



Notes

April 3, 2025, MNICS Task Force Meeting

Task Force: Cory Berg (Chair), Craig Ferguson, Darrin Franco, Kelvin McCuskey, Nick Petrack, Greg Carlson
Non-Task Force Attendees: Ryan Johnson, Leanne Langeberg (Notes), Ryan Kingsley, Kevin Carlisle, Shelly Greniger
Guests: Dan Paulson, Taylor Schenk

DISCUSSION TOPIC	NOTES
MNICS Budget Update	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The Task Force reviewed the monthly budget expenses and uncommitted funds. - The budget spreadsheet distributed to the Task Force includes the dispatch upgrade cradle points, security readers for MIFC building entry doors and the work completed on the MNICS Type 3 incident management team trailer, all of which had pre-approved coop funding. - MNICS agencies are in good standing on coop contributions.
MIFC Building Update	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The MIFC building fire extinguishers were inspected. - The annual sprinkler system inspection will be scheduled soon. - The Grand Rapids Fire Department supports removing the three hose stations and extra hose from the cache. Carlisle will follow up on their recommendation to add a fire sign panel to the stairwell's outside door. - The Forest Service is waiting on the contractor to confirm the elevator installation schedule. The contract is set with a May 1 completion date. The Forest Service contracting officer plans to send a care notice regarding the contract status. - The NEK cache manager confirmed the MIFC building roof is under a 25-year warranty. The cache is aware of two leaks in the fire cache area that require a fix. - The Region 9 Forest Service engineering committee did not accept the proposal for a new radio shop facility, stating that they felt there should be adequate space inside the fire center building to house the communication staff. Petrack advised that there was insufficient space within the MIFC building for staff and radio communication equipment. The committee felt that leasing a space would be a more cost-effective than funding a new facility. Kingsley advised the NEK cache is looking at leasing a warehouse across from the MIFC facility that has office space large enough to accommodate the radio shop.
Minnesota Interagency Fire Center office space availability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Both federal and state partners are working on meeting the return to office initiatives. - The BIA will need an office space if the agency fills the regional fire management officer position with a duty station in Grand Rapids, Minnesota. - The Forest Service will need one office space to house a regional fire staff member at the beginning of June and will likely place that person in one of the current Forest Service offices. They may also need additional office space for a Washington Office employee associated with fire and aviation. - The DNR does not anticipate any additional office space due to the recent return to office directive that will go into effect on June 1. - Carlisle will share the building committee meeting invite with McCuskey.



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MNICS Type 3 Incident Management Teams	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Dan Paulson, Type 3 Incident Management Working Team chair, met with the Task Force. - The Task Force approved \$2,000 of MNICS coop funds to purchase 300 challenge coins for the MNICS Type 3 teams. - The Incident Commanders agree a new public address (PA) system is needed for the team trailer. Paulson will work on obtaining a quote and submit it to the Task Force for review. The Task Force will discuss the topic further after the official quote is submitted. - The MNICS Type 3 Incident Management Team Standard Operating Guide edits have been collected from all team members. Paulson will forward the key edits on to the Task Force.
Minnesota Wildfire Academy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Taylor Schenk met with the Task Force. - Course instructors are all on board and the Wildfire Academy Incident Management Team is forming. - Minnesota North academy coordinator Todd Manley shared a list of recommended courses MNICS can offer at future academies, including aviation courses, D-110 dispatch, incident within an incident (IWI), L-380, and more 300 and 400-level courses. Schenk advised that he will discuss the proposal with the MNICS Training Working Team before making any proposals to the Task Force. - The Task Force advised aviation courses at the academy were no longer offered based on the level of complexity involved. The limited internet connectivity on campus has made it challenging to offer the D-110 during the academy. The Eastern Area dispatch working team does offer a D-110 close to the academy, and MNCC dispatches helps instruct the course. The number of higher-level 300 and 400 course offerings have been reduced because they conflict with lower-level academy instructors who want or need to take the higher-level courses. - The incident within an incident (IWI) course is a highly requested and Bennett Nelson is working on building an IWI course with MNICS partners.
Cooperative Agreement Letters for Aircraft	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The Minnesota DNR's exclusive use and call-when-needed contracted aircraft have been included on cooperative letters for federal use. The two state-owned aircraft used for detection and air attack, along with the pilots, are not included in the cooperative letters. - The Task Force discussed the Forest Service's decision to not complete the annual inspections of Canada's water-scooping aircraft this year. Whether federal agency inspections can be completed if the DNR requests scoopers for a quick strike through the Great Lakes Forest Fire Compact is uncertain. The Task Force will await national direction on whether a quick strike can be used on federal-managed land without a cooperative letter.
MNDOT and Cradle Point update	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The radio shop has not confirmed when the cradle points will be installed. - Minnesota DNR has placed the request to meet with the Minnesota Department of Transportation (MN DOT) to the Forestry Division leadership and is working on answering all of their questions before sending the request on to MN DOT.
Working Team Reports	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The Task Force tasked the MNCC center manager with coordinating MNICS Working Team chair updates in May. The working team updates will be scheduled the day before the May Task Force Meeting.



