

2024
ANNUAL
REPORT



2024 MNICS Board of Directors

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2024 MNICS Task Force

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Cory Berg	Fire Management Officer Bureau of Indian Affairs
Jacob Beauregard	Mutual Aid and Logistics Coordinator Homeland Security and Emergency Management
Darrin Franco	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

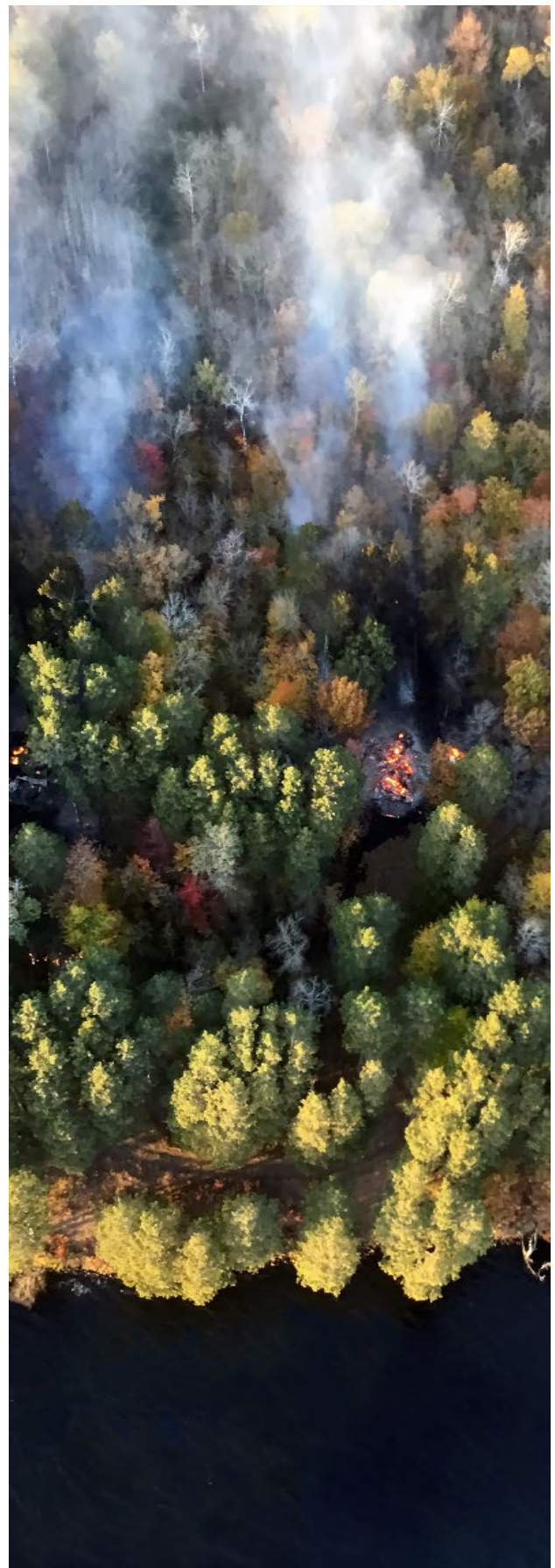
To provide coordination, education and implementation of the Incident Command System in Minnesota and support fire and all-risk incidents nationwide.

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 Chair

As 2024 draws to a close, I would like to congratulate the MNICS partners and participants for enthusiastically keeping the MNICS organization going for 40 years. Each year has brought new challenges, some predictable, and some completely unforeseen. Changes in climate, technology, budget, personnel, and administration continue to teach us the importance of being flexible and innovative. Your dedication to duty and commitment to MNICS has resulted in another successful year of fire and emergency management throughout Minnesota and beyond.

The MNICS Type 3 Incident Management Team (IMT) program remains strong and continues to provide effective incident management both in and out of state. Retirements and new appointments will continue to result in changes within the IMT program. The Task Force thanks past participants for their service and offers thanks and encouragement for those who are stepping into new leadership roles.

The MNICS Task force has been working with the Minnesota Interagency Coordination Center (MNCC) to evaluate our dispatch system and identify deficiencies and alternatives that will make initial attack (IA) dispatch more effective. Some of these changes will be short-term fixes, while other will involve long-term plans. The goal is to provide dispatch services to improve information sharing, efficiency, and make interagency operations safer for our field responders.

As we enter the off-season, we know we can't reliably predict what new challenges we will face in 2025, but I am confident that the agencies involved in MNICS will continue to assist each other through hardship and share in each other's success.

In closing, I encourage each of you to thank family, friends, and coworkers for their continued support. Without them, it's not possible to provide the services to MNICS and wildland fire that you do well. Have a safe and productive 2025.

*Greg Carlson (NPS)
MNICS 2024 Task Force Chair*



MNCC Intelligence

Fire Situation Review

The 2024 wildfire season has been on a roller coaster of dry and wet weather conditions. What began as a “lost winter” with a rain event at the end of 2023, followed by no snowpack state-wide through March, led to no break between the 2023 and 2024 seasons. The first wildfire of the year was recorded on January 2, 2024, in southwest Minnesota. A total of 70 wildfires were recorded between January 2 to February 29. Wildfire totals for March were well above average, with 283 wildfires recorded throughout Minnesota. The largest wildfire of the season was recorded on March 3, on the Doran WMA in west central Minnesota, and burned 2087 acres. After a late-season snowstorm at the end of March, wildfire activity returned to near or below average for April and May.

The dry conditions took a sharp turn in early June with the arrival of significant flooding storms. Steady precipitation through the summer months slowed daily fire occurrence into August. But, dry conditions returned in late August, and wildfire activity steadily increased.

Drought conditions persisted through fall and rainfall totals for September and October hit record lows. The increasing fire danger and expanding drought concerns led to Class-3 burning and campfire restrictions in northeast Minnesota that remained in effect from October 4 to October 22, 2024.

On October 17, the Evergreen fire was detected in the Chengwatana State Forest amid a Red Flag Warning that spanned all but the two far northeast counties. The MNICS Type 3 Team C was requested to support the Evergreen Forest fire, leading to the first and only in-state MNICS Type 3 Team mobilization in 2024.

Heightened fire weather conditions lingered due to the sustained dryness well into November.

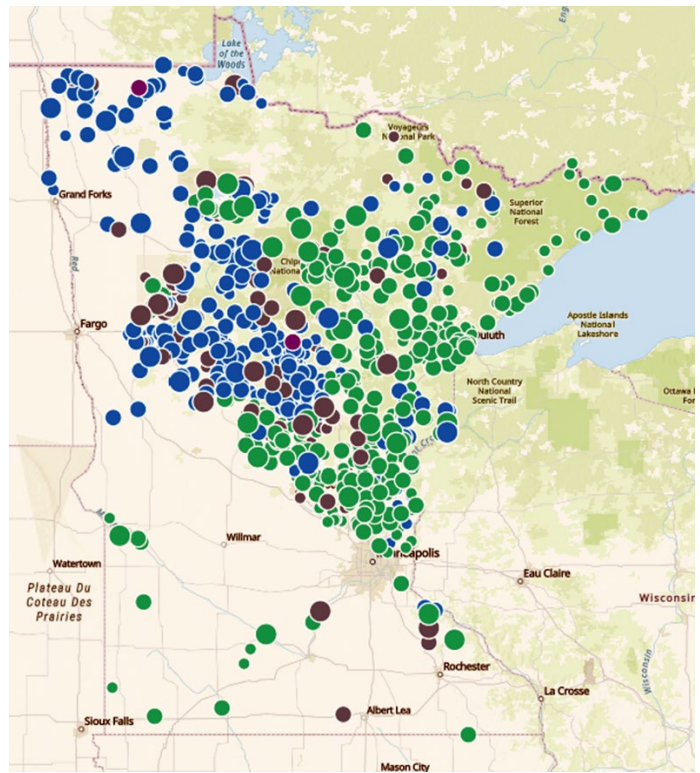


Image - 2024 recorded locations of wildfire activity from January 1 through November 15, 2024. (retrieved from INFORM)

2024 Wildfire Activity

Agency	Wildfires	Acres
Bureau of Indian Affairs	185	880
USDA Forest Service	34	449
U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service	10	336
National Park Service	2	1
State	893	13,755
2024 Totals	1,125	15,421

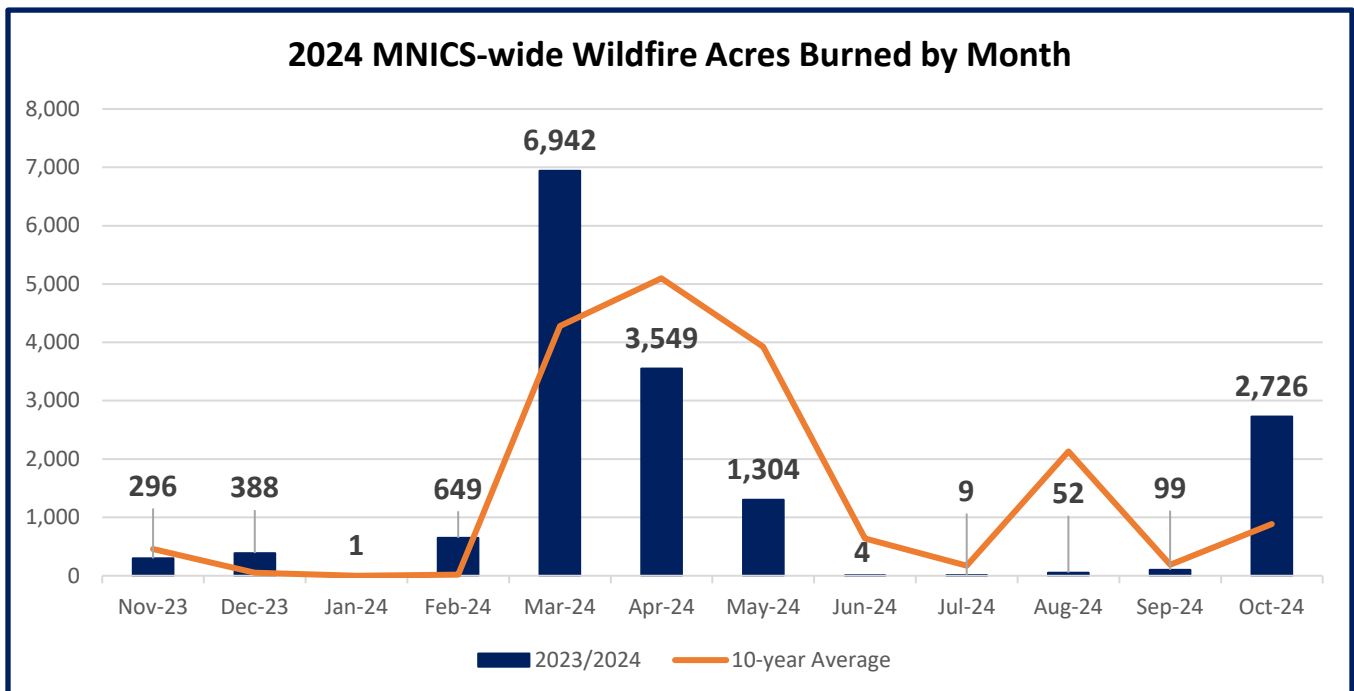
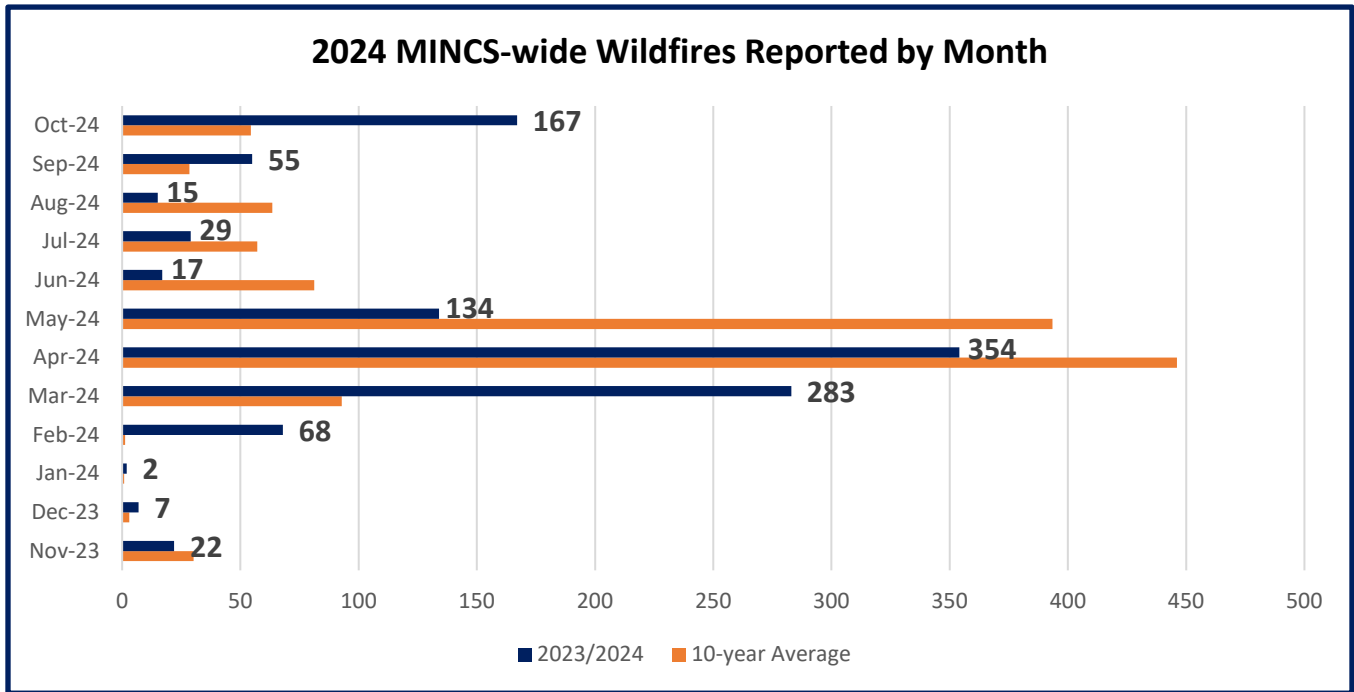
Total recorded as of October 30, 2024

