



# Notes

## March 7, 2024, MNICS Task Force Meeting

**Task Force:** Greg Carlson, Paul Lundgren, Cory Berg, Mike Hill, Kara Behr, Nick Petrack

**Non-Task Force Attendees:** Ryan Kingsley, Leanne Langeberg, Brian Wise, Kevin Carlisle

DISCUSSION TOPIC	NOTES
<b>Budget Update</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The Task Force reviewed the monthly budget expenses. There were no significant expenses incurred over the past month.</li> <li>- MNCC will proceed with the purchase of new desk chairs for the dispatch floor with approved MNICS coop funds.</li> </ul>
<b>Building Update</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The security upgrade project is nearly complete. The cameras have been installed but not been programed to any internal MIFC staff computers.</li> <li>- The elevator project received multiple bids that are being evaluated.</li> </ul>
<b>Master Coop Agreement Update</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The extension remains in place, as the Forest Service begins reviewing the final draft.</li> <li>- The coordinator is awaiting final signatures from the Bureau of Land Management and the National Park Service. Paul Lundgren will reach out to Bart Kicklighter with the Bureau of Land Management and ask for support to obtain the agency’s required signature.</li> </ul>
<b>Academy Financial Review</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The Task Force discussed their plans to meet with Taylor Schenck and Bob Lintelmann, MNICS Training Working Team representatives, before the Minnesota Wildfire Academy.</li> <li>- The Task Force will work with the representatives to develop talking points on concerns with rising tuition rates and establish a cost reduction strategy for 2024. The talking points and strategy will help guide Academy planning conversations with Minnesota North College staff in June or July of 2024.</li> </ul>
<b>MNICS Type 3 Incident Management Working Team</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Due to the early onset of spring wildfire and increasing fire activity throughout Minnesota, the Task Force will request the MNICS Type 3 Teams start rostering the week of March 19, two weeks ahead of their official 2024 schedule. They are open to starting official team rosters or ad hoc teams to cover the two-week extension.</li> <li>- The Task Force will make the request through the MNICS Type 3 Incident Management Working Team chair.</li> <li>- Because the previous contract bid solicitations for the MNICS team trailer upgrades did not receive any bids, the Department of Corrections (DOC) has offered their crews to work on the incident management team trailer upgrades. The crew’s work is voluntary, and they are fully insured. The only cost MNICS will incur is materials, and Kevin Carlisle will develop a cost estimate for project materials for the Task Force to review. If approved, the trailer will be moved to Carlos Avery during the upgrade.</li> <li>- The MNICS Incident Management Working Team has been working on the MNICS team out-of-state roster. The incident commanders submitted their proposed positions list that includes the standard 20 in-state positions and an additional 12 positions. The MNICS Incident Management Working Team plans to meet on March 11 and will review the requested positions.</li> </ul>
<b>Aviation – Coop letters, Aerial Ignition</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Cory Berg briefed the Task Force on the federal policies that are preventing cooperative access to available aircraft not contracted by a specific federal agency. The policy will</li> </ul>



