribal Type 2 Initial Attack hand crew that mobilized to Northern California in August. The Minnesota Agency supported the BIA air attack program with ATGS coverage at BIA exclusive use bases. They also helped the BIA's National Aviation Office get their new air attack and fire intelligence program started.

Reservation	Wildfires	Acres	Prescribed Fires	Acres
Red Lake	122	1,070	14	8,657
White Earth	60	121	32	904
Fond du Lac	0	0	1	2
Mille Lacs	11	19	2	17
Bois Forte	0	0	1	2
Grand Portage	2	0.5	2	89
Leech Lake*	N/A	N/A	1	9
Total	195	1,210.5	53	9,680

**Leech Lake wildfires are reported by the Chippewa NF*

Medical Incident Technician Training

In September of 2023, Minnesota Agency held a Medical Incident Technician (MIT) training in Bemidji. The MIT training is a 40-hour course instructed by ETS Consulting, Inc. Their trainers have many years of experience providing medical treatment in remote and high-risk environments. The training for wildland firefighters teaches the knowledge and skills to treat minor medical conditions. In addition, the training focuses on procedures to stabilize, transport, and request medical support for patients with more serious conditions. This is the first time the hands-on, scenario-based course was taught in Minnesota. It was previously hosted in Wisconsin. Next year, the BIA plans to host the course in Michigan.

The training session in September was delivered to 25 students. Five of the students received *train the trainer* instruction, which allows them to lead the eight-hour Medical Incident Leadership (MIL) course. The MIL course is a first aid and CPR course tailored specifically for wildland firefighters. The BIA hopes to begin MIL course instruction in 2024.



History In the Making



Photo credit: Robert Gotchie, Leech Lake

“When you know who you are; when your mission is clear, and you burn with the inner fire of unbreakable will; no cold can touch your heart; no deluge can dampen your purpose. You know that you are alive.”

– Chief Seattle

2023 marked an opportunity for a mission and a sense of purpose to align with the historical formation of the first intertribal and Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) Type 2 Initial Attack crew to mobilize from the Midwest Region. The crew was assigned to the South Fork Complex in the Shasta-Trinity National Forest in Northern California. They completed a 14-day assignment that began on August 19.

The 20-person crew was represented by Tribal and BIA employees from White Earth, Leech Lake, Bois Forte, Mille Lacs and the Menominee Tribe of Wisconsin, and was led by Crew Boss, Robert Gotchie. Gotchie, who is the Fire Management Officer with the Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe, interviewed with Minnesota Public Radio’s Cathy Wurzer while on assignment, and shared –

“I’ve always had dreams that one day the BIA could send out a crew just from Minnesota, or just from the Midwest region. And this happened to come about. So, we started talking about if we could really pull it off, and here we are on day 11, all here working as a team.”

To listen to the full story visit <https://www.mprnews.org/story/2023/08/30/midwest-indigenous-crew-in-california-to-fight-wildfires-on-native-land>.

Homeland Security and Emergency Management

New Director

Kristi Rollwagen was appointed as the Director of Homeland Security Emergency Management (HSEM) in May 2023. Before this appointment, Rollwagen spent 13 years as the Manager of Emergency Programs for the Metropolitan Airports Commission at the Minneapolis-Saint Paul International Airport. In that position she administered the Airport Emergency Plan and the Continuity of Operations Plan, executing trainings and exercises that tested the airport's emergency response readiness. She also managed all aspects of the airport triennial exercise.

Rollwagen has previously worked as the HSEM grant program administrator and the Statewide Hazardous Materials Response Teams coordinator with the State Fire Marshal (SFM) division from 1992 to 2002.

Prior to her time with the Department of Public Safety (DPS), Rollwagen spent 15 years in fire service. She started as a firefighter with the Mankato Fire Department in 1995. She then joined the Minneapolis Fire Department as a captain. Rollwagen was promoted to deputy chief of emergency preparedness and rose to the role of interim assistant chief in 2007. She served in Minneapolis until 2010.

Rollwagen earned three bachelor's degrees in Spanish, biology, and chemistry from the University of Saint Thomas. She earned a master's degree in public safety administration from Saint Mary's University.



Figure 1: Director Kristi Rollwagen

New State Emergency Operations Center

Groundbreaking for the new \$41 million-dollar State Emergency Operations Center (SEOC) was held on October 26, 2023. The 37,000-square-foot facility will house the SEOC, HSEM staff offices, and emergency management training facilities. The new building will improve the functionality, security, resiliency, and redundancy of the state's coordinated emergency response to all-hazards incidents. Completion is projected for the spring of 2025.