2024 Prescribed Burning

Agency	RX Burns	Acres
Bureau of Indian Affairs	90	9,956
USDA Forest Service	41	2,132
U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service	111	27,016
National Park Service	1	166
State	367	44,155
2024 Totals	603	83,425

Total recorded as of October 30, 2024

2024 Wildfire Season Totals Through September



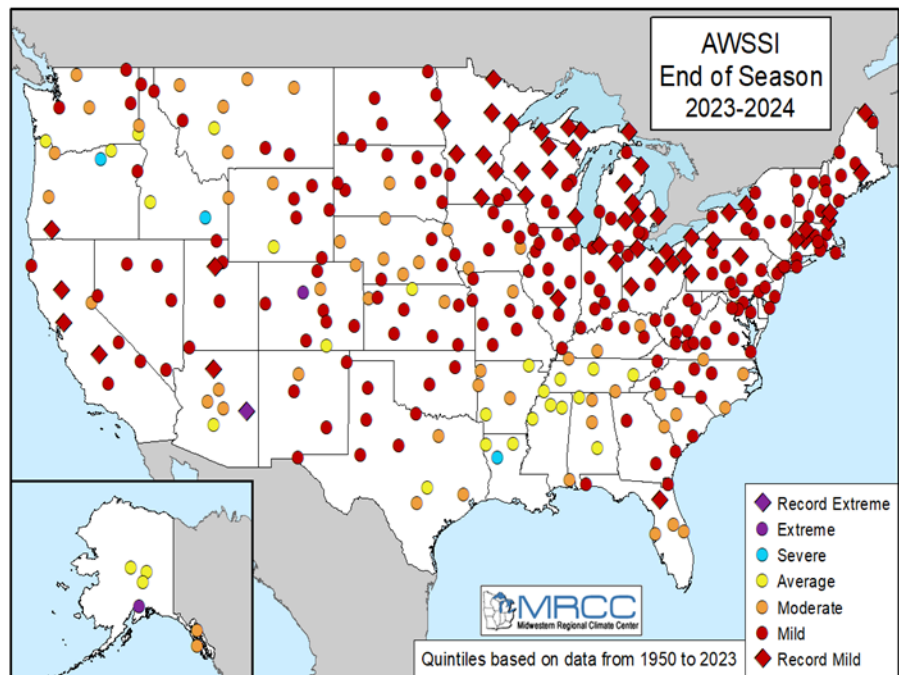
National Weather Service



The 2024 weather year was quite interesting across Minnesota. It featured record flooding across southern Minnesota from May into early July, sandwiched between two prolonged dry and active fire weather stretches from late winter to early spring and again in the fall.

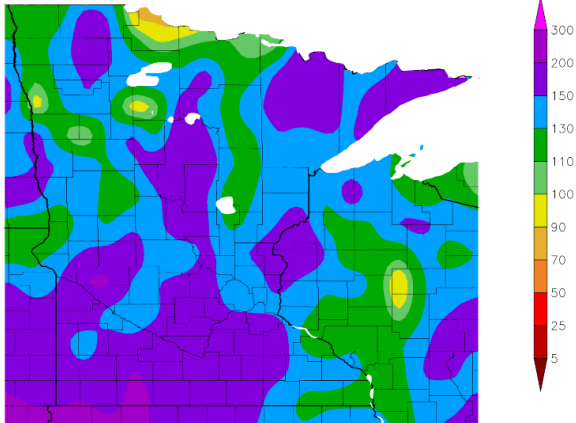
The 2023-2024 winter was the warmest, least snowy and mildest winter on record with the Accumulated Winter Season Severity Index (AWSSI) statewide. The mild conditions set the stage for a very early start to the spring fire weather season, met with record warmth and dry conditions that led to a rapid start to the spring fire weather season by late February. By mid-March, a significant pattern change resulted in significantly more rain through the spring, culminating in record flooding across southern Minnesota by the end of June. Given the wet run into summer, Minnesota had a relatively quiet summer for fire weather.

Drier conditions started to reemerge across the north in August, and by September, dry conditions had taken hold across the Great Plains into the northeast United States. September 2024 was the driest on record for the state of MN and was also one of the warmest, a perfect combination for creating an active fall fire season. The warm and dry weather continued through the first three weeks of October, with the fall of 2024 rivaling the fall of 2012 for the degree of active fire weather days. However, like the spring, a more active weather pattern quickly set in during the last week of October, with fire weather conditions starting to settle down as we head toward the late fall and winter.



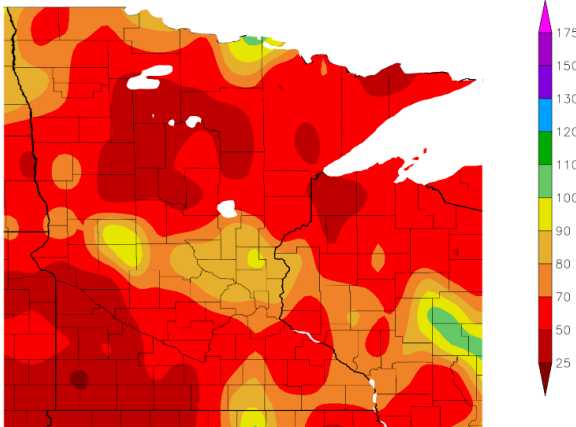
Accumulated Winter Seasonal Severity Index for the 2023-2024 winter season.

Percent of Normal Precipitation (%)
4/1/2024 – 6/30/2024



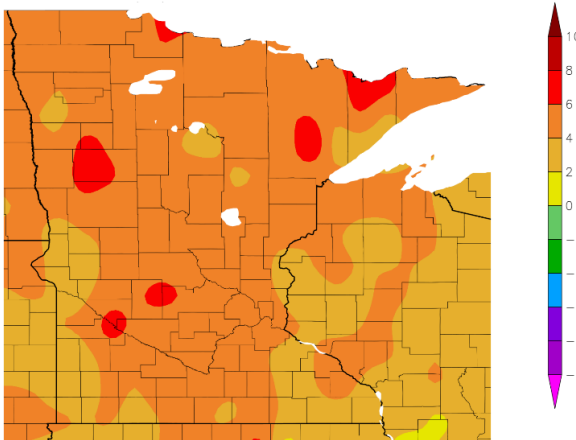
Percent of normal precipitation for April through June

Percent of Normal Precipitation (%)
8/1/2024 – 10/31/2024



Percent of normal precipitation for August through October

Departure from Normal Temperature (F)
8/1/2024 – 10/31/2024

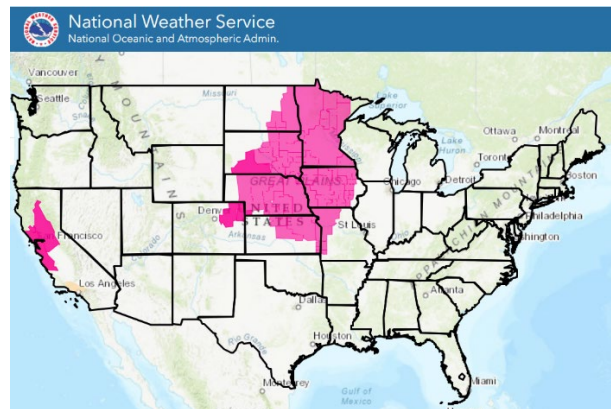


Temperature departure from normal for August through October.

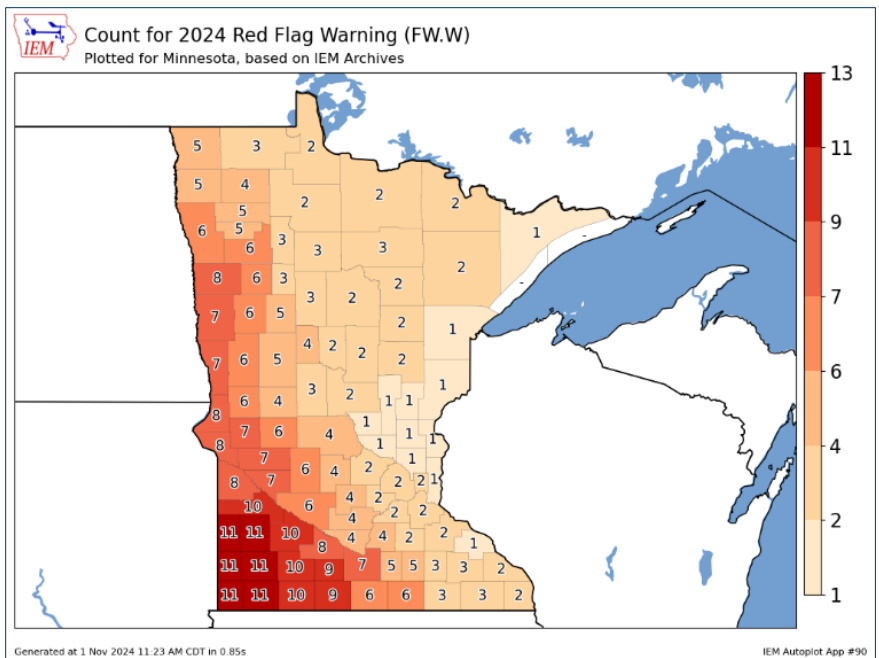
FIRE WEATHER

Given the lack of snowfall, the fire weather season was off and running in the south by the end of February, setting the stage for Minnesota to have the earliest Red Flag Warning ever issued in the state on March 3, posted for far southern MN. Unfortunately, the Red Flag Warning was also accompanied by a nearly 2000-acre wildfire in Waseca County. The first two weeks of March featured occasional Red Flag Warnings across the southern half of the state. In mid-March, though, wet conditions in the south and cool conditions across the north brought a temporary reprieve from critical fire weather conditions until April. During April, occasional Red Flag Warnings were issued during a few dry periods. By the start of May, the combination of very wet conditions and a nearly complete green-up meant an earlier-than-normal end to the spring fire season.