# Notes

DISCUSSION TOPIC	NOTES
	<p>affect Minnesota’s interagency aviation coordination this year. The policy also includes shared aircraft use on prescribed fire.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The Forest Service policy requires a Forest Service contracted aircraft back-fill immediately when a non-Forest Service aircraft is ordered to protect life and property because it is the closest resource.</li> <li>- The Task Force acknowledge the current national policy was written with a western wildfire response mindset and does not fit the MNICS model that has proven to work well for Minnesota’s interagency response.</li> <li>- The MNICS Board of Directors will meet on the topic, and Paul Lundgren will initiate the conversation with the board members before their regular scheduled meeting.</li> </ul>
<p><b>MNICS Annual Meeting updates</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The planning committee proposed a recommendation to improve interagency networking during the MNICS annual meeting. The proposal is to start the general session events the evening following the Working Team meetings with an evening dinner starting at 5:00 p.m. followed by an engaging guest speaker. The silent auction bidding would also begin at this time. The evening event would wrap up by 7:00 – 7:30 p.m., which would allow attendees time to engage in after-hours socializing plans. The concept is similar to the Section Chief’s Academy evening dinner and guest speaker event.</li> <li>- An alternate option to the dinner is to offer an open cash bar followed by the guest speaker, allowing more time to network and participate in the silent auction event.</li> <li>- The Task Force is open to the recommendation and suggested looking into appetizers in lieu of a main course dinner and include the open bar option.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Agency Updates</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <b>BIA</b> – BIA and the tribal agencies are seeing a steady rise in wildfire activity. Mille Lacs has added additional resources. Red Lake is still conducting prescribed burning, but monitoring conditions closely and will likely shut down prescribed burning due to the lack of snow and extreme dry conditions. The agency is working on submitting a severity request to the Geographic Area Coordination Center that includes additional aircraft, staff and engines. An offer has been made on the fire budget position. BIA is working with DNR to offer a WildCAD-e training session. Red Lake will continue working with their WildCAD this year.</li> <li>- <b>DNR</b> – DNR responded to two large fires over the weekend, both involved Wildlife Management Areas. There was a lot of attention focused on the Waseca County fire. Overall, DNR is seeing a rise in fire activity throughout the state. The regions are starting to experience some staffing needs. DNR will reach out to the Great Lakes Forest Fire Compact partners for support, though Wisconsin and Michigan are both experiencing similar conditions. Several Midwest states have reached out for wildfire support, but Minnesota has not sent resources due to increased fire activity locally.</li> <li>- <b>FWS</b> – Wildfire activity picked up over the weekend, and Fish and Wildlife Service staff provided support to both large fires in Waseca and Otter Tail counties. Fish and Wildlife Service is considering both plans for prescribed burns and how long-term severity impacts the burning window. During the recent zone-wide meeting, the drought code and how close the region is to meeting long-term severity was discussed. Currently, there are no resources out-of-Minnesota. The Zone Fire Management Officer position closes March 8.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Agency Updates Cont.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <b>HSEM</b> – The National Guard aircraft resources are in a safety stand down. An EMAC coordination meeting has been scheduled to discuss plans for the July Republican National Convention in Wisconsin. Currently the EMAC has identified needs for law enforcement. HSEM is working with Minnesota DNR to set a date for the FEMA 305 course delivered in</li> </ul>



# Notes

DISCUSSION TOPIC	NOTES
	<p>coordination with the State Fire Marshal’s office. Kara Behr and Jacob Beauregard plan to present with MNICS partners on the MNICS Teams at the March 14 Minnesota One conference. HSEM is coordinating with other state agencies to offer a <i>Just In Time</i> training exercise on June 25.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <b>NPS</b> – Voyageurs National Park reported no fires since the last Task Force meeting, and recently received some quality snow. The park is working on agreements, prescribed burning plans, and fire refreshers. The park plans to send an engine to Missouri.</li> <li>- <b>USFS</b> – Both the Chippewa and Superior National Forests will start staffing this weekend. Steve Teeter is filling the acting role for the Chippewa National Forest Assistant Fire Management Officer. The Superior National Forest is 95% snow-free and some open water is accessible. The helitack crew is now on board, working in the Mark Twain on contract. Both forests are pulling back resources out-of-Minnesota as they time out. Prescribed fire is ongoing. The forests are working on recalibrating weather stations. The Chippewa assistant fire management officer, the Superior National Forest west zone fuels planner and the Ely tanker base positions and several engine positions have been advertised.</li> <li>- <b>MNCC</b> – WildCAD-e weekly meetings are ongoing at the State’s regional levels and great work is happening in the CAD throughout Minnesota, especially with the activity experienced so far. MNICS is on track for 8000+ CAD incidents this year. The center manager sent out a summary of February incident numbers to the Task Force that compares the last three years. The last planned training is scheduled for March 18 - 20 in Bemidji. MNCC is finalizing the virtual Interagency Dispatch Refresher for March 21-22. Minnesota DNR Northeast Region fire section submitted a request for MNCC Operations to take dispatching for the Hibbing and Eveleth areas. MNCC has evaluated the request. It recommends staying with the current process because MNCC’s infrastructure and staffing levels cannot support additional dispatching workloads at this time. MNCC is also working with the Minnesota State Patrol to facilitate a request to take on the Forest Service’s law enforcement and investigation dispatching full time. MNCC Aviation is down one dispatcher who is taking paternity leave time. Efforts are underway to rotate dispatch detailers throughout MNCC. The Center Manager reached out to Facebook wildfire dispatch channels with a fillable form to gain situational awareness on nationwide availability, timelines, qualifications. The outreach received 65 responses and mobilized four so far. MNCC is sitting good for staffing and planned detailers as needed. The Forest Service sent out national approval for up to 300% per diem for wildfire response and prescribed burning that covers the 21 priority landscapes. For the continental United States, the calculation comes out to \$439 nightly rate for lodging. If the federal budget passes, it currently includes the Wildland Firefighter Paycheck Protection Act, which does affect the federal dispatchers pay within the country and we may need to evaluate a new pay disparity between the agencies within the center.</li> </ul>

Next Task Force Meeting will be held April 4, 2024, at MIFC.