



# ANNUAL REPORT

2025



## 2025 MNICS Board of Directors

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|                               |                                                                                              |
|-------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Tom Hall (Chair)</b>       | Forest Supervisor<br>Superior National Forest                                                |
| <b>Michael Stansberry</b>     | Forest Supervisor<br>Chippewa National Forest                                                |
| <b>Brian Harmon (acting)</b>  | Superintendent<br>Voyageurs National Park                                                    |
| <b>Jason Riggins</b>          | Regional Fire Management Coordinator<br>U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service                         |
| <b>Paul Lundgren</b>          | Fire Section Manager<br>Minnesota Department of Natural Resources                            |
| <b>Kevin Reed (acting)</b>    | Deputy Director<br>Homeland Security and Emergency Management<br>Department of Public Safety |
| <b>Cheryl Bright (acting)</b> | Regional Fire Management Officer<br>Bureau of Indian Affairs                                 |



## 2025 MNICS Task Force

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|                          |                                                                                                           |
|--------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Cory Berg (Chair)</b> | Fire Management Officer<br>Bureau of Indian Affairs                                                       |
| <b>Kelvin McCuskey</b>   | Regional Program Coordinator<br>Homeland Security and Emergency Management<br>Department of Public Safety |
| <b>Darrin Franco</b>     | West Zone Fire Management Officer<br>U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service                                         |
| <b>Nick Petrack</b>      | Forest Fire Management Officer<br>U.S. Forest Service                                                     |
| <b>William Glesener</b>  | Wildfire Operations Supervisor<br>Minnesota Department of Natural Resources                               |
| <b>Greg Carlson</b>      | Fire Management Officer<br>Voyageurs National Park                                                        |

### 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

Since 1984, MNICS has worked to make wildfire response safer, more effective, and more efficient. The commitment to coordination, training, and incident response over the past 40 years is evident in how we operate today. Our interagency partnership continues to prove its value year after year, and 2025 was no exception. This year, we were tested by several challenging incidents, including the Munger Shaw, Camphouse, and Jenkins Creek Fires.

A core strength of our organization is our ability to adapt and learn from experience. Planning is already underway for next year and beyond, and we remain committed to identifying improvements and ensuring our successes endure.

Change is constant in our line of work. We face shifting environments, challenging fire behavior, new technologies, adjustments in budget, and ongoing policy updates. At times, we guide change based on lessons learned; other times, change is driven externally. Regardless of the source, we continue to adapt with a focus on safety and effectiveness. As we look ahead to 2026, we recognize that federal wildland fire agencies are on the verge of significant transformation. MNICS will also need to evolve, but our guiding principles—partnership, coordination, education, and supporting Minnesota's firefighters—will remain central to our mission.

As 2025 comes to a close, I encourage everyone to take a moment to reflect on the accomplishments of the past year and on behalf of the Task Force, thank you for a job well done.

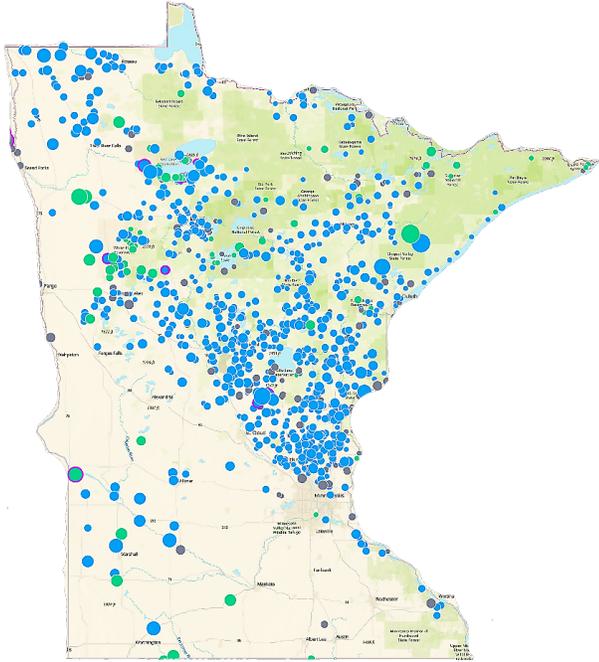
*Cory Berg (BIA)*  
*MNICS 2025 Task Force Chair*



# MNCC Intelligence

## 2025 Wildfire Season Totals Through October 31, 2025

Minnesota Incident Command System partners recorded 1,291 wildfires that burned 49,070 acres in 2025 between January 1 through October 31.