With the warm and dry fall, critical fire weather conditions became common from September 30 through October 17. A Red Flag Warning on October 17 eventually included every county in the state except Cook and Lake counties in the Arrowhead. The only other fall since 2006 that has seen this level of Red Flag Warnings issued in the state was the fall of 2012. By the end of October, every county in the state had been in at least one Red Flag Warning during the course of the year, with a cluster of counties in the southwest corner of the state placed under 11 separate Red Flag Warnings.



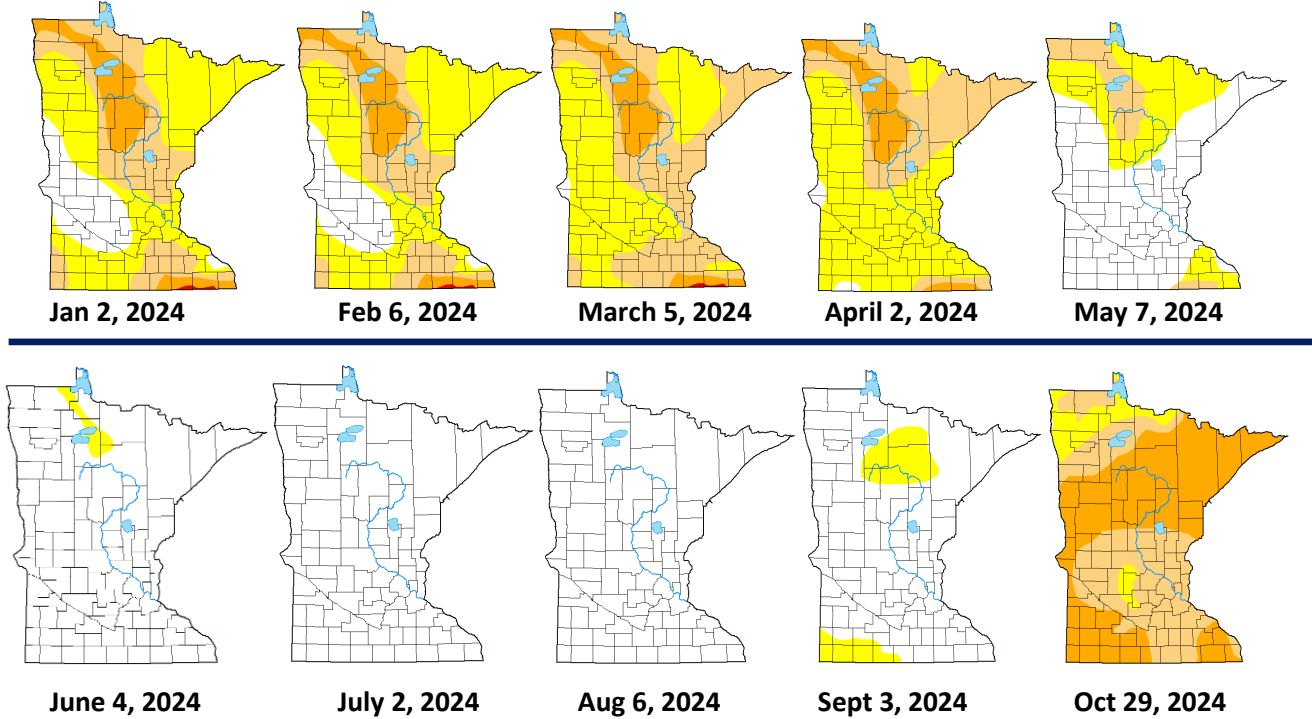
Span of the October 17, 2024, Red Flag Warning area. Image captured on October 17, 2024 from the National Weather Service www.weather.gov/fire site.



Number of times each county appeared in a Red Flag Warning in 2024

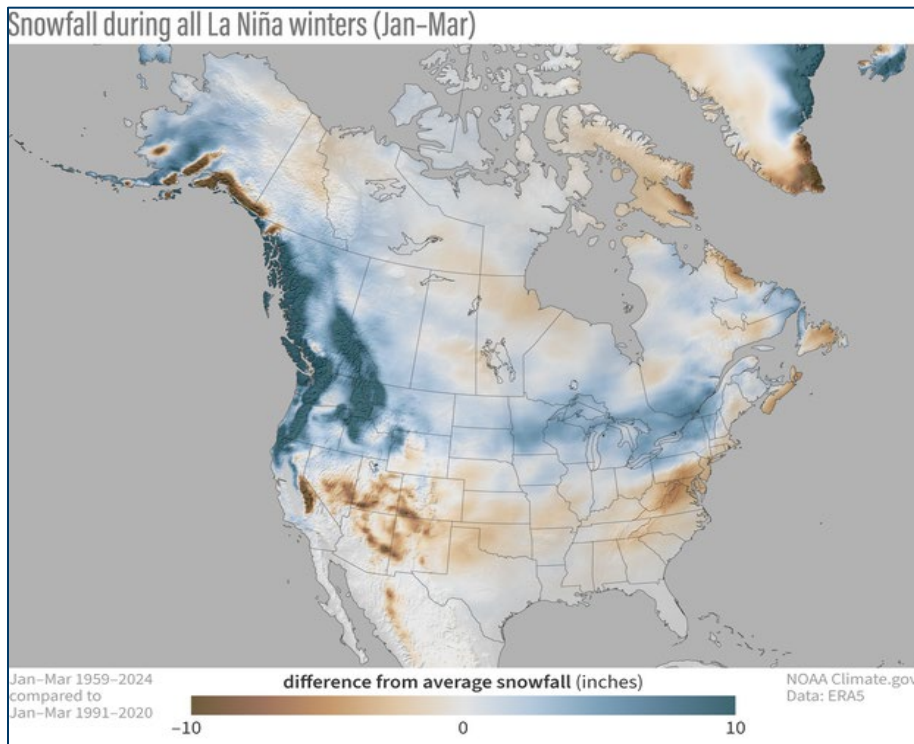
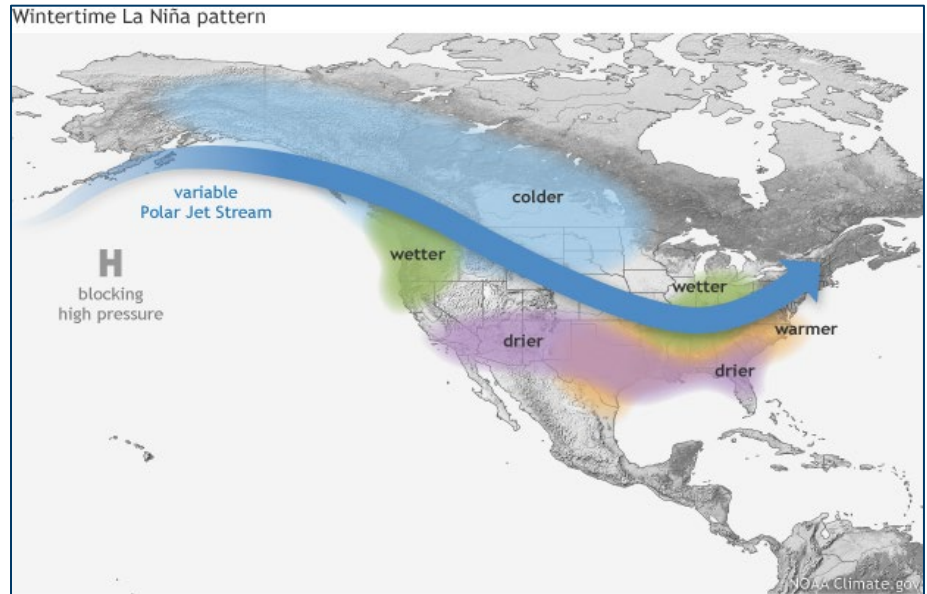
DROUGHT SUMMARY

Given the weather patterns throughout the year, we saw the remnants of the summer of 2023 drought linger into the start of 2024. By the end of May, the entire state was drought-free due to the very wet spring, and it would remain drought-free through early August. However, as the north started to dry out, some drought returned to areas in the north. With the warm and dry September, drought conditions rapidly expanded across the state during September and October. In terms of D1 (moderate drought) or greater coverage in the state, we started the year with 43% of the state in at least a D1 designation, which was reduced by 0% over the summer, and by the end of October, drought ballooned back up to 86% of the state.



OUTLOOK

By the end of 2023, we were expecting and preparing for a winter dominated by a strong El Niño, a key player in making the winter of 2023-2024 the warmest on record. This year, we are expecting and preparing for a weak La Niña. The La Niña weather patterns tend to favor colder air outbreaks and more opportunities for snow, or a winter more typical of what we tend to see in Minnesota is expected in 2024-2025, and an unlikely repeat of the record warmth we saw last winter.



Of the 22 La Niña winters since 1950, 14 have featured above normal snowfall in Minnesota.

Standardized wildfire dispatch software expands throughout Minnesota



Wildland fire dispatchers throughout Minnesota are transitioning into a modernized interagency dispatch system. The WildCAD-e software has become the wildland fire industry standard across the United States. In Minnesota, the USDA Forest Service and Minnesota Department of Natural Resources fully dispatch initial attack and aircraft response to wildland fire through the WildCAD-e system.

Ryan Kingsley, Minnesota Interagency Coordination Center Manager, shares more about the tool and how it draws MNICS agencies closer to achieving the unified Minnesota Interagency Coordination Center vision.

Modernizing computer-aided dispatching system

WildCAD-e is a modernized computer-aided dispatching system designed for wildland fire agencies. It was developed to bring fire dispatching centers throughout California onto a modern technology platform.

The software developer behind the concept is Bighorn Information Systems, whose developers bring various backgrounds from wildland fire, emergency response and information technology. When approached by California's wildland fire dispatching agencies in the early 2000s, Bighorn's developers and end users recognized the disconnects in how dispatchers completed their work using available technology and the inefficiencies it created in moving resources effectively. So, they set out to improve how wildland fire response agencies conducted their initial attack dispatch services and modernize the system utilizing software technology. The Los Padres National Forest Dispatch Center in California was one of the first federal agencies to adopt the program. In 2007, it introduced dispatching staff from the Superior National Forest to the positive benefits.

WildCAD in Minnesota

WildCAD arrived in Minnesota in 2007 after the Superior National Forest dispatch managers experienced firsthand while on assignment supporting the Los Padres Dispatch Center how working with the tool improved the dispatching experience. The USDA Forest Service used the software to dispatch initial attack fire response to the Superior and Chippewa National Forests. By 2011, the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources saw the benefit it would have in tracking and flight-following aircraft assigned to incidents and decided to install a WildCAD system at the air desk. Shortly after, the DNR expanded the software system to its three tanker bases in Brainerd, Bemidji, and Hibbing. The new system allowed the tanker bases and the air desk to integrate real-time electronic information sharing.

With the establishment of the Minnesota Interagency Coordination Center (MNCC) in 2016, the coordination center was operating two separate instances of WildCAD - initial attack and aviation. Similar instances of multiple CAD systems were occurring across most of the United States in addition to similar products like FIResponse and the Alturas CAD. In 2019, the National Wildland Coordinating Group (NWCG) collectively saw an opportunity to adopt a national service and formalize the National Interagency Computer Aided Dispatch Subcommittee to assist in the development of national contract requirements for federal agencies to use a common CAD system.

The subcommittee's work provided opportunity to establish a national contracted vendor, and the contract was awarded to Bighorn Information System in 2020. It's important to note that the contract only streamlined purchasing the product license that made federal dispatch centers to operate a common system for their CAD. The contract did not require the states to participate in this contract, but it made it possible for the states to tag on to the federal requirement in interagency environments like MNCC.