Figure 2: Groundbreaking ceremony Oct. 26, 2023, Photo credit: DPS



Homeland Security and Emergency Management

Minnesota Special Event Assessment Rating

Leadership at DPS identified a gap in knowledge and situational awareness around the many special events that occur across the state. With the ever evolving and changing threat environment, such as more “lone wolf” style attacks, the need to better analyze the threat landscape and quickly respond with state assets was identified. The Commissioner's Office tasked HSEM to coordinate a pilot project with key partners to collect data for improved situational awareness.

The Minnesota Special Event Assessment Rating Program (MNSEAR) was developed and launched in the summer of 2023, with full roll-out to be completed by spring 2024. The MNSEAR program allows local jurisdictions to enter key metrics and data about their special events which intern helps determine the threat landscape on any given day and improve the situational awareness for both state and mutual aid resources. Access to the data is coordinated through HSEM and the Fusion Center within the Bureau of Criminal Apprehension (BCA).

Emergency Communications Network Exercise

The Communications Unit within the Emergency Communications Network (ECN) division of DPS worked with the Minnesota National Guard, HSEM, federal, state, tribal, and local organizations to conduct a joint communication exercise at Camp Ripley in August 2023. The exercise brought emergency responders from across Minnesota together to learn about alternative communication methods to ensure agencies are ready to work together during a critical incident. John Dooley, IPAWS Program Manager, Deputy Statewide Interoperability Coordinator, and member of the MNICS Communication Working Team, led the training. At the end, participants took home knowledge of the latest communications technology



Figure 2: National Guard members deploy communications equipment, Photo credit: Sgt. Jorden Newbanks

and a familiarity of their Minnesota counterparts.

FEMA Region 5 Power Outage Functional Exercise

The FEMA Region 5 Power Outage Incident Annex functional exercise was held on July 27, as was an interactive operations-based exercise that tested the ability of state, tribal, and federal agencies to respond to a long-term, wide-spread power outage effectively. The scenario used a combination of physical and cyber-attacks to damage and eventually collapse the electrical grid in FEMA Region 5. The State of Minnesota was able to exercise coordination calls with utility partners, the utilization emergency communications equipment, resource requests to FEMA Region 5 for equipment related to the long-term power outages and estimate restoration timeframes to impacted power systems by working with tribal nations and local power cooperatives.

All-Hazards IMT, Train-the-Trainer

HSEM, in conjunction with state partners and the U.S. Fire Administration, hosted the first O-310 All-Hazards Incident Management Team (IMT), Train-the-Trainer event at Camp Ripley October 9-13, 2023. This course is part of the required curriculum to certify instructors to teach the O-305 All-Hazard IMT Course. The class roster included members from HSEM, SFM and the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources. Future offerings are being revised to include local and tribal governments.



Homeland Security and Emergency Management

Minnesota School Safety Center

The Minnesota School Safety Center (Center) provides trainings and resources to schools and districts to help them prepare for, respond to, mitigate and recover from all hazard emergencies. They work with each school to provide individualized trainings to fit the school and district's needs. In June of 2023, they hosted the first annual School Safety Conference for educators, school resource officers and other first responders. The conference included a wide variety of topics from behavioral threat assessments and de-escalation techniques to emergency communications and large event planning. The overwhelming positive feedback has brought back the conference for 2024 with planning efforts already underway.

HSEM Public Information Officer Assignment at MNCC

Veronica Marshall, public information officer for HSEM and ECN, spent a 7-day assignment at the Minnesota Coordination Center (MNCC) in August of 2023. The purpose was to backfill for MNICS PIO Leanne Langeberg while she was on leave, but the MNICS Taskforce saw it as an opportunity to improve shared situational awareness, working relationships, and coordination between MNICS and DPS. Veronica has since continued to work closely with Leanne and the MNICS partners to support our mission.

2023 State and Federal Disaster Declarations

State Disaster Number	Incident Period	Incident Type	Jurisdictions Included in Declaration
SD-070 (state)	Dec. 13-16 2022	Snow/Ice Storm	Aitkin, Carlton, Cass, Crow Wing, Lincoln, Pine, St Louis.
SD-071 (state)	March 31 – April 1, 2023	Snow/Ice Storm	Washington
SD-072 (state)	May 11-14, 2023	Flooding	Brown, Cottonwood, Sibley, Waseca, Watonwan
SD-073 (state)	July 25-26, 2023	Thunderstorm/Severe Weather	Kandiyohi, Pope, Stevens
DR-4722 (federal)	April 11-30, 2023	Flooding	Aitkin, Big Stone, Carlton, Chippewa, Clay, Grant, Houston, Kittson, Lac qui Parle, Lake of the Woods, Mahnomen, Marshall, Mille Lacs, Morrison, Norman, Pine, Pope, Renville, Roseau, St. Louis, Stevens, Swift, Traverse, Wabasha, Wilkin, Prairie Island Indian Community