2025 Minnesota wildfire activity - image retrieved from InFORM

### 2025 Wildfires Reported by Agency

| Agency                       | Wildfires    | Acres         |
|------------------------------|--------------|---------------|
| Bureau of Indian Affairs     | 215          | 1,731         |
| USDA Forest Service          | 22           | 16,543        |
| U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service | 14           | 5,064         |
| National Park Service        | 2            | 3             |
| State                        | 1038         | 25,729        |
| <b>2025 Totals</b>           | <b>1,291</b> | <b>49,070</b> |

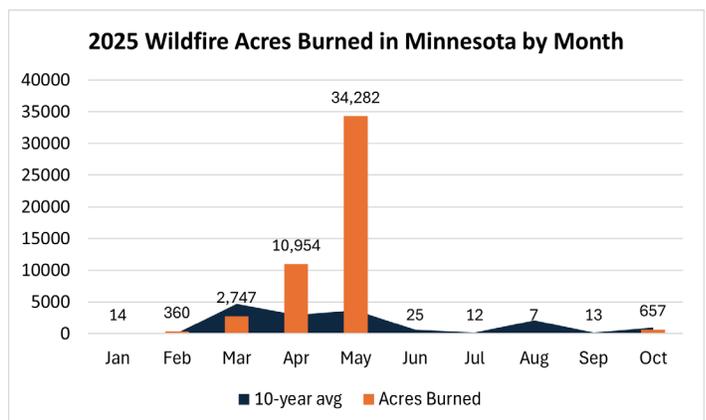
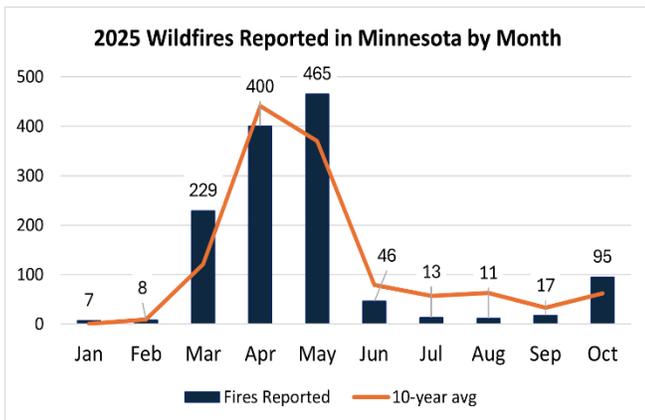
Total recorded as of October 31, 2025

### 2025 Prescribed Burns by Agency

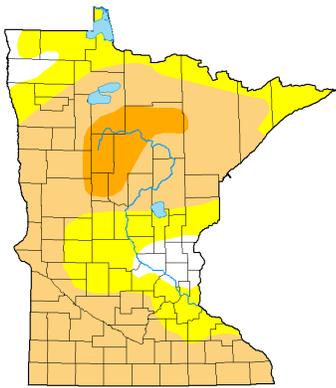
| Agency                       | RX Burns   | Acres         |
|------------------------------|------------|---------------|
| Bureau of Indian Affairs     | 69         | 13,782        |
| USDA Forest Service          | 34         | 2,532         |
| U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service | 106        | 21,832        |
| National Park Service        | 2          | 155           |
| State                        | 344        | 48,067        |
| <b>2025 Totals</b>           | <b>544</b> | <b>86,368</b> |