State and Federal Partners working under one WildCAD-e system

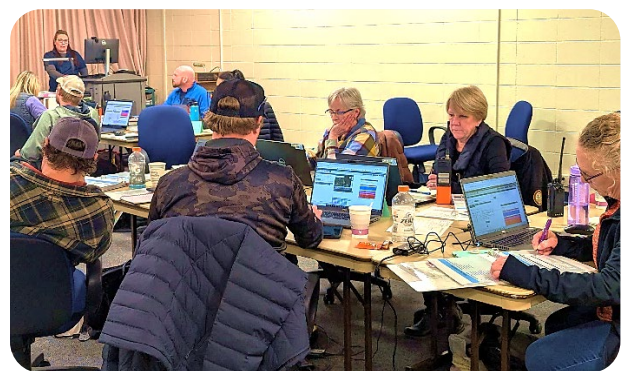
The latest software product – WildCAD-e – was made available to Minnesota in June of 2023 when MNCC Operations and Aviation migrated their systems into a single WildCAD. The move allowed both levels of coordination to communicate and work together seamlessly while dispatching incidents throughout Minnesota. As the two CADs merged, the DNR's wildland fire leadership approached MNCC with a proposal to use MNCC's WildCAD-e on a statewide level, expanding the State's dispatch service to functions as a unified CAD. There were many benefits to combining services, and the planning wheels were set in motion.

Throughout the past year, MNCC and the DNR have navigated over many hurdles with rolling out the large-scale software deployment and upgrading systems throughout Minnesota to communicate under a unified CAD system. The process took time for agency subject matter experts to deploy the software and hardware necessary to work in the system and prepare and train the DNR's regional dispatching militia to operate under one standard dispatching system. Thanks to the extraordinary efforts deployed by MNCC staff, communications and IT staff, and the dispatchers who have taken the essential steps to adopt a new way of business, the unified dispatching service has brought the entire MNICS community together. WildCAD-e provides vastly improved situational awareness, real-time reporting, mutual aid support, and, best of all, a newfound level of safety and accountability for our firefighters on the ground.

Through more than 3500 incidents in 2024, the Minnesota has proven that effective interagency coordination is achievable.



MNCC dispatchers and air attack running a WildCAD-e simulation during the DNR WildCAD-e training.



Jolene Soltis leading the Minnesota DNR Northeast Region through WildCAD-e training.

Minnesota Interagency Coordination Center



Minnesota Interagency Coordination Center (MNCC) Season Review

2024 brought a uniquely challenging season on many levels to the coordination center. We started the year by welcoming our partnering agencies into WildCAD. This is a game changer for the way both MNCC as well as the participating agencies conduct IA dispatching, and it now allows for the entire state to function out of a true CAD system. The amount of situational awareness as well as the ability to have a single point of tracking has not only improved the way we conduct business but have proven its worth by increasing the support and safety of our firefighters. The true fire season started off much earlier than historically normal and we saw our needs for dispatch at MNCC increase in early February. While this early season was challenging, getting support from staff both in and out of the state proved invaluable as we continue into an active fall season as I write this.

Staffing changes- 2024 is finally the year of consistency we have hoped for, for so long at MNCC. We did not lose any staff this past year and we able to add Jennifer Opsal to our vacancy in the DNR Operations dispatcher position. We have taken this past year to really focus on improvement of our staff in cross qualification and personal development including multiple out of state assignments. We have celebrated the accomplishments of multiple dispatchers in gaining and building on their qualifications in dispatch making our center a more well-rounded center. Nationally, staffing continues to be a challenge in many centers, and we are seeing the effects of that in the west with dispatch consolidations. The value of our office having the staffing we do is not only a testament to the working environment but also to the value and appreciation we have in our staff.

A special thanks to all of our detailers this past year, 26 IA Dispatchers, 14 Aircraft Dispatchers, and 11 Expanded Dispatch Recorders worked in MNCC in support of our normal staff. Dispatchers joined us from California, North Carolina, Oregon, Wyoming, Michigan, Alaska, Louisiana, Texas, Idaho, Nevada, Montana, Pennsylvania, and Arkansas.

Statewide this year we have had 3220 incidents created through our WildCAD system vs our average of 400 prior to the entire state being on board. That's averaging nearly 12 incidents a day, every day, the entire season up to the time I am writing this. Kudos to all of our dispatchers and support staff statewide on making this vision a reality, a very successful reality!

What's in store for 2025? We will find out together, but we are excited for the 2024 season to be coming to an close and look forward to 2025 being our best season yet!

MNCC Logistics Mobilizations and Requests National

The 2024 mobilizations started early with the first non-local order filled January 7. The season remained busy with an extended period at national Preparedness Level 5. Activity bumped to PL5 7/18 – 8/21 and then again 9/6 – 9/19. Followed by four weeks at PL4. The increased resources during this period was at an all-time high and demand outpaced availability.

MNCC Logistics coordinated over 2,000 overhead, crew and equipment resources from Minnesota that supported incidents in 32 states. Many of Minnesota’s active resources mobilized on more than three assignments.

Local

Locally in Minnesota we saw a steady need for resources to help support initial attack and prescribed burning. Agencies utilized local resources and brought in out of state resources to bolster support. As we moved into the fall months and began to see drought impact the state again, agencies ordered in another round of out of state resourced to assist.

Local incidents had over 600 orders filled with non-local resources. To meet changing priorities and needs, some resources were reassigned to multiple incidents to meet changing priorities and needs.

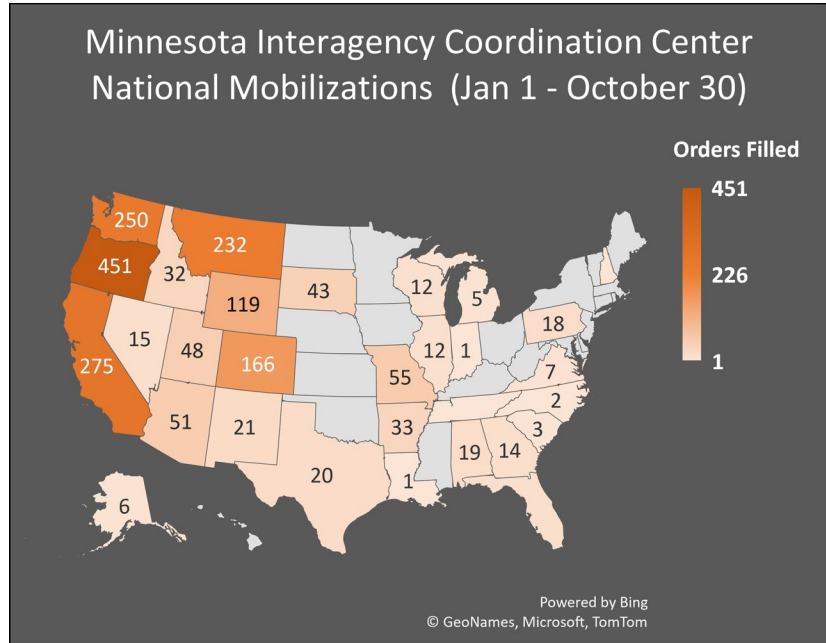
International Mobilizations

23 – hand crew resources mobilized through the Great Lake Forest Fire Compact (GLFFC) in support of wildfires in Manitoba, Canada.

MNICS Type 3 IMT Mobilizations

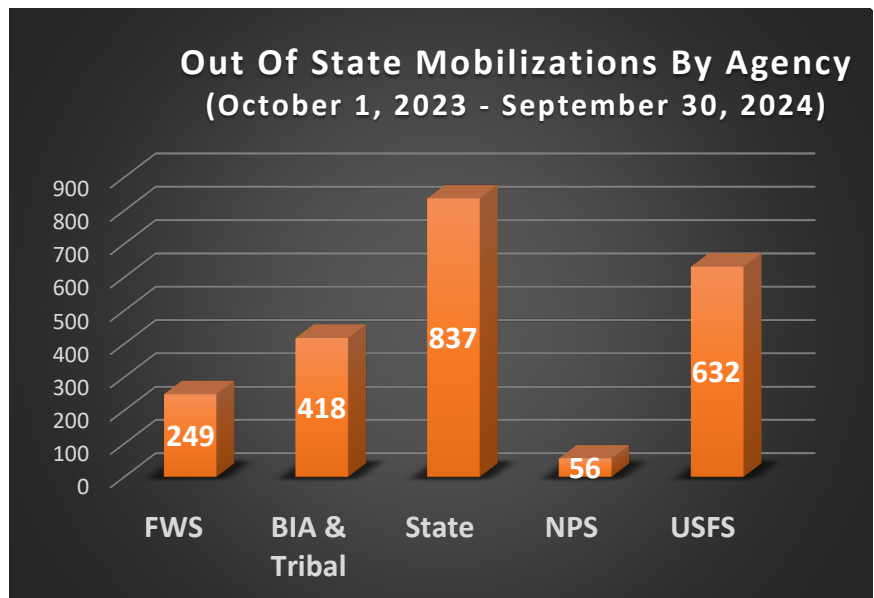
- Local Team A – Evergreen Forest Fire, Pine City, MN, October 18, 2024
- National –Team C – RAC MOB Support, Redmond, OR, 8/2. Reassigned - Williams Mine Fire, Troutlake, WA 8/7. Reassigned – Ruby Fire, Newhalem, WA 8/8

National Mobilization Map

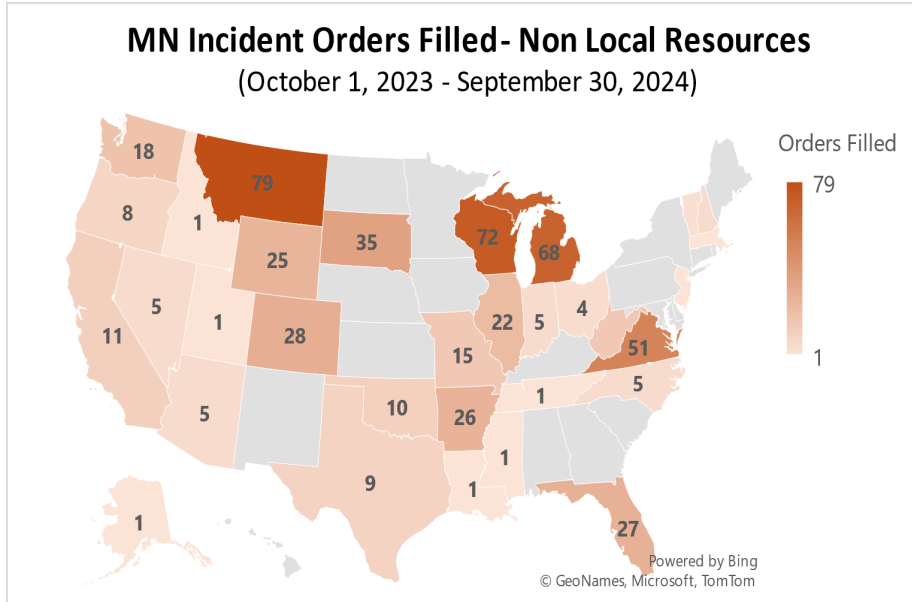


Minnesota resources that support national needs this year.