Figure 4: Road washout due to spring flooding, photo credit: DPS

As of October 2023, Gov. Tim Walz authorized the use of the State Disaster Contingency Account for four incidents so far this year. President Joe Biden has also declared one federal disaster making public assistance available to state, tribal and local governments throughout Minnesota. HSEM recovery specialists will continue to work with the affected jurisdictions to reimburse them for response, repair, and recovery costs related to those incidents.



Minnesota Department of Natural Resources



Minnesota DNR firefighters support the historic Canada wildfires through three Type 2 IA Crew Mobilizations in July

Season Review

The Minnesota DNR had a significantly lower-than-average spring season in March and April as the record-setting snowpack and late winter storms delayed the fire season. Fire occurrence in May and June was active. By June, very high to extreme fire danger and increased fire activity coincided with the progression of spring dip in the Northeast and prompted the DNR, in coordination with the Superior National Forest and the Bois Fort, Fond du Lac, and Grand Portage Tribes, to implement Class 3 Burning Restrictions and Campfire Restrictions from June 13 through July 3 for Carlton, Cook, Lake, and St Louis Counties. The DNR ordered a MNICS Type 3 Team in early September to manage the 80-acre County Road 11 Fire in Carlton County, Minnesota.

Throughout the fire season, more than 250 Minnesota DNR resources mobilized to 20 states and two Canadian Provinces. DNR rostered staff on all three MNICS Type 3 Teams and the Eastern Area Gold and Silver Teams. Through the summer, fire danger conditions were manageable, and DNR firefighting resources assisted in the national and international efforts. Between July 3 and July 27, Minnesota DNR sent three-Type 2 Initial Attack hand crews to Manitoba, Canada. The mobilizations of these crews were coordinated through the Great Lakes Forest Fire Compact (GLFFC). The third and final interagency crew deployment included firefighters from Michigan. The DNR also sent the Kodiak aircraft and pilots on a couple of missions to Ontario, Canada.

Personnel Changes

New Hires

Jay Lauer – Asst. Cache Manager
Jon Handrick – Enforcement
Taylor Schenk – Training Coord
Bennett Nelson – Adv. Training Spec.
Lisa Wiley – MIFC Front Desk
Laura Larson – Grants & Agreement

Retirements

Greg Vollhaber
Todd Manley
Brian Pisarek



Crew 2 in Manitoba, Canada

Interagency Dispatch Coordination

Minnesota DNR has started installing a standardized dispatch infrastructure and software system, WildCAD-e, to areas and regional dispatch locations. The DNR will be fully operational with the system by June 2024.



Minnesota Department of Natural Resources

Training

The Minnesota DNR's wildland fire training program has experienced many changes this year. Todd Manley, wildland fire training coordinator, and Brian Pisarek, advanced training specialist and the Eastern Area Gold Team Incident Commander, retired from state service in 2023. Taylor Schenk accepted the wildfire training coordinator supervisor position in May, and Bennett Nelson accepted the advanced training specialist position for prescribed fire. The Minnesota DNR plans to fill two additional advanced training specialist positions to coordinate aviation and incident command system focused training.

The 2023 Minnesota Wildfire Academy was held in early June at the Minnesota North College, Itasca Campus, in Grand Rapids, Minnesota. Academy coordinators focused the 19-course offerings on developing entry-level firefighters at the 100 and 200-level. The academy drew over 500 participants. Several DNR employees supported instructor roles and the academy's incident management team.

Throughout the fall, the training program hosted several advanced training courses. It plans to offer additional courses throughout the winter in the effort reduce a backlog of training needs that grew throughout the COVID-19 pandemic.



2023 CIMC Minnesota Team Members: Brian Jenkins, Leanne Langeberg, Aaron Mielke, Mike Rice, Joe Frenz, Jeremy Fauskee, Kevin Carlisle, and Donna Edelman, and the three coaches assigned to mentor the Minnesota Team. Photo credit - Eastern Area Incident Management Team

Complex Incident Management

The MNICS partners sent a command and general staff team comprised of staff from Minnesota DNR and USDA Forest Service to the Complex Incident Management Course (CIMC) in February. The week-long advance training session, held in Madison Wisconsin, was a Great Lakes Forest Fire Compact sponsored event.