Total recorded as of October 31, 2025

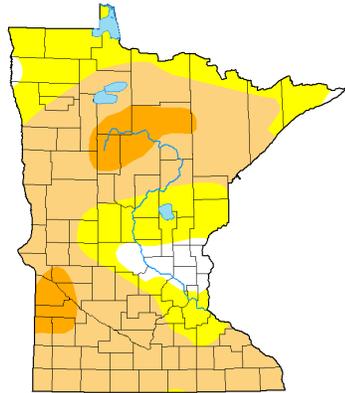
## 2025 Wildfire Season Totals – January 1 through October 31, 2025



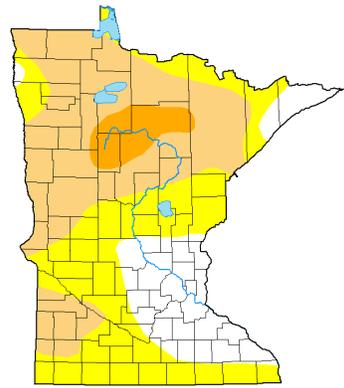
# 2025 Drought Monitor February through October



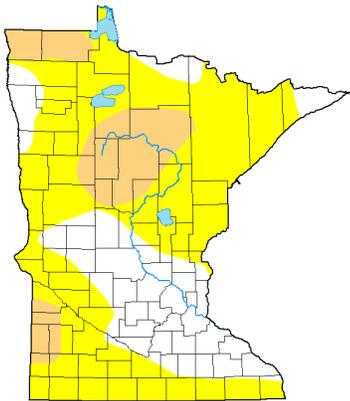
February 25, 2025



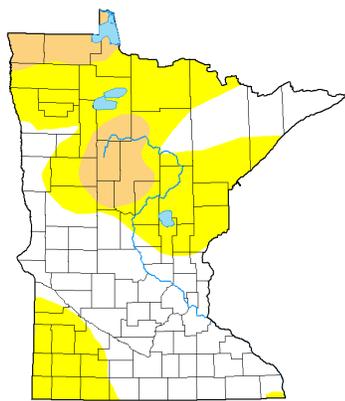
March 25, 2025



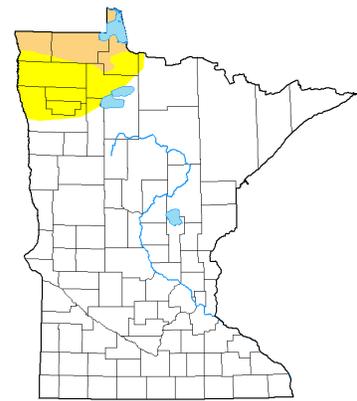
April 22, 2025



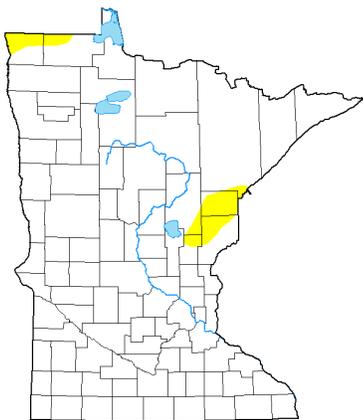
May 27, 2025



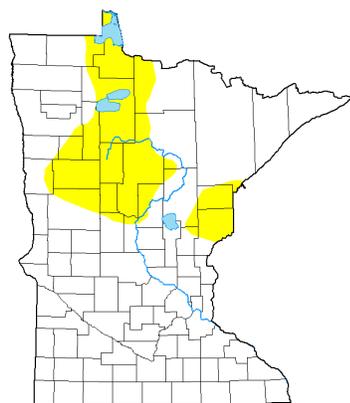
June 24, 2025



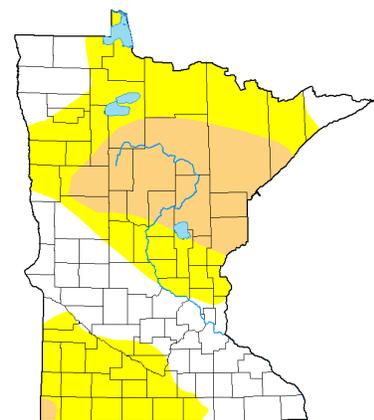
July 22, 2025



August 26, 2025



September 23, 2025



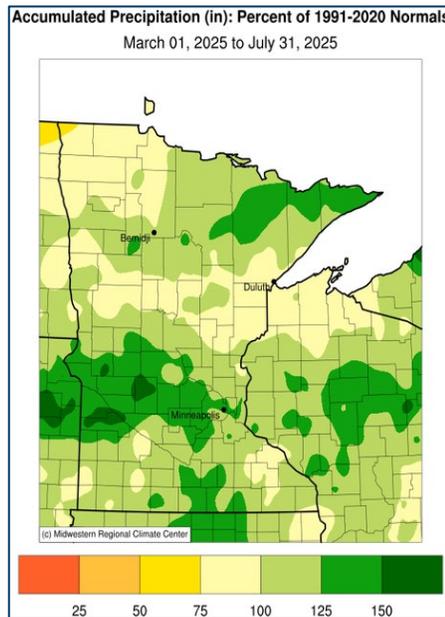
October 28, 2025

# National Weather Service

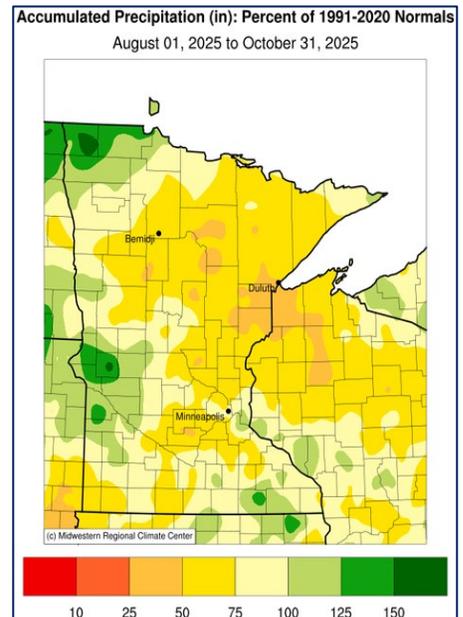


While 2025 winter snowfall started off light for the second winter in a row, temperatures were cooler. The colder conditions allowed for a more traditional mid-March through May spring fire season. The highlight of the spring fire weather season occurred between May 10-14, when a significant May heatwave descended on the state. Each day, highs were in the 80s and 90s across the state. The most significant fire weather day occurred on May 11 when temperatures reached highs near 100 degrees as far north as Lake of the Woods. The warm temperatures, along with southerly winds gusting to 45 mph, sent humidity down to 10 to 15 percent. During this span of hot, dry, and windy fire weather, a couple of destructive fires developed in northeast Minnesota near Brimson, with the Camp House and Jenkins Creek wildfires destroying dozens of structures.

As spring transitioned to summer, timelier rains helped keep fire danger low throughout much of the summer (see the precipitation departure map for March 1 through July 31). However, drier-than-normal conditions from late August through October (see precipitation departure map for August 1 through October 31) allowed the fire danger to build. The lack of stronger windstorms helped keep fire danger low throughout the fall, though dry and windy conditions produce a minor Red Flag Warning near the Duluth area on November 3.