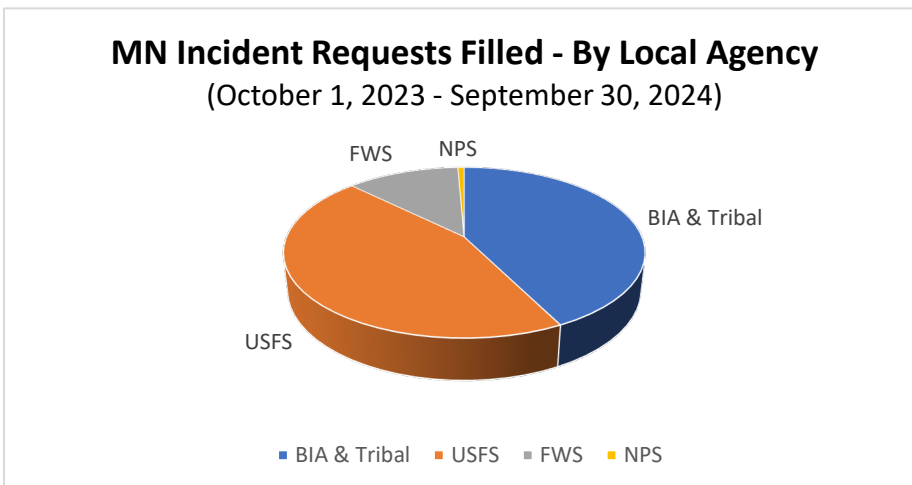
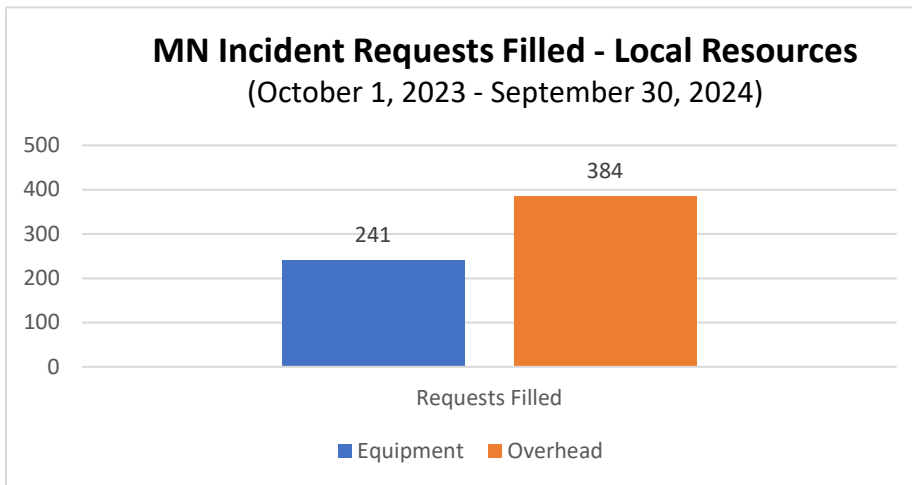
National Mobilizations by Agency



Non-Local Resources Assigned – By State



Local Resources Assigned – Equipment and Overhead



MNCC AVIATION AIR DESK



2024 FIRE SEASON STATISTICS (3/01/24 – 10/30/2024)

Aviation Dispatches

MNCC Aviation desk received 283 aircraft requests on 109 fires.

- Helicopter – 104
- Air Attack – 57
- Tankers – 122

Helicopters

First mission was flown on March 1 and the last on November 12

- Responded to 79 DNR fires
- Responded to 7 USFS fires
- Responded to 5 BIA fires
- Responded to 1 USFWS fires

Air Attack

First mission was flown on March 3 and the last on October 26

- Responded to 34 DNR fires
- Responded to 11 USFS fires
- Responded to 6 BIA fires

Fixed Wing Tankers

First mission was flown on March 3 and the last on October 26

- Responded to 32 DNR fires
- Responded to 9 USFS fires
- Responded to 6 BIA fires

2024 MNICS AVIATION PROGRAM SUMMARY

Contracted, Utilized or Shared Aircraft (Spring 2024 – Oct.30)

Single-engine aircraft

Agency	SEAT EU	SEAT CWN	SES EU	SES CWN
BIA	1	4	1	2
DNR Forestry	2	2	6	2
USFS	-	-	-	2
Total	3	3	7	6

Large Air Tankers, Scoopers, & non-rotor-winged aircraft

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

Helicopters

Agency	T3 EU	T3 CWN	T2 CWN	T1 EU	T1 CWN
BIA	1	1	-	-	-
DNR Forestry	7	3	-	-	-
USFS	1	2	-	2	-
Total	9	6	-	2	-

EU - exclusive use

CWN - call when needed

SEAT - Single Engine Air Tanker

SES – Single Engine Scooper

CL – Canadair amphibious firefighting aircraft

ATGS - Air Tactical Group Supervisor

Lt F/W - Detection flights including Beavers

UAS - Unpersoned Aircraft System mission

LAT -Large Air Tanker

T1 – Type 1

T2 – Type 2

T3 – Type 3

INTERAGENCY AVIATION COORDINATION



Minnesota DNR

Hosted MNICS/GLFFC Air Ops Meeting

- Discussion topics included a season review, NOAA Weather, Hummingbird Drones, and mishap response plan sharing

Training and Briefings

- Provided cadre for the Pennsylvania Wildfire Academy S-270 & A-219
- Annual Minnesota Aviation Workshop
- Provided cadre for the Minnesota Wildfire Academy S-270 Basic Air Operations

Non-Local Assistance to Minnesota (1/1 -10/30)

- Received assistance from the following aviation positions: ATBM, MXMS, ATGS, RTCM-T, FWPT-T
- The following state provided aircraft dispatcher ACDP support to the Air Desk: Nevada, California, Arkansas, North Carolina, Wyoming, Oregon, Montana, Idaho, Michigan, New Mexico and Wisconsin

Out-of-State Assistance (3/21—10/30)

- DNR 198 Day Exclusive Use helicopter supported Idaho Department of Lands, Grangeville, with initial attack - 7/15 - 8/5/24.
- ATBM, SEMG, RAMP, FWPT, ATIM personnel to AZ, NM, CO, WY, WA, OR, ID, MT, NV, TX, CA
- ATGS supported incidents in AZ and WA
- ACDP supported incidents in OR, NV & MO

HECM & HMGB supported incidents in ORMN Department of Natural Resources Aerial Projects

- Aerial Ignition (PSD) - DNR Wildlife Cross Lake West 1029 ac.
- Aerial Herbicide Application – 510 ac.
- Aerial Seeding - Spring - 2207 ac., Fall – 585 ac.
- State-wide wetland monitoring aerial photos
- 200,000 Remote sites tree seedlings distributed by sling load

Bureau of Indian Affairs

- Hosted BIA EU Intel/AA Platform in Bemidji for 50 days
- Red Lake Helitack staffed locally and throughout entire fire season providing coverage and assistance to Crow Helitack
- MN Agency ATGS's staffed BIA EU platform in Minnesota, New Mexico, Arizona, Montana, and Washington
- Tribal and BIA employees worked numerous fire assignments in various aviation qualifications such as HECM, HMGB, ASGS(t)

US Fish and Wildlife Service

- Utilized UAS for aerial ignition and reconnaissance on three prescribed fires for 9,173 acres

USDA Forest Service - Superior & Chippewa NF

- USFS Issued 19 Cooperator Letters
- Superior Helitack:
 - Helicopter was on contract for 120 days, March 1st – June 28th.
 - 67 off forest contract days in southern tier of R9 and R8 (3/1 to 4/20 - R9/R8 Rx, 6/1 to 6/28 - R8 severity)
 - 53 on forest contract days (4/21 to 6/12)
 - 136.2 season flight hours (all mission types and locations)
- 20,911 Rx aerial ignition acres completed between R9 and R8
- Assisted BWCA SAR logistics
- Personnel assistance with Beaver flights for DNR fish stocking.
- USFS HECMs and HMGBs supported aviation programs and incidents in: MO, VA, OR, WA, NV, MT, FL, GA, CA, ID, and AK
- Aviation training - helispot selection, requirements and log deck construction, RT-219, A-314, RT9016, and PLDO refresher training incorporated aerial FIRBs

Ely Tanker Base:

- 200 Operational Days (67 Operational Days with Aircraft)
- 523,594 Gallons delivered
- 58 Air Attack Hours
- 89 Scooper flight hours
- 56 Days of out of state ATBM deployments
- 80 Days supporting MNDNR and BIA bases
- Training for FWPT, RAMP, SEMG and ATIM
- 1 Fulltime Base manager 11 Detailers

DHC-2 Beaver Program:

- 115 Hours Fire Patrol
- 8 Hours IA Scooping
- 7 Hours Firefighter Transport
- 7 Hours Medivac
- 33 Hours Search and Rescue
- 13 Hours Wildlife Survey
- 18 Hours Forest Health
- 16 Hours Fish Stocking
- 10 Hours Lake Surveys
- 3 Hours Law Enforcement

Unpersoned Aviation (UAS)

- 7 UAS operators currently qualified
- Rx Aerial Ignition
- Wildfire Recon
- Natural Resource missions

INTERAGENCY AVIATION COORDINATION





Northeast Interagency Support Cache & National Symbols Program



Northeast Interagency Support Cache (NEK)

During the 2024 fire season, the Northeast Interagency Support Cache (NEK cache) supported five Type 3 incidents and our normal annual business. This year marked the first time since the NEK cache opened in 1991 that we sent items to Connecticut. We also sent supplies to Michigan, West Virginia, Ohio, and Illinois. In total, NEK processed and shipped 3,950-line items of supplies totaling approximately \$2.5 million this year. We also processed 1,219-line items of returns totaling roughly \$1.1 million.

The NEK cache utilized the National Cache System by bringing in over \$3 million worth of items from other caches to support fires in the Eastern Area and sent approximately \$4 million in supplies to other caches supporting the western fire season, including caches in Colorado, California, Montana, Idaho, Oregon, Washington, Arizona, and Kentucky. NEK also supported the National System by refurbishing pumps for the Southern Area and Rocky Mountain Caches.

The Cache provided supplies and equipment of more than \$433,000 for the following training sessions:

2024 GLFFC Section Chiefs Academy, Minnesota North College's (ICC) Natural Resources Program, Big Rivers Wildfire Academy, S-130/S-190 Basic Firefighter Courses, Vermillion Community College's S-211 Pumps class, MN DNR's S-212 Chainsaw Courses, Lake Superior College's S-211 & S-212 Classes, and the MN Wildfire Academy

We also provided supplies to eight contract helibases and four tanker bases

NEK staff supported the western fire season by assisting with the following positions: Small Engine Mechanic and Equipment Manager. Cache personnel did a total of four western fire assignments.

National Symbols Program

The National Symbols Cache processed 3,080 orders for approximately \$1,487,000 in sales in fiscal year 2024. This year Smokey celebrated his 80th birthday. This helped our sales top our usual average of approximately \$1 million annually.

We currently stock 106 products, plus 47 digital downloadable products. New products this past year for Smokey Bear included 10 Smokey 80th products. These products, along with our standard product offerings, can be viewed and ordered on the website at www.symbols.gov.

The Cache welcomed Ryan Bruley, Warehouse Lead, and Roxanne Kaminski, Fire Supply Technician, to the cache this last year. Both have been great additions to our staff.



Bureau of Indian Affairs



2024 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 and Tribal Fire Programs of Minnesota Agency and Red Lake proudly serve their communities and assist our interagency partners.

Like nearly all MNICS partners, Minnesota Agency and Red Lake's fire season began in February and extended late into the fall. Tribal and BIA firefighters supported Oklahoma through the winter months, covered suppression and prescribed fire needs locally through the spring, and quickly transitioned to assistance in the Southwest in early summer. Throughout the fire season, BIA and Tribal firefighters took multiple assignments to support other tribes and fires in Oklahoma, Arizona, New Mexico, Montana, Colorado, Oregon, Wyoming, South Dakota, and Washington. Additionally, the Midwest Region provided two BIA-Tribal T2IA crews to the Rocky Mountain Region.

Reservation	Wildfires	Acres	Prescribed Fires	Acres
Red Lake	130	720.6	12	7,450
White Earth	49	173.8	47	948
Fond du Lac	2	10.3	11	110
Mille Lacs	14	10.6	2	510
Bois Forte	1	.1		
Grand Portage	0	0	4	63
Leech Lake*	N/A	N/A	1	7
Total	196	915.4	77	9,680

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

Minnesota Agency supported the BIA's air attack program by providing ATGS coverage at BIA exclusive use bases and helping the BIA's National Aviation Office build the air attack/fire intelligence program. 2024 marked the first time an enhanced air attack platform has been hosted in Minnesota. The intel products were highly valuable to ground resources in locating concentrations of heat, location of spot fires, and ensuring there was no ignition of peat during drought conditions.

The BIA looks forward to the continued development and use of these technologies to assist its MNICS partners and greatly appreciates any feedback, suggestions, or questions that will help build the program.

In 2024, Midwest Region welcomed Jackie Hazeman to the team as a Fire/Forestry Budget Analyst. Jackie is working out of the Minnesota Agency office in Bemidji.

Minnesota Department of Natural Resources



Cooperative Fire Response

The Minnesota DNR is working with the MNICS partners through the renewal of the five-year Minnesota Master Cooperative Wildland Fire Management and Stafford Act Response Agreement and working to provide unified interagency dispatching service with the WildCAD-e system. The DNR installed the dispatch infrastructure and software system in the spring of 2024 in areas and regional dispatch locations. MNICS federal and tribal partners have or are considering upgrading and installing the WildCAD-e system on their agency systems.