Participation in this course prepares incident management team command and general staff leaders who are ready to advance into primary positions on Complex Incident Management Teams (CIMT). More than ten DNR personnel have earned complex incident management qualifications.



Minnesota DNR's Kodiak aircraft departing for Ontario, Canada on July 10, 2023.

Aviation

The DNR received \$6.36 million in infrastructure bonding bill funds in 2023 that will be applied toward completing necessary airtanker base facility improvements. The DNR requested an additional \$7 million in funding for 2024, and if approved, will apply the funding toward additional airtanker base improvement projects.

Minnesota Department of Natural Resources

Rural Fire Program

The Division of Forestry's Rural Fire Program awarded 181 Volunteer Fire Assistance program grants in 2023. These grants, supplemented by 25% of Minnesota's fireworks sales tax revenue, provided over \$660,000 to Minnesota's rural fire departments this year. The program has distributed 57 pieces of large equipment (pickups, generators, 916 and 915 Freightliners) acquired through the Federal Excess Property Program, and six state surplus Type 6 engines and three tracked vehicles.



Nerstrand Fire Department received a surplus engine through the Rural Fire Program

Fire Prevention

Minnesota DNR's fire prevention program received two significant grants this year through the USDA Forest Service Community Wildfire Defense grant program. The prevention program was awarded more than \$1 million in funding. The funds will help to develop a lidar-derived wildfire risk assessment and prescribed fire reporting system. It will also help create a community engagement program and provide local fire departments access to resources and tools available on the Minnesota Wildfire Risk Assessment portal.

The fire prevention team is committed to improving the tools and processes that support fire prevention initiatives and public safety. This year the program implemented a Lean Six Sigma Green Belt project to implement significant enhancements to Minnesota's spring burning restrictions process.

Firewise in Minnesota continues to support community wildfire resilience with technical and financial assistance. The USDA Forest Service grant funding has helped to support the 38 established Firewise communities in Minnesota. It has also allowed Minnesota DNR to improve its grant tracking system and update the agency's Firewise Handbook and live fire training policy.

The program's outreach and community fire prevention education has increased efforts to promote wildfire danger and prevention awareness through the DNR's social media channels and at fire prevention education events. The program has made many improvements to the DNR's fire prevention displays at the Minnesota State Fair. This year at the fair, they introduced new fire prevention education events hosted throughout the Governor's Fire Prevention Day. The fire tower attraction continues to be a popular education tool at the Great Minnesota Get Together, with more than 1,000 visitors who climbed to the top each day of the fair this year.



2023 Minnesota State Fair, photo Credit Minnesota DNR

USDA Forest Service

Wildland Fire Response

Overall wildland fire response was minimal across the forests. The Chippewa National Forest had a few more human fires, with a total of 12. However, their total acreage was much less with 4.55 acres. Their largest fire was the Big Deer Fire on May 2, 2023, at three acres.

The Superior National Forest had their first wildfire on May 15, 2023. In all, they had nine human-caused fires for a total of 30.95 acres. The largest fire was the Spice Lake Fire, which occurred on June 30, 2023, at 30 acres within the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness. MNICS Team B under IC Aaron Mielke was ordered by the Superior to take command of that fire due to the dry conditions and limited resources across the Forest. The team worked the fire for six days. In addition to Superior firefighters, a 19-person hotshot crew was ordered. They camped out working the fire, including a burnout operation. The fire caused the Superior to implement a campfire restriction and a Forest Closure area for lakes, portages, and campsites within the Spice Lake Fire footprint and surrounding area.



Casey Goldsmith Rx burning on the CPF



*Spice Lake Fire - June 16, 2023-Superior National Forest.
USDA Forest Service photo by J. Jungemann*

Prescribed Fire

Both Forests kicked off the spring prescribed fire season with ambitious goals, much to do with last year's nationwide prescribed fire operations pause. The Chippewa National Forest completed 10 projects for a total of 665 acres. The Superior National Forest completed 52 projects, for a total of over 4,841 acres.



MNICS Team B at ICP of the Spice Lake Fire on the Gunflint Ranger District. USDA Forest Service photo by C. Kolinski-MNICS Team B PIO3(t)

USDA Forest Service

Wilderness Crews

MNCC Operations continued their partnership with the Superior National Forest Wilderness Program in tracking Wilderness Rangers in the BWCAW. The Wilderness Rangers assisted with search and rescue operations, fire reporting and response, and notifying wilderness recreationists of closures, evacuations, and fire restrictions.

