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October 2, 2025, MNICS Task force Meeting

Task force: Cory Berg (Chair), William Glesener, Darrin Franco, Kelvin McCuskey, Nick Petrack, Greg Carlson
Non-Task Force Attendees: Ryan Johnson, Leanne Langeberg (Notes), Ryan Kingsley
Guests: Aaron Mielke, Jeb Backe, Mike Hill, Joe Meyer, Dan Paulson, Tasha Woodwick, Jim Strezishar, Taylor Schenk, Joe Meyer, Ryan Williams

DISCUSSION TOPIC	NOTES
MNICS Budget Update	- The task force reviewed the monthly budget expenses and uncommitted funds report. - The DNR received an agreement modification for WIMS/FEMS funding between the State and the U.S. Forest Service, which will be applied toward the salary funding for C. Maxwell and will allow the position to be extended longer than expected.
MIFC Building Update	- Hopkins Electric has evaluated the training room electrical upgrades and will return to complete the project once the necessary parts arrive. - The NEK cache sent an email advising cache availability during the federal shutdown.
MIFC facilities project updates	- Jim Strezishar, U.S. Forest Service engineer, provided updates on the MIFC facilities projects the Forest Service is working on. - Elevator – The contract modification was awarded. The contractor is ready to proceed when the shutdown concludes. The Superior National Forest submitted an exemption to the Washington Office (WO) to proceed with elevator work during the shutdown. - Pump Shop – The Forest Service agreed to coordinate all project components based on the DNR engineering workload backup. The Forest Service architect is designing a first draft. - Exterior siding damage – The Forest Service will submit a proposal to repair the woodpecker damage on the MIFC building exterior siding next federal fiscal year. - Radio Shop – The Forest Service regional office submitted a high-priority request for a new facility to the WO. The FY2028 is the soonest funding may be available if approved. The preliminary architect designs will likely be delayed to FY2027 due to the shutdown. The task force will request that the radio shop staff be involved in the initial design phase to help plan storage space and will meet with the DNR and Forest Service radio shop staff to discuss facility needs that can be shared with the designer.
MNICS Type 3 Incident Management Teams	- The task force established three plan options for the 2026 season: A – no change if current recruitment fills three teams' primary positions; B – downsize to two full teams, maintaining weekly rotations with the option to request an out-of-state team at PL-3 or higher; C – transition to compact-wide Type 3 teams. The ICs support this plan progression. <i>MNICS Type 3 Teams recruitment and rostering</i> - The team's shortfall positions are liaison, safety and public information officer, followed closely by logistics and plans. The ICs recognize that MNICS teams rely heavily on a couple of key team members to cover multiple rotations for key primary positions. - The ICs are concerned with rostering additional positions to meet new standards when they are already struggling to fill the core command and general staff positions.



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MNICS Type 3 Incident Management Teams cont.	- Glesner proposed that the agency fill the PIO position when at PL-3, but the ICs advised against the recommendation, recognizing that media can quickly become overwhelming, similar to the Camp House fire. They prefer having a dedicated team PIO. - Currently, 119 applications have been received for the MNICS teams. Fewer people are applying for primary, but there are more job share applicants. The plan is to extend the MNICS team application period through the end of October. - The ICs are concerned with bringing out-of-state teams to cover a weekly rotation because it requires a two-week commitment, which will impact the established MNICS weekly rotation and disrupt team members' ability to plan around an established schedule. - The task force is open to developing a policy prioritizing assigning an outside team to the next fire that develops upon arrival. It is also open to exploring opportunities with mutual aid state-to-state agreements to draw in closer team resources. - The ICs would like to have more flexibility when rostering teams during preparedness level (PL) 2 in June and September. The task force requested that MNCC logistics prepare a report listing MNICS Type 3 team deployment dates and the associated planning level that they will use to develop a proposal on the PL-2 request. <i>MNICS Type 3 Teams National Availability</i> - The ICs expressed disappointment that the MNICS ad-hoc team that rostered for national availability didn't mobilize due to low national needs. The ICs recognized the season was challenging with lower planning levels but also questioned if there was too much competition from other Eastern Area Type 3 teams - New York and Wisconsin - that rostered at the same time, and the Eastern Area Complex team drawing a lot of team members away after the MNICS team went off rotation. - The ICs noted that MNICS teams are limited to two months to roster an ad-hoc team, July and August, based on the current rotation schedule. If the teams had more flexibility during PL-2, especially in September, it may increase the opportunities extend availability if the first round does not result in an assignment. - The task force advised that the Eastern Area coordinating group is having similar informal discussions as more Type 3 teams become available.
Training Working Team Request – Dispatch Courses	- Taylor Schenk, Training Working Team (TWT) chair, met with the task force to discuss the NWCG requirement for dispatch courses. - All dispatch classes (D-110, D-310 dispatch recorder, 311 initial attack, and 312 aircraft) are now required to become fully qualified starting in 2026. - Federal partners are more flexible than the state with sending dispatchers to out-of-state training. - MNICS plans to offer courses and DNR can host; however, MNICS has a lead trainer shortfall. An MNCC assistant center manager intends to attend the December M-410 course and can then become a lead. - The DNR has about a dozen staff who need the course. MNCC has a dispatcher who needs all the courses, while others only need the D-310 course. - The plan is to offer D-310 and follow up with D-311 at a later time. - The task force supports paying a lead instructor to travel to Minnesota to lead the course and will work through the MNCC coordinator for any potential leads.