Out-State Support

Individuals from all levels of wildfire response – firefighters, line supervisors, and incident managers – mobilized to support our local, state, and federal partners this year. Nationally, DNR mobilized 561 personnel to support fire response needs in 15 states. Internationally, two DNR Type 2 initial attack suppression modules mobilized to Manitoba through the Great Lake Forest Fire Compact.

Incident Management Teams

The fire program organized two Type-3 incident management teams to support flood response in Minnesota this year. The first team mobilized to the Lake Vermilion-Soudan Underground State Park, where excessive rain flooded the underground mine. A second team rostered a full team to support the ongoing needs in southern Minnesota, but the team was released before mobilizing due to improved conditions.



DNR All-Hazard Type 3 IMT at the Lake Vermilion Soudan Underground Mine.

Since November 2023, the MNICS Type 3 Incident Management Teams rostered three teams throughout the spring and fall fire seasons. A MNICS Type 3 Incident Management Team supported the national effort this summer on two out-of-state incidents during a single mobilization period. Their assignments led them to the Williams Mine Fire in Trout Lake, Washington and the Ruby Fire in Newhalem, Washington. Minnesota DNR continues to support the Eastern Area Complex Incident Management Team (CIMT), which has qualified DNR team members for complex incident management. The Eastern Area CIMT mobilized three times this summer to support critical needs in central Oregon on the Red and Willamette South Complex fires.

Aviation

The DNR's wildfire aviation program made significant progress toward developing an unpersoned aircraft system (UAS) program. The UAS program is on track to be released in 2025 and will help to support wildfire hotspot detection, perimeter mapping, and overall wildfire situational awareness. Plans are underway to improve the Hibbing Tanker Base. The project involves constructing a new tanker base facility to house staff and a new ramp. Funding from the 2023 infrastructure bonding bill is supporting the project.

Rural Fire Program



The Division of Forestry's rural fire program awarded 183 Volunteer Fire Assistance (VFA) program grants in 2024 that provided \$663,381 in assistance. The program is supplemented by 25% of Minnesota's fireworks sales tax revenue, which provided \$176,515. The DNR acquired over \$2 million of equipment from the Department of Defense. The equipment, which includes six – 916 and 915 Freightliners (to be converted to water tenders) and six pickup trucks, will be distributed to rural fire programs in future allocations.

The rural fire program allocated 27 assets from the federal excess personal property program, including four pickups, three 916 and 915 Freightliners and three skid steers. The Minnesota DNR excess equipment program distributed 14 pickups and three type six service bodies to rural fire programs.

Fire Prevention

The DNR's fire prevention program is proud to work with 16 Firewise USA communities throughout Minnesota. DNR staff improved the Firewise grant tracking system, which will provide improved service and value to Minnesota's Firewise communities.

The DNR made considerable improvements to the Burning Permit System. The upgrades include a call log tracking system for incoming and outgoing messages and a new map layer displaying the communities coordinating burning permit programs at the local government level. DNR also released a new burning permit brochure guiding building permit system end users through the latest upgrades.

To celebrate Smokey Bear's 80th birthday celebration, the DNR developed and promoted a Summer Fire Tower Club for Smokey's 80th in coordination with the Minnesota State Parks. The well-received program involved a passport-type progress tracker encouraging participants to visit five Minnesota State Park fire towers and the Minnesota State Fair Grounds fire tower. During the Great Minnesota Get Together, the program helped boost the daily fire tower climbs to more than 1,200 climbers daily. DNR fire prevention also hosted numerous activities focused on Smokey Bear's 80th throughout the state this year.



Homeland Security & Emergency Management



New State Emergency Operations Center

Construction for the new \$41 million-dollar State Emergency Operations Center (SEOC) is nearing completion. 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 1: Construction underway of the new State Emergency Operations Center (SEOC). Photo credit: DPS

Alternate SEOC Functional Exercise

The Emergency Preparedness Response Committee (EPRC), led by HSEM and comprised of emergency managers from various state agencies, conducted a functional exercise of the Alternate State Emergency Operations Center (ASEOC) on Oct. 16, 2024. The objectives were to test the functionality of the building and IT infrastructure, exercise processes and standard operating guidelines, and train and refresh on the use of WebEOC. All state agencies with assigned responsibilities in the Minnesota Emergency Operations Plan (MEOP) had members in attendance. The exercise identified and reinforced many positive aspects and a few key areas for improvement. Overall, a great success!



Figure 2: HSEM along with state agencies conduct functional exercise at the Alternate State Emergency Operations Center (SEOC). Photo credit: DPS

2024 State and Federal Disaster Declarations

As of October 2024, Gov. Tim Walz authorized the use of the State Disaster Contingency Account for six state-declared disasters, including high winds, flooding, and tornadoes. In June, historical rainfall and overland flooding resulted in President Joe Biden declaring a federal disaster declaration (DR-4797) in Minnesota on June 28, 2024. DR-4797 included public and individual assistance to state, tribal, and local governments throughout Minnesota. The State Emergency Operations Center (SEOC) was activated for 17 days for response and an additional 67 days for recovery operations. FEMA and HSEM also hosted multiple Disaster Recovery Centers (DRC) across the state to reduce barriers and better connect disaster survivors with the various assistance programs available during recovery. HSEM recovery specialists will continue working with affected jurisdictions as communities as they continue to rebuild and transition to long-term recovery.



Figure 3: St. Louis County Mobile Command Post set up and operating in Mitchell County North Carolina. Photo credit: St. Louis County Emergency Management



Figure 4: Flooding in the city of Jackson, MN. Photo credit: DPS

Emergency Management Assistance Compact. (EMAC)

The Emergency Management Assistance Compact (EMAC) is a mutual aid agreement between all 50 states and territories. Resources are shared via a request and offer process. HSEM coordinates Minnesota's EMAC program.

2024 was a busy year for the EMAC program in Minnesota, primarily as an assisting state. Minnesota sent multiple resources to various states throughout the year. May brought severe weather impacting our neighbors to the south, specifically in Iowa, where a major tornado impacted the community of Greenfield, IA. Minnesota sent the Anoka County All-Hazards IMT (AHIMT) for two weeks to support response and recovery in Greenfield. In June, Minnesota sent 25 law enforcement officers from multiple agencies to Wisconsin to support safety and security efforts during the Republican National Convention. A very active hurricane season during September and October resulted in multiple resources responding to help affected states. The Minnesota National Guard sent aircraft and search and rescue teams, St. Louis County Emergency Management sent personnel and equipment, Ramsey County Sheriff's Office sent law enforcement officers, Anoka County AHIMT deployed seven members, and the Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT) sent debris removal crews to clear roads.

2024 Declarations Table

State Disaster Number	Incident Period	Incident Type	Jurisdictions Included in Declaration
SD-076 (state)	May 21, 2024	High winds	Mower County
SD-077 (state)	June 2-3, 2024	Flooding	Big Stone, Rice, Sibley, and Todd counties
SD-078 (state)	June 12, 2024	Tornadoes	Aitkin and Crow Wing counties
SD-079 (state)	July 26, 2024	Heavy Rains and Flooding	Marshall County
SD-080 (state)	July 33- August 5, 2024	Severe Storms	Beltrami, Big Stone, and Todd counties
DR-4797 (federal)	June 16, 2024 - July 4, 2024	Severe Storms and Flooding	<p><u>Public Assistance</u></p> <p>Blue Earth, Brown, Carver, Cass, Cook, Cottonwood, Faribault, Fillmore, Freeborn, Goodhue, Houston, Itasca, Jackson, Lake, Le Sueur, Martin, McLeod, Mower, Murray, Nicollet, Nobles, Pipestone, Redwood, Renville, Rice, Rock, Sibley, St. Louis, Steele, Wabasha, Waseca, and Watonwan counties</p> <p><u>Individual Assistance</u></p> <p>Blue Earth, Cook, Cottonwood, Faribault Freeborn, Goodhue, Itasca, Jackson, Lake, Le Sueur, Martin, Mower, Murray, Nicollet, Nobles, Rice, Rock, St. Louis, Steele, Waseca, and Watonwan counties</p>

National Park Service



2024 Fire Season Review

2024 was a slow fire season for the parks on the east side of the Border Park Zone. Voyageurs reported one fire for a tenth of an acre. Isle Royal, Grand Portage, and Apostle Islands reported no fires. Most parks experienced periods of high fire danger but minimal fire occurrence.

Mechanical fuels projects continue throughout the Border Park Zone to protect park infrastructure and make historic sites more defensible in the event of large wildfires. The fire management staff at Voyageurs assisted with the western firefighting effort from early July until early October.

Approximately 160 acres of invasive Cattails were burned at Voyageurs in the spring of 2024 as part of a wetlands restoration project. These burns consisted of several small project areas on Rainy and Namakan lakes.

The western portion of the Border Park Zone experienced a very active fall fire season, with several large fires on or near the North Dakota parks

Equipment:

Voyageurs received a new fire boat in the spring of 2024. We now have a dedicated fire boat in the Ash River area and one on Rainy Lake. This will improve the Initial attack response time.

Voyageurs will receive a new type 6 engine; the anticipated delivery is expected sometime in 2025.

Personnel:

- Paul Biesner was hired as the new lead wildland firefighter and is duty stationed at Voyageurs.
- Justin Wilson was hired to fill the vacant Fire Program Management Assistant position. He is working remotely from Theodore Roosevelt National Park.
- Rod Skalsky, Border Park Zone Fire Management Officer, accepted the Deputy Regional Chief of Fire and Aviation post for the NPS Midwest Region and will soon depart his current position.

USDA Forest Service



Wildland Fire Response

Overall, wildland fire response was slow in the spring but picked up in the fall when drought conditions occurred; however, wildfires across the state were smaller in size, and the need for IMT3 teams was minimal.

The Chippewa and Superior National Forests had the same number of human-caused wildfires. Neither forest had any confirmed lightning fires during 2024.

The Chippewa National Forest had 15 human-caused fires, totaling 115 acres. The first fire of the season was on March 11, 2024. The largest Chippewa NF fire was the Boy River Fire on April 6, 2024, at 53 acres.

The Superior National Forest had its first wildfire on March 12, 2024. In all, 15 human-caused fires burned 270 acres. The largest fire was the Bogus Lake Fire, which occurred on October 8, 2024, also 53 acres.



View of the Bogus Lake Fire. This fire was responded mutually with the USDA Forest Service and MN Department of Natural Resources. USDA Forest Service image

Prescribed Fire

Both national forests kicked off the prescribed fire season in the spring with ambitious goals to reintroduce more fire to the landscape. The Chippewa National Forest completed 15 projects, totaling 773 acres, and the Superior National Forest completed 26 projects, totaling over 1,359 acres.



Chippewa National Forest fire crews conduct a prescribed burn on the native landscape at the combined Forest Service Walker District and the Walker Chamber of Commerce office in April 2024. USDA Forest Service image.

Wilderness Crews

MNCC Operations continued its partnership with the Superior National Forest Wilderness Program in tracking Wilderness Rangers in the BWCAW. The Wilderness Rangers assisted with search and rescue operations, law enforcement actions, fire reporting and response, closure and evacuation notices and fire restriction notices to wilderness recreationists.

Search & Rescue

Search and Rescue missions remained steady for another season, including a complex mission at Curtain Falls. Overall, 21 missions were recorded for search and rescue, medical aid and public assistance at the time of this report. The Curtain Falls mission was not only the most complex but also the longest duration, beginning on May 18, 2024, and ending on June 4, 2024.

The Superior National Forest extends a big thank you to all the aviation staff, employees, law enforcement, and volunteers who assisted in this and other missions this year.

Personnel Changes

This year, the Forest Service had some current staff take new positions and hire new staff.

Stepping into different positions include Tim Lovich, air tanker base manager; Justin O'Brien, assistant FMO Superior National Forest east zone; Travis Durkin, assistant FMO-Fuels Superior National Forest west zone; Amber Hughes, E621 Superior National Forest Gunflint Ranger District and Roxanne Kaminski, NEK cache. Greg Gulan joined the Chippewa National Forest's fire organization as the forest's assistant fire management officer. Congrats to all!