Search & Rescue

This year was busy for the Beaver pilots conducting Search and Rescue (SAR). The beavers flew seven SAR missions, eleven Medevac missions and one body recovery mission.

Our aviation staff was flexible in their approach to providing excellent public assistance amid the pandemic, cooperating with emergency services partners, and providing for responder safety first.



Beaver aircraft and Superior National Forest staff assisting in a medivac in the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness. USDA Forest Service photo

Personnel Changes

- Chase Marshall – retired as the Fire Management Officer
- Caleb Schreiber, Patrick Johnson, and Nick Petrack accepted 120-day details as interim Fire Management Officers
- Rob Heavirland – retired as the Forest Aviation Officer
- Blake Freking – accepted the Zone Aviation Officer for the USFS
- Ryan Kingsley – accepted the MNCC Center Manager position
- Ryan Johnson – accepted the MNCC Assistant Center Manager for Operations Dispatch
- Amber Jackson – accepted the Support Services Specialist at MIFC



National Park Service



Season Review

The 2023 fire season began with very high fire danger for most of the East Border Park Zone parks. Voyageurs, Apostle Islands, Grand Portage, and Isle Royal all experienced prolonged periods of very high or extreme fire danger, as very little rain fell during the months of May and June. Severity funds were used to bring in additional firefighters to assist with fire staffing at Voyageurs, and to support other parks as needed. Fortunately, there were no fires during this period of large fire potential. Three small wildfires at Voyageurs, and one at Isle Royal were suppressed in 2023, making for a generally slow and uneventful fire season.

The western portion of the Border Park Zone also experienced a slow fire season. A heavy snowpack during the spring of 2023, combined with frequent wetting rains throughout the summer months, resulted in sustained green conditions and low fire danger for the North Dakota Parks. The North Dakota parks did however manage to have a successful prescribed fire season before spring green up.



The Border Park Zone continued mechanical fuels projects to protect park infrastructure and make historic sites more defensible in the event of large wildfires. Border Park Zone fire staff also participated in the national firefighting effort as fire danger in Minnesota began to moderate during mid-summer.

Personnel Changes

Tyler Brink was hired as the new Supervisory Forestry Technician at Voyageurs National Park in the spring of 2023. Tyler is enthusiastically getting acquainted with the Border Parks fire program and is also participating within the MNICS organization as a member of the training working team.

Brenda Miles is retiring from the NPS in December after 35 years at Voyageurs National Park. Most of this time was spent as the Fire Program Management Assistant. Brenda's involvement with our fire program and with MNICS will be missed, but we know that the next phase of her life will be even more gratifying. Congratulations Brenda!



U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service



Season Review

The 2023 spring season started off wet and cold causing significant impacts to prescribed fire and wildfire operations. Fire season started in April with the onset of the Berg Fire which entered the Agassiz National Wildlife Refuge Wilderness Area on April 30. The fire was held at 1,725 acres with the support from MNICS Team A. The Berg Fire and HWY 59 Fire in Mahanomen County highlighted U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's fire program use of Unperson Aircraft Systems (UAS).

The Disaster Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act 2022 and the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) continue to be top priority. Fiscal year 2023 BIL projects are at various stages of implementation at all locations in the zone. Projects range from large interagency prescribed fires, increased pile burning, to landscape level fuels mastication and fuel breaks. Critical specialty equipment has been purchased to aid FWS employees performing the work in addition to contracting fuels reduction work. The opportunity to get ahead on large fuel reduction projects is an investment that will pay dividends for years to come. Work is expected to continue through Fiscal Year 2026.

Looking back to January, U.S Fish and Wildlife Service started the year with mobilizing resources to assist with an all-hazard response on the Rosebud Agency Blizzard in South Dakota. Other winter mobilizations included a module leader to the National Prescribed Fire Training Center, a Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM) response to a National Park Service incident, and prescribed fire assistance to U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service units in Texas and Florida.



Photo Credit: Phil Millette



Photo Credit: Phil Millette



U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service



Photo Credits: Alicia Haken, Tamarac NWR

Season Review

In May, Zach Doffin from Fergus Falls, was recognized with a National Fire Safety Award for his work in developing capacity in firefighter mental health. He was honored in Alaska. During the spring of 2023, resources from Minnesota traveled to Iowa, Illinois and Wisconsin to assist fuels projects and prescribed fire implementation.

Despite weather challenges, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service field stations completed 109 prescribed burns for a total of 19,059 acres and responded to 19 wildfires that burned 2,538 acres on U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service managed land. A special thanks to MNCC and all the partners for a safe and productive 2023 season!