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MNICS Annual Meeting Update	- The contract was awarded to the Holiday Inn in downtown Duluth, Minnesota. - The announcements for MNICS award nominations and MNICS meeting were distributed. - The guest speakers are mostly confirmed, but we are awaiting final confirmation on the Wednesday evening presenter. The backup plan is to ask the National Weather Service to present on Wednesday evening, instead of Thursday afternoon.
State Emergency Managers meeting presentation request	- HSEM requested the MNICS Type 3 incident commanders present at the State Emergency Managers meeting break-out session, February 9-11, 2025. The topic can center on what to expect when a Type 3 team is managing an incident in your jurisdiction. - The ICs support the opportunity. Joe Meyer will coordinate efforts with McCuskey and Schenk to develop key messages and a brief video sharing the key points.
MNICS cooperative agreement	- The federal wildfire service direction continues to unfold. Due to uncertainties about how the change will impact cooperative agreements, Berg will reach out to Schriber and advise that MNICS will request an extension to review any changes to the template.
Agency Updates	- BIA – Federal shutdown impact - BIA exempted fire and fuels staff with few limitations except for prescribed fire work. Regular business - The agency is discussing the wildfire service changes that may pull aviation assets and how the Office of Aviation will handle the contract work. Locally, BIA hopes to contract for two single-engine scooters and seats. - DNR – Federal shutdown impact – The DNR is not impacted; however, some staff working under grants may be paused. Regular business - DNR fire staff attended the Great Lakes Forest Fire compact meeting in Wisconsin. Glesener is covering section manager duties. Fire activity is increasing with limited initial attack reported, and staff are getting the upper hand on the fires. Michigan and Wisconsin are experiencing similar conditions. DNR Forestry is planning an all-staff division meeting in November. - FWS – Federal shutdown impact – FWS has exempt all fire-funded positions. The agency is not conducting prescribed fire projects and can't support partners prescribed fire projects. Collateral duty staff may be called back in to support wildfire needs. Regular business – Locally, FWS is seeing an increase in initial attacks in the Crookston area. The agency is still conducting prep work for prescribed burns to be ready when the shutdown concludes.
Agency Updates cont.	- HSEM – Federal shutdown impact – Similar to the DNR. Regular business – No report. - NPS – Federal shutdown impact – NPS fire staff are exempt while funding is available and may transition to excepted. The use of ADs is allowed. Travel and training for fire is approved. Regular business – Park staff are closing out the year-end. The fire crew is traveling back from North Dakota. Locally, NPS plans to burn piles when the shutdown concludes. Next year, Mt. Rushmore will host a Fourth of July celebration, and the region's preparations may involve local staff to support as needed. Voyageurs National Park is dry. - USFS – Federal shutdown impact – Fire and fuels staff are exempt. The agency plans to continue limited fuels work, but no prescribed fire. Training and travel are authorized. Regular business – The Superior completed 1,500 acres of prescribed fire and all ignitions stopped on Friday. Prescribed fire projects are on hold. The Chippewa National Forest is dry. Most resources have returned from out-state assignments. - MNCC – Federal shutdown impact – MNCC staff have not been impacted; all are reporting. Regular business – MNCC is staffing for increased aircraft in the state

Next MNICS Task force Meeting scheduled for November 6, hosted at MIFC.