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<p>MNCC positions</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The Forest Service made a tentative offer to Ryan Johnson for the MNCC center manager position. Johnson has tentatively accepted the position. - The offer leaves the assistant center manager operations position vacant. The Forest Service received approval to announce the open position in their next phase of national fire hire and is working with the DNR to advertise simultaneously. - The Task Force is committed to integrating dispatch positions to ensure no one agency fills specific positions. They will prioritize advertising positions through both state and federal channels when possible. - BIA working with the DNR about possibly bringing on a seasonal technician position to temporarily fill in with MNCC logistics ahead of planned retirements to train and learn from the current team members. - The Task Force will attempt to meet next Tuesday after the weekly MNICS planning call to discuss plans for filling the current and anticipated vacancies in logistics.
<p>Annual Meeting</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The group has contacted Danielle Shedden with Close the Gap and Matthew Holmstrom, as potential guest speakers. - The Task Force recommends sticking with the 2024 MNICS meeting agenda outline.
<p>Agency Updates</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - BIA – The Agency reported a fair amount of snow was received during the recent storm. Prescribed burning is ongoing as windows open, and 13,000 acres have been completed so far this year, mainly at Red Lake, White Earth and Mille Lacs. BIA will bring a SEAT aircraft on next week and positioned it at Bemidji. They are also looking at on-call aircraft as needed. The contract for the helicopter at Red Lake is in progress, but the start date may be delayed up to a week, depending on conditions. The air attack platform is scheduled to arrive Wednesday, but that may be delayed depending on conditions. The regional FMO and Minnesota Agency aviation manager are on the priority list for national hiring, but the date for advertising the positions has yet to be determined. The new wildland firefighter pay scale is now in effect for BIA firefighters. Tribal firefighters are eligible, but it will take some time for the Agency to consult with the Tribes on how to proceed. Red Lake has transitioned to WildCAD-e, but their system is separate from MNCC. All fires are reported in Red Lake’s WildCAD-e will report into InFORM. - DNR – The entry-level crews are now on rotation and started April 2 out of Cambridge. Recent storms have produced snow in most counties except for Kittson County in the northwest and far southeast Minnesota counties. The helicopter based out of Willow River will start April 7. - FWS – Prescribed burning will resume after the latest storm system moves out and conditions become favorable. Local agency staff are assisting in other states. Starting next week, the agency plans to bring on the usual complement of spring-prescribed fire detailers. The PFTC should arrive early next week and will be available to help support partners with needs. The new firefighter pay scale is now in effect for agency firefighters. The new premium pay for detailers is also in effect but may result in fewer detailers at a time. Training is ongoing for agency UAS pilots. The UAS machine is now onsite at Detroit Lakes. Fire travel card authority has been restored for fire personnel but remains restricted for collateral duty staff. The agency is starting to receive their working capital trucks with GPS collars. Franco will coordinate a demonstration for the Task Force after the new trucks arrive.



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<p>Agency Updates Cont.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - HSEM – HSEM’s federal FEMA funding is currently on hold. Severe Weather Awareness Week is next week and will include a state-wide tornado drill. Cassie Calametti is presently the acting Operations Bureau Director. HSEM will hold a community-based response for tribal threats training course at Boise Fort on April 16 – 17. The agency is also hosting the Under One Roof conference on May 20-21. - NPS – Voyageurs National Park is entirely snow-covered after the recent storm. The park’s seasonal wildland firefighters will be onboarding at the end of the month. Voyageurs National Park has an engine module in Tennessee. The park’s fire staff is working on conducting fire refreshers and getting bill-funded fuels work completed. The Zone FMO position remains unfilled as the hiring freeze continues. Dan Angelo is currently acting in the position. - USFS – The forests have seen the return of some probationary staff. The forests are reporting snow cover. The agency hopes to accomplish some prescribed fire work this spring season. The agency is preparing for shifts in leadership and workforce reduction, including a lot of retirements. - MNCC – Ryan Johnson announced he has tentatively accepted the MNCC center manager position. Currently, MNCC is staffing aviation with detailers. Operations will be down one staff member for two weeks due to a mandatory military training commitment. MNCC will switch to seven-day staffing starting this weekend. - PIO – The MIFC PIO has reached out to all the federal partner Public Affairs staff to strategize on fire communication for the 2025 season.

Next MNICS Task Force Meeting will include Working Team reports and is scheduled for April 30 and May 1, at MIFC.