Mobilizations

The fire season proved to be very busy this year. The local agency mobilized 111 personnel off district in positions supporting operations, logistics, finance, plans, law enforcement, and command positions across 15 states.

Personnel Changes

Julia Widmar – West Zone Apprentice, Minnesota Valley NWR

Jimmy Corbett – Prescribed Fire and Fuels Technician, Minnesota Valley NWR

Jacob Walters – Fire Forestry Technician, Minnesota Valley NWR

Sam Schmeling-Rykhus – Fire Forestry Technician, Fergus Falls WMD

AJ Hoffman – Fire Forestry Technician, Litchfield WMD

Cody Kennedy – Fire Forestry Technician, Sherburne NWR

Mitchel Fox – Fire Forestry Technician, Morris WMD.

Seth Grimm – Vacated the Zone Fire Management Officer position and accepted the Midwest Region Deputy Regional Fire Management Coordinator role



MNICS Working Teams

Air Operations

The Air Operations Working Team collaborated on many projects, trainings and briefings throughout the year. During the joint MNICS and GLFFC spring air operations meeting, attendees participated in a Switchback Foundation training session. The training focused on human factors, safety, resilience, leadership, and teamwork and was well received by the attendees.

The UAS sub-working group steadily worked on program status updates to incorporating federal requirement for use on investigations, aerial ignitions, and for interoperability. The following are interagency aviation trainings, briefings and projects hosted or worked on throughout the year:

- RT-130 Aviation Topic
- S-271 Hosted by USFS in June
- Designing a UAS public awareness infographic
- Standardized an all-risk air to air frequency
- Adjusted the geographic boundaries for air to ground frequencies through NIFC
- Delivered the A-312 Water Ditching and Survival training course in October
- Delivered two sessions of the S-270 Basic Air Operations at the Minnesota Wildfire Academy

Mike Mansson, Working Team Chair



Communications

The 2023 fire season was quiet overall. The MNICS communication trailers were utilized on several incidents. The new upgrades to radios, batteries, and general organization helped meet the radio communication equipment needs for in and out-of-state assignments. The MNICS communication trailer was used on the Bowles Creek Fire, located near Philipsburg, Montana.

The Minnesota DNR converted all their base stations and repeaters to digital. In a combined effort the Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT), the DNR has removed all the analog repeaters and base stations. The DNR also installed a new repeater south of Bagley, Minnesota. The DNR and USDA Forest Service will begin switching handheld radios to the BKR5000 in 2024.

The Great Lakes Forest Fire Compact is sponsoring the S-258 COMT course in March 4-8, 2023. The course will be held in Cloquet, Minnesota. The training has not been delivered in Minnesota for several years. It will provide a great opportunity to build the next generation of COMT which are in critical demand.

Ryan Williams, Working Team Chair

Dispatch

The Dispatch Working Team is focused on planning future trainings, meetings, and workshops to develop and qualify more dispatchers. The working team focused on:

- Annual Single Resource FAQ sheet revisions
- IROC training for the MNICS Teams and Finance
- MNICS Mobilization Guide revisions
- 2025 joint biannual dispatch workshop with the Eastern Area Dispatch Working Team

The dispatch community decided to continue offering the D-110 dispatch training course because of the strong foundation it provides for developing dispatchers. MNCC Logistics hosted four in-person Expanded Dispatch Recorder training sessions this year, and nine attendees earned their qualifications and opened additional dispatch task books.

The Eastern Area Dispatch Working Team sponsored the annual spring IROC (Incident Resource Ordering Capability) practice training sessions. MNCC hosted two of the five offered sessions. The Geographic Area effort provides general orientation and the opportunity to work in the IROC platform and view the latest updates.

Nationally, MNCC mobilized 20 dispatchers for out-of-state requests in 2023. They supported fires in 18 states, assisting busy coordination centers and expanded dispatch locations as:

- EDSD – Support Dispatcher
- EDSP – Supervisory Dispatcher
- IADP – Initial Attack Dispatcher
- ACDP – Aircraft Dispatcher
- EDRC – Expanded Dispatch Recorder

In total, 33 out-of-state dispatching positions were filled from Minnesota, with 17 requests filled with trainees who gained valuable experience on western, eastern, and southern assignments. The shortage of dispatchers continues to be a national concern. Anyone interested in becoming a dispatcher is highly encouraged to talk with a MNICS Dispatch Working Team member for more information.