Beaver aircraft and St. Louis County Sheriff Rescue prepare to depart for Iron Lake from the Seaplane Base in Ely, MN for the Curtain Falls Search and Rescue, located in the BWCAW. USDA Forest Service photo by C. Skustad



Chippewa National Forest employees take part in fire shelter deployment training. USDA Forest Service image

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service



2024 Season Review

The primary focus in 2024 for FWS personnel was to continue to implement treatments and organizational changes as a result of the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL). BIL treatments varied in range from landscape level prescribed fire to invasive species treatment to fuel break implementation. Several prescribed fires were implemented as a result of BIL, notably the County Road 7 Rx at Agassiz NWR and Unit 40 Rx at Sherburne NWR. In addition to BIL providing funding for fuels treatments, BIL also made a new wildland firefighter job series. While the opt-in process to the series is voluntary, FWS implemented this transition during 2024 which included changes to position descriptions, supervisors, and a reorganization of the FWS hierarchy.

The westward expansion of the National Interagency Prescribed Fire Training Center (NIPFTC) in 2024 allowed FWS to host modules for the first time as well as support the program as a whole with module leader and operations specialist detailers for the spring session. The May session was able to conduct 2 burns in MN with FWS staff.

UAS continues to evolve within the FWS Fire program, and in 2024 all FWS pilots were able to get additional training as a UASP(t). FWS is in possession of one UAS aircraft, a Skydio X10, capable of IR and color imagery. Reconnaissance/intel and imaging will be the primary mission for this aircraft. UAS was utilized on 2 prescribed burns, totaling 6,690 acres with aerial ignition on one unit totaling 2,483 acres.



Prescribed fire Unit 40G at Sherburne NWR. Photo Credit: Bob Bengson

The Wildland Fire Apprenticeship Program (WFAP) continued in 2024 with the 2 apprentices in MN pursuing training and experience throughout the country. Krishna Parthasarathy is set to graduate the WFAP program in December 2024.

Personnel Changes

- Brad Oen joined the West Zone as AFMO for the NW Hub.
- Darrin Franco transitioned into the Zone FMO position in June 2024.
- Javier Mattson took a new position with Medicine Bow-Routt NF in Laramie, WY

Mobilizations

It was a busy year for FWS personnel mobilizations, both in-state and nationally. FWS personnel assisted the MNICS partners with prescribed fire and wildfire response throughout the 2024 season. Out-of-state mobilizations included both RX and WF response to 13 states.



FWS Staff on the Willamette Complex in OR. Credit: Seth Grimm

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Fire Statistics as of November 5, 2024

Station	Wildfires	WF Acres	RX Burns	RX Acres
AGASSIZ NWR	0	0	2	4,273
BIG STONE NWR	0	0	8	994
CRANE MEADOWS NWR	0	0	5	107
DETROIT LAKES WMD	4	43	7	1,314
FERGUS FALLS WMD	0	0	18	4,548
GLACIAL RIDGE NWR	0	0	2	3,297
HAMDEN SLOUGH NWR	0	0	1	401
LITCHFIELD WMD	1	148	14	1,696
MN VALLEY NWR	2	5	2	796
MORRIS WMD	2	135	25	4,166
RICE LAKE NWR	0	0	0	0
RYDELL NWR	0	0	8	46
SHERBURNE NWR	0	0	12	4,091
TAMARAC NWR	0	0	3	261
WINONA DIST	0	0	0	0
WINDOM WMD	2	3	4	1025
Zone Totals	11	334	111	27,016



MNICS Working Teams

Air Operations

The MNICS Air Operations Working Team focused on the following:

- Drafted aviation qualification succession plan
- Updated Tactical Aircraft Request Order form
- Updated MN Interagency Flight Following plan
- Worked with NIFC to change geographic boundaries of air to ground frequencies
- Provided standardized RT-130 Aviation Topic
- Updating incoming resource in-brief packet
- Hosted GLFFC meeting with regional partners
- Working to add UAS Subcommittee to Air Operations Working Team

Michael Mannson, Working Team Chair

Communications

The 2024 fire season started as a quiet spring and turned into a wet summer in Minnesota, but this fall has been busy for the majority of the state. Team C mobilized for the Evergreen Forest Fire which was near Pine City, MN. The team was able to fill both the RADO and COML positions for this assignment. A suggestion made for the Communications working team was to add some additional equipment to the trailer such as an additional base station to install in ICP, magnetic mounted antennas for vehicles that do not have mobile radios installed in them, potentially bring the 50' antenna on a trailer, and to address the direct power connection issues but overall, the MNICS communication trailer worked well.

The MNICS Team C was assigned to Williams Mine Fire in Trout Lake, WA and then reassigned to the Ruby Fire in Newhalem, WA and utilized the new MNICS Communications trailer. Both RADO and COMT were rostered. Challenges included issues with direct power connections, resolved by using a

generator and non-GFIC outlets. The three remote repeaters were setup on separate mountains via helicopter. Communications overall were successful with little to no issues overall on the assignment.

Agency updates:

- MN DNR submitted the LMR Assessment and is waiting for final bids for contract. Once awarded, the assessment will take several months to complete.
- The DNR and USFS continue switching and updating handheld radios to the BKR5000. U.S. FWS is working on standardizing code plugs statewide. They plan to have them ready for the 2025 fire season.

There is a still high demand for new RADOs, COMT, and COML trainees and qualified individuals. A S-258 COMT course was held in Cloquet, MN hosted by GLFC on March 4th-8th 2024. This training was a great success with a full roster of students attending from within the Great Lake Forest Fire Compact. Be encourage those within your agency who attended to continue to pursue RADO, COMT, and COML to strengthen the MNICS Type 3 Teams especially for a larger pool for individuals when teams roster.

Ryan Williams, Working Team Chair

Dispatch

The Dispatch Working Team remains focused on planning trainings, workshops, meetings, and recruitment efforts as critical shortages of qualified and trainee dispatchers persists. In 2024, MNCC supported national dispatch needs by mobilizing 17 dispatchers filling 30 out-of-area requests in 12 states. Additionally, 36 orders were filled to support dispatch operations at MNCC. IROC training and practice sessions were hosted this past spring and MNCC hosted 2 of the 4 offerings. FWS began

MNICS Working Teams

incorporation into the WildCAD-e system and developed a closer partnership with MNCC, and MNCC supported additional WildCAD-e trainings for DNR offices statewide. Moving forward, multiple trainings are planned and scheduled for 2025:

- IROC offerings will continue locally
- D-110 (virtual) planned for first quarter 2025 in partnership with Mid Atlantic Compact
- Eastern GACC: D-311 Initial Attack Dispatcher – March 3-7, 2025
- Southern GACC: D-310 Support Dispatcher – February 3-7, 2025
- Southwest GACC: D-310 Support Dispatcher – March 24-28, 2025
- D-312 Aircraft Dispatcher – Dates TBD
- National Dispatch Academy will conduct its first Basic Dispatch session 2/14-3/14/2025, in Tennessee. Courses include – D-310, D-311, S-260/261, S-215, as well as offerings for Stress Management, Retirement/Insurance, and Law Enforcement Officer Safety.

As always, anyone interested in gaining experience in dispatch, or further supporting dispatch operations locally and nationally, is encouraged to connect with Dispatch Working Team Members for more information.

David Blatz, Working Team Chair

Finance

The Finance Working Team spent the season supporting the Eastern Area Incident Management Team, MNICS Incident Management Teams, Manitoba Canada fire support, Minnesota preposition incidents, and other geographic areas with finance support.

Throughout the season, team members worked on accomplishing task book items and pursued task book completion, with many team members earning next-level qualifications. Working with the MNICS Training Working Team to offer the S-261

course this year was a huge accomplishment that brought in several folks new to the finance section, which will help backfill recent retirements and build a more robust finance unit.

We want to grow the Finance Working Team membership to include participation among MNICS Agencies! Do you know someone interested in Finance? Please encourage them to talk with any member of the Finance Working Team to learn more!

Kristi Henderson, Working Team Chair

Information Management

Last December, the Information and Prevention Working Group reviewed the charter, discussed the PIO training opportunities, media use of drones over fires, and the PIOs role in Smokey Bear's 80th birthday celebration. The Information Team are actively trying to recruit more representation/voting members from the US Fish and Wildlife Service, Bureau of Indian Affairs, and National Park Service. The team is also working on incorporating the PIOT position into MNICS rotations and MN incidents.

PIOs once again supported the Type 3 Incident Management Team that formed for the 2024 Wildfire Academy. The academy is always a great training opportunity for developing PIOF-t to work with the media, write daily updates, and work with the fantastic instructors and students. Training opportunities were limited this year within the state but nationally there were many training opportunities. PIOs who had interest and flexibility picked up great experiences during out-of-state fire assignments.

PIOs were actively involved with fall wildfires including the Wood Lake Fire, Shell Lake, and Bogus Lake Fires on the Superior National Forest

Christine Kolinski, Working Team Chair

MNICS Working Teams

Information Technology

The ITSS and GISS group focused primarily on recruitment and training, resulting in two new certified ITSS member, bringing the total to five Minnesota. The group will continue working with trainees next year and recruiting GISS trainees.

Due to fewer MNICS Type 3 team assignments, ITSS set up trailers and completed maintenance on computer kit computers, network equipment, and printers. The MNICS team trailer is now equipped with a large printer. ITSS is looking at purchasing a portable plotter with GISS map product printing capability. ITSS plans to review inventory and reorganize equipment next season.

ITSS and GISS supported the Eastern Area Complex Incident Management Team's three assignments in Oregon this year, bringing with three trainees, two of whom earned certification. With the consolidation of the two Eastern Area Teams, ITSS has a lot of inventory, reorganizing, replacing and disposing of equipment work ahead. ITSS is also looking into purchasing the team a Starlink equipment package.

The new Minnesota Wildfire Risk Assessment Portal ESRI dashboard wrapped up this year. The tool provides an interactive public-facing interface for fire planning and preparedness. The project was completed in collaboration with the Timmons group. ITSS also finished Minnesota DNR's Burning Permit enhancements project, which allows SMS text messaging to access burning permit information and activate permits, and provides an improved, modern platform for the burning permit application system.

Joel Perrington, Working Team Chair

Logistics

Team members had many opportunities to support the MNICS Team mobilizations this year. The continued growth and experience among the logistics personnel demonstrate how the MNICS Teams effectively manage incidents in Minnesota and on national assignments.

Logistics personnel started the season supporting the Minnesota Wildland Fire Academy, working collaboratively with Minnesota North College - Itasca Campus, and building team personnel development.

MNICS logistics personnel from the DNR supported the Soudan Mine Flood in June. In July, MNICS logistics personnel supported two out-of-geographic area fires, the Williams Mine Fire in Trout Lake, WA and the Ruby Fire in Newhalem, WA. While on the Ruby Fire, Logistics personnel worked with a private contractor (Zero Hero) through the Greening Fire Team initiative and set a new national record for the highest percentage of incident recycling/ diversion in the Greening Fire Team initiative's history. More information about the Greening Fire Team Initiative is available online at the Greening Fire Team - Incident Recycling Dashboard. During the Ruby Fire, the MNICS Team also worked with a private vendor to utilize a Starlink for incident communications and connectivity. Starlink will likely be an important resource moving forward and will benefit other functional areas in locations where internet connectivity is limited.

MNICS logistics personnel supported the Evergreen Fire in Pine City, MN, in mid-October to round out the season.

Throughout the 2024 season, we continued to enhance mobilization procedures using standard incident management team push pallets for initial team mobilizations. These efforts pay dividends for incident management teams and continue to be beneficial for expediting team mobilizations. The mobilization push

MNICS Working Teams

pallets received additional review and updates for mobilizations in-state versus out-of-state assignments. Using the MNICS Team Trailers enhances opportunities for equipment transportation and provides workspace beyond the limits of site facilities while on incident. MNICS logistics has three trailers ready for incident management team mobilizations. The trailers are located at the Minnesota Interagency Fire Center (MIFC).

The Logistics Working Team is mainly comprised of members of the Minnesota DNR, Minnesota Department of Public Safety, and USDA Forest Service. The Team plans to continue recruiting new logistics support personnel.