Ginger Humphrey, Working Team Chair

Finance

The Finance Working Team (FWT) met throughout the year and continued focusing on efforts to master the electronic world of finance. The FWT evaluated and improved processes, and shared lessons learned and tips to improve processes. With finance-qualified folks nearing retirement, the FWT is reviewing training and experience requirements for current finance members and discussing recruitment opportunities to ensure incident management team finance needs will be met.

Several FWT members mobilized with the MNICS Type 3 Teams in Minnesota and on Complex Incident Management incidents nationwide this season. They gained valuable experience, developed important skills, and built interagency relationships. FWT looks to improve voting member participation among MNICS agencies. Anyone interested is encouraged to connect with an FWT team member for more information.

Kristi Henderson, Working Team Chair



Information

The Information Management met with the Fire Prevention Working Team and developed an initial campaign strategy to promote the Northeast Wildfire Risk Assessment Portal (WRAP) to group in Minnesota who coordinate emergency response and preparedness.

Minnesota's qualified PIOs were active with the MNICS Type 3, 2023 Wildfire Academy, and non-local assignments that all led to great experiences.

We're RECRUITING!!! Nationally, PIOs are in demand. Consider the awesome opportunity to pick up an incredible qualification, you'll be glad you did!

A SHOUT OUT to the Minnesota PIO team members who accepted new jobs, ventured into new opportunities, and retired.

Peg Robertson, Working Team Chair



Logistics

The Logistics Working Team members had many opportunities this year to support the Minnesota Team assignments. Each assignment allowed our logistics team members to hone our practices, improve on the existing equipment we provide for the teams, and work with the NEK fire cache.

Minnesota logistics personnel also supported fires outside of the geographic area, including the MNICS Team assignment to the Bowels Creek Fire in Montana and the Eastern Area Teams on multiple national assignments and two international assignments in Canada.

The standard incident management team push pallets for initial team mobilizations were reviewed and improved this year and now, include Bluetooth speakers. The push pallet inventory will be reviewed again in February.

MNICS logistics has three trailers ready for incident management team mobilizations. The trailers are located at the Minnesota Interagency Fire Center (MIFC). The 24-foot map trailer and the 22-foot combination communication and general office space trailer are fully operational, while service work on the 44-foot trailer will likely occur this winter. Some older trailers previously used for incident management team assignments were decommissioned. The 18-foot trailer, located at MIFC, was purchased by the National Park Service and is assigned to the Eastern Area CIM Team.

The Logistics Working Team, comprised mainly of Minnesota DNR, Minnesota Department of Public Safety, and USDA Forest Service members, plans to broaden recruitment efforts and gain more members from the less represented MNICS agencies.

Jon Benson, Working Team Chair

Operations

The Operations Working Team focused on implementing improvements to the MNICS Type II Initial Attack (IA) Crew program and recruitment process. Team members revised the standard operating guide and agreed to follow a standard recruitment and application period for all crew members. Despite the efforts, received few applications this year.

MNICS decided to pivot the program from the traditional interagency crew roster and redirected efforts to forming interagency ad hoc crews. However, due to a lack of available resources, MNICS was unable to roster an ad hoc interagency IA crew. A few MNICS agencies were able to mobilize a couple of 20-person crews and 10-person suppression modules to national and international suppression efforts.

During COVID we learned that each agency's ability to support national fire suppression efforts independently often involves less coordination effort. As we keep this lesson learned in mind, the Operations Working Team will continue to openly discussion opportunities to develop an improved MNICS Interagency Type II IA Crew model that works best for all Minnesota firefighters.

Adam Cook, FS, Working Team Chair

Prescribed Fire & Fuels

The team reviewed and edited the Fire Danger Operating Plan and coordinated all the MNICS agency prescribed burning priorities and aviation needs. Team members are working with agency representatives to provide information and assistance to help complete the Minnesota Fire Assessment project, led by Mike Lynch, Forest Stewards Guild. When complete, the assessment's information will help land management agencies with prioritizing their fire treatments on the land.



Photo Credit: Phil Millette

MNICS-Wide mechanical fuels treatments

	Chippewa National Forest
Forest	Rx - 564 ac and Mechanical – 6,865 ac
Service	Superior National Forest
	Rx - 4674 ac and Mechanical – 14,400 ac
	Minnesota Agency & Red Lake Agency
BIA	RX - 913 ac and Mechanical – 1,715 ac
	Red Lake
	RX – 8657ac and Mechanical – 4,660 ac
DNR	RX – 37,094 ac
FWS	

Rx = all burning - piles, broadcast, under burn.

Mech = all primary and secondary fuels treatments

Carl Crawford, BIA, Working Team Chair

Prevention

The Prevention Working Team (PWT) continues to share information and build partnerships across agencies that support prevention efforts. The PWT met periodically this year and focused on:

- Developing a common outreach strategy for the Northeast-Midwest Wildfire Risk Assessment Portal with the Information Management Working Team.
- Raising Community Wildfire Defense Grant program awareness and identifying wildfire occurrence and risk communication needs in Minnesota.
- Working with the Wildfire Prevention Spatial Assessment Portal (WPSAPS) to learn the varied planning and tracking methods individual federal agency use for prevention programs.

PWT welcome Jeremy Bennett (BIA) and Laura Murphy (DNR) to the team. We wish a farewell and thank you to Allissa Reynolds, who departed the DNR in October.

Reminder! MNICS teams or agencies who plan to request financial support for a project involving prevention costs – submit an itemized copy of the Project Request Form or letter via email.

Mike Palmer, DNR, Working Team Chair



2023 Minnesota Wildfire Academy

Training Working Team

The 21st annual Minnesota Wildland Fire Academy was held June 5th – 9th, 2023, at Minnesota North College, Itasca Campus. The Training Working Team coordinated with the Minnesota North College staff, Academy Incident Management Team, led by Mike Altman, excellent leaders, cooperators and instructors during the first half of 2023 to coordinate the Minnesota Wildland Fire Academy.

The week-long event featured 19 nationally certified basic wildland firefighting, planning, operations, and leadership in wildland fire courses. The Academy also offered trainees a week-long incident management team (IMT) course to gain hands-on experience working with qualified IMT staff. In addition, 110 instructors were involved in the Fire Academy.

The COVID-19 pandemic pause resulted in a backlog of training needs. The Training Working Team has offered more than 45 courses for the MNICS partners, local fire departments, and affiliates this year. The courses ranged from basic firefighting to advanced leadership, and included additional offerings of the M-410, L-280 and L-380 courses.

The annual request for the training needs assessment was sent MNICS-wide earlier this year. Once the results are analyzed, the team will use the information to plan the 2024 training calendar.

MNICS will offer the Incident Management Section Chief's Academy at the end of January, the Minnesota Wildland Fire Academy is planned for June 3 – 7, 2024. Contact your agency Training Working Team member with any specific training need requests.

The Training Working Team Representatives include Troy Boschee (USFWS); Taylor Schenk (MN DNR); Tracy Fifarek (USFS); Tyler Brink (NPS); Robert Lintelmann (BIA); Angela Packer (MN DPS HSEM). Supporting members include Mike Rice, Darrin Franco, Brian Pisarek, Kyle Avesing, Jeb Backe, Terry Flatley, Michael Hill, Steve Shapira, and Patrick Kelley.

Special Thanks To

- BJ Glesener for his mentorship and guidance as the team's Task Force Representative.
- Training working team members for your contributions and behind-the-scenes work.
- Mike Aultman and the Academy Incident Management Team, Meadow Kouffeld and staff at MN North College, Holly Henriksen at ISD 318, and the many instructors and volunteers who made 2023 a successful training year.

Robert Lintelmann, Working Team Chair

Type 3 Incident Management Working Team

This year, our MNICS Type 3 teams went on four assignments. The first assignment occurred on May 1, with Team A mobilizing to the Berg Fire on the Agassiz National Wildlife Refuge. Team B mobilized on June 15, to the Spice Lake Fire in the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness in the Superior National Forest. Team C received an order for a national mobilization to the Bowles Creek Fire on the Beaverhead-Deerlodge National Forest in Montana on August 3. Team B mobilized to the County Road 11 Fire in Carlton County near Cloquet, Minnesota on August 8.

Congratulations to Aaron Mielke, Jeb Backe and Mike Hill who were selected as the primary MNICS Type 3 Incident Commanders (ICs) for the 2024 season! The Working Team and the ICs are building the 2024 season team rosters and expect to announce team membership in early December. The annual team meeting is February 13 and 14. It will be hosted at the Timberlake Lodge in Grand Rapids, Minnesota.

We continue to seek diverse membership for the MNICS Teams. All who are interested in providing their expertise to the Type 3 Teams are encouraged to apply.

Ben Roy, Working Team Chair



In Memory



Brad Witkin



Legacy Award

BRAD WITKIN

Leadership Award

DANIEL PAULSON

JEB BACKE

MIKE RICE

Service to the MNICS Task Force

SETH GRIMM

Retirement Award

JIM EDGAR

LARRY HIMANGA

TODD MANLEY

BRENDA MILES



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