Jon Benson, Working Team Chair



Operations

The Operations Working Team collaborated with the Prescribed Fire and Fuels Working Team to identify opportunities to improve Red Flag Warning parameters. The information gathered during the project has been combined into a memorandum. This year's accomplishments include updates to the team charter and MNICS Type II IA Crew Standard Operating Guide (SOG). Due to low interest in the crew program, MNICS focused on forming ad hoc 10- and 20-person, agency-specific and interagency crews, which resulted in multiple mobilizations this season. The working team members recognize the value of continuing the ad hoc crew model as

availability allows. Team members also feel the Crew SOG is still useful for crew rostering and operating procedures and will be refined as needed. The Operations Working Team thanks all the willing crew bosses and MNCC staff for their continued support in Crew dispatching and engine, aviation, dispatch, and SRB assignments.

Phil Millette, FWS, Working Team Chair

Prescribed Fire and Fuels

The Prescribed Fire and Fuels Working Team (PFFWT) was given 2 tasks from the MNICS Task Force. One task was completed by coordinating with the Operations Working Team. This task was to seek improvements to the Red Flag Warning parameters. The second task was for the PFFWT to identify and define how MNICS agencies would conduct prescribed fire operations in reference to Air Quality Index alerts. This task was completed and submitted to the Task Force for approval.

An annual PFFWT task is to coordinate interagency aerial ignition resources and prioritize burns needing aerial ignition. Accomplished this spring, there were no conflicts for needed aerial ignition resources. Another primary PFFWT task is to continually work with EPA and MPCA on smoke related issues. A unique example of this work was demonstrated this spring on the 5728-acre County Road 7 prescribed burn on Agassiz NWR. PFFWT members worked with the burn boss to model where the smoke would travel to predict any possible impacts.

MNICS agencies Prescribed Fire accomplishments for 2024:

- Bureau of Indian Affairs: 8976 ac
- Camp Ripley: 13,980 ac
- Chippewa National Forest: 590 ac
- Department of Natural Resources: 31,812 ac
- National Park Service: 214 ac
- Superior National Forest: 3597 ac
- US Fish and Wildlife Service: 27,275 ac

MNICS Working Teams

Prevention

The Prevention Working Team (PWT) continues to share information and build partnerships across agencies that support prevention and wildfire risk mitigation efforts and periodically throughout the year. Wildfire Risk Assessment: The MN DNR rolled out a Minnesota specific Wildfire Risk Assessment Portal: <https://minnesotawildfirerisk.com/>. It is intended for local community groups, private landowners, government officials, hazard-mitigation planners, and wildland fire manager use. The interactive dataset provides baseline information to support planning, risk mitigation and prevention efforts across the state. Wildland fire managers, emergency managers, and planners who work in the risk mitigation space are encouraged to create an account and sign up for the advanced Viewer function.



Smokey Bear 80th: The MN DNR held multiple events in communities and state parks around the state to celebrate Smokey's Birthday. Smokey Bear's 80th birthday was also celebrated throughout the 12 days at the Minnesota State Fair with extra activities and events on the first Friday, August 23, Governor's Fire Prevention Day. The Lieutenant Gov visited with Smokey Bear for his birthday and presented a proclamation making August 23, 2024, Smokey Bear Day in Minnesota. The US Forest Service also celebrated Smokey's 80th by having The Rudy Wendelin paintings of Smokey Bear make a stop on its national tour. They were displayed at 3 locations over a 2 week period. The USFS also held several

birthday events including Birthday Parties at each District, a tree give away in honor of Smokey's birthday, and a birthday themed float in five parades.

The Superior National Forest (USFS) held landowner workshops in collaboration with the MN DNR, Dovetail, The Nature Conservancy, and the Firewise Coordinators for both Lake and St. Louis Counties to put on two workshops for landowners. In June they held a workshop called "Tools for Living with Fire" where property owners learned about forest management and the tools to reduce hazardous fuels on their properties. In October they collaborated on a workshop called "The Art of Pile Building and Burning" to introduce landowners to the tools to safely build and burn brush piles.

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 to the MNICS Task Force.

Mike Palmer, Working Team Chair

Training

Upon the conclusion of the 2023 MNICS Annual Meeting, the Training Working Team began coordinating with Minnesota North College, the academy's Incident Management Team (IMT) and the MNICS working team members to prepare for the 2024 Wildfire Academy. The Minnesota Wildfire Academy was held June 3-7, 2024, at the Minnesota North College Itasca campus, and the week-long logistics and operations were once again managed by the Type 3 Incident Management Team led by Mike Altman. The success of this academy is due to the excellent leaders (including IMT trainees), instructors and cooperators, along with the seasoned assistance from Minnesota North College staff who arguably made the 2024 Academy one of the smoothest academies to date.

MNICS Working Teams



In addition to the academy planning, MNICS partners were busy hosting courses throughout the year. Together with the academy, MNICS partners offered over 37 courses, providing training to 455 registered students. MNICS member agencies also hosted fire courses to meet their agency employees' training needs.

The Working Team is analyzing the 2024 Training Needs Assessment results and will soon have a proposed training course listing available for planned 2025 courses, including the academy, June 2-6, 2025, at MN North College in Grand Rapids. Upcoming fire training course offerings are posted on the MNICS website training calendar. Agency Training Working Team representatives are always available to discuss training questions or needs.

The current Training Working Team voting members for 2024 include Michael Hill (USFWS); Taylor Schenk (MN DNR); Tracy Fifarek (USFS); Tyler Brink (NPS); Robert Lintelmann (BIA); Kara Bahr (MN DPS HSEM). Alternates and supporting members include Terry Flatley, Kelly Sande, Stacy Troumbly, Bennett Nelson, Steve Shapira, Patrick Kelley, David Dukart, Brian Hicks, and Tim Oland.

The Team has experienced many changes this year through retirements or job transitions and, along with these changes, a loss of considerable expertise. Thanks to our long-time members, Darrin Franco, Mike Rice, Jeb Backe, Angela Packer, Brian Pisarek, and Troy Boschee (who will soon retire), for their contributions. But change goes both ways, and we have gained expertise with the additions of Kelly Sande (DNR), Bennett Nelson (DNR), Mike Hill (USFWS), Stacy Troumbly (USFS), and Kara Bahr (MN DPS HSEM).

Taylor Schenk (DNR) will take the reins as the incoming chair, and Mike Hill (FWS) will serve as vice chair for 2025-2026.

The Team extends a special THANK YOU to William Glesener for his mentorship and guidance as the Training Working Team Task Force Representative. Also, THANK YOU to all the team members for their active contributions and participation in the many meetings and behind-the-scenes work accomplished this year. Finally, THANK YOU to Mike Aultman and his Incident Management Team, Meadow Kouffeld and staff at MN North College, Holly Henriksen at ISD 318, and the many instructors and volunteers who made 2024 another successful training year.

Robert Lintelmann, 2023-2024 Training Working Team Chair

MNICS Working Teams

Type 3 Incident Management

The MNICS Type 3 teams went on two assignments this year. The first assignment occurred in early August, with the formation of an ad hoc MNICS Type 3 Team that mobilized to Region 6 with plans to tie in with the Northwest Coordination Center. While en route, the team was assigned to the Williams Mine Fire, an emerging fire on the Gifford Pinchot National Forest in Washington. The team spent two shifts on the fire, building a foundation for a Complex Incident Management Team (CIMT) assigned to assume incident command. The team conducted a public meeting for the local community, prepared an incident command post for the incoming CIMT, and established a solid anchor point from which the CIMT operations team could engage.



MNICS Team B at the Incident Command Post of the Ruby Fire. Photo credit to MNICS.

After the CIMT took over the Williams Mine Fire, the MNICS Team was reassigned to the Ruby Fire in the North Cascades National Park, another emerging incident. The team filled out their 14-day assignment on the Ruby Fire. While there, the team built a fire management plan for steep, rugged terrain with poor access. The plan included protecting infrastructure and public recreation use within the park. Some challenges encountered during the deployment included working with multiple agency administrators and a CIMT. The team faced many learning moments, including managing a landslide that cut off fire resources assigned to another large fire (a scene right out of Costa Ricardo), and implementing the Incident Strategic Alignment Process (ISAP) for future suppression actions could be utilized by other teams or the hosting agency if need. During this assignment, the team achieved some great achievements, like incorporating more than 20 trainees and utilizing the Greening Fire Team to manage the incident's waste. This effort resulted in attaining the highest diversion rate (amount of garbage not sent to a landfill) of any fire on record.



During very dry conditions and increased fire activity in mid-October, MNICS Team C, led by Mike Hill, was ordered to the Evergreen Forest Fire Incident on October 18. The fire was burning in the Chengwatana State Forest, under the jurisdiction of the Minnesota DNR, Sandstone Area. Team C commanded the fire for six shifts from noon on October 19 to noon on October 25. The fire burned 167 acres of state forest lands. The team's challenges during the incident included enforcing a State Forest closure, access limited to tracked vehicle equipment, and the fall leaf drop with reburn potential. The team's successes during the incident included using InciWeb on a state incident and maintaining relationships with cooperators. As we progress in the 2025 fire season, congratulations are extended to Aaron Mielke, Jeb Backe and Mike Hill, who were selected as the primary MNICS Type 3 Incident Commanders (ICs). The Type 3 Incident Management Working Team and the ICs are building the 2025 team rosters and expect to announce team membership in early December. The annual team meeting is tentatively planned for March 12 and 13, 2023. We continue to seek diverse membership for the three MNICS Teams. All interested in providing their expertise to the Type 3 Teams are encouraged to apply. Ben Roy, Outgoing Working Team Chair.

Ben Roy, Working Team Chair

A Note of Thanks!



The 2024 MNICS Meeting was made possible the interagency 2024 MNICS Meeting Planning Team. The Team was comprised of Leanne Langeberg, Kevin Carlisle, Ryan Kingsley, Mike Palmer, Donna Edelman, Joel Perrington, John Furr, William Glesener, Joe Theisen, Tracy Fifarek, Tim Engrav, Lisa Wiley and Mike McLaughlin who spent the last year pulling together all the details large and small. It takes time and commitment to arrange pulling off the MNICS Meetings, from the guest speakers, hotel and conference center space, to making it shine with the behind-the-scenes work and handouts, to inviting all of you to join together and recognize the past year's accomplishments and plan for the year ahead. Many thanks you our MNICS Planning Team.

MNCC Dispatchers receive 2023 Eastern Area Recognition



Tasha Woodwick, 2023 Eastern Area Excellence in Dispatching Award Recipient



Jerrod Hegwood, 2023 Eastern Area Excellence in Dispatching Award Nominee

Congratulations to our MNCC team members, Tasha Woodwick, MNCC Assistant Center Manager and Jerrod Hegwood, MNCC Lead Aviation Dispatcher, who were recognized by their dispatching peers and nominated for the 2023 Excellence in Dispatching Award, coordinated by the Eastern Area Dispatch Working Team.

The Eastern Area dispatching community spans the 20 Northeast United States from Minnesota to Maine. The Eastern Area Excellence in Dispatching Award recognizes a regional dispatch leader annually for their contributions to local, geographical, and national dispatch efforts.



WILDFIRE ON ICE

January 17 & 18, 2024

Walker, Minnesota

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MIKE AULTMAN

Service - MNICS Board of Directors

TOM REMUS

Outstanding Performance

DAN OLDS

KEVIN CARLISLE

Leadership Award

DAN CARROLL

Retirement Award

TROY BOSHEE

TRACY FIFAREK

DEB BRUYERE

BRIAN WISE

Teamwork

AVIATION MISHAP RESPONSE

STEVE DAY

ROB JOHNSON

MIKE MANSSON

KEITH RIEDEL

JAKE WILLIS

WILLIAM GLESENER

RYAN KINGSLEY

CAMERON OLSON

JAKE SERFLING

SANDIE YOUNGBLOM

ANNA HINES

LEANNE LANGEBERG

ANGELA PORTER

MNICS TYPE 3 IMT RUBY FIRE – WASTE REDUCTION

JEB BACKE

SARAH BROWN

LADONE EDELMAN

STEVE GROVE

CHRISTINE KOLINKSI

LINDA MERRIMAN

JEREMY NESTE

NICOLE SELMER

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