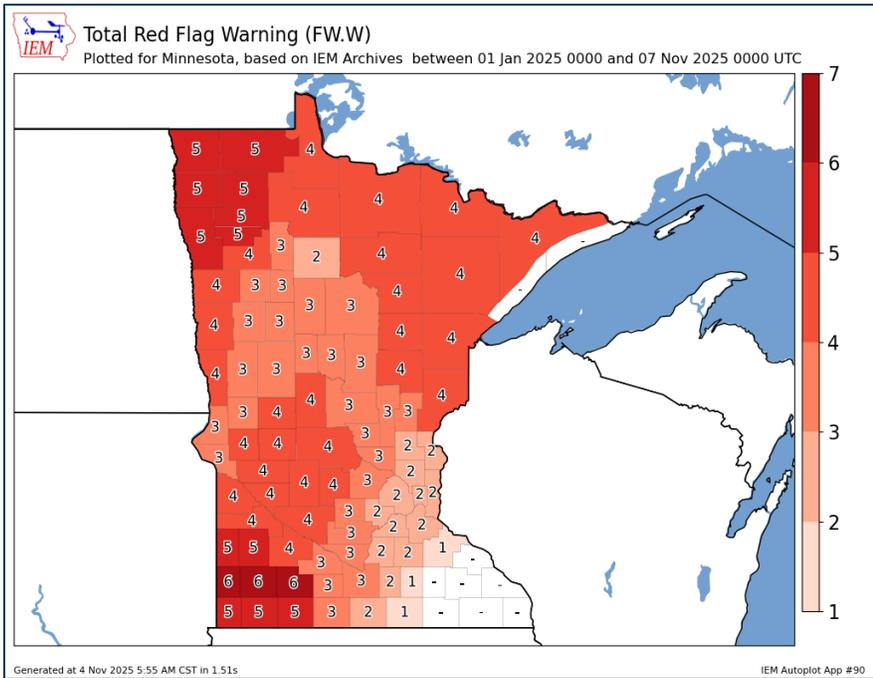


*Percent of normal precipitation for March 1 - July 31, 2025*



*Percent of normal precipitation for August 1 - October 31, 2025*

# FIRE WEATHER



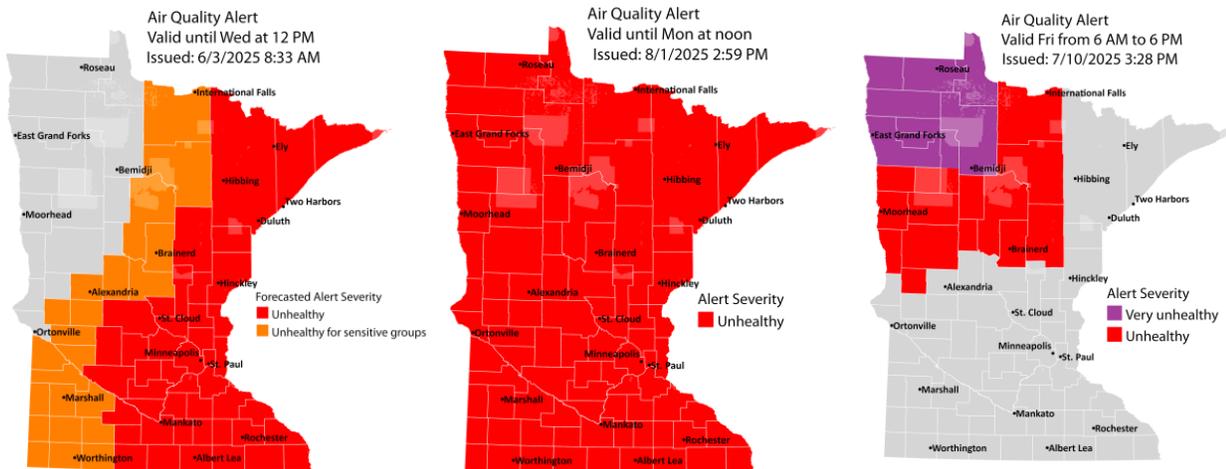
Number of days each county appeared in a Red Flag Warning in 2025

The first Red Flag Warnings of the year occurred on March 10 in far west Minnesota. However, after March 10, a series of winter storms brought a reprieve to the spring wildfire season for the remainder of March. The next Red Flag Warning event arrived on April 9 and was issued in southwest Minnesota. Timely rains the remainder of April kept fire danger relatively tame, with no additional Red Flag Warnings issued in the state for the remainder of the month.

The spring fire season peaked in May, aided by a stretch of very hot, dry weather. Red Flag Warnings were issued in some parts of the

state on May 4 and 5 in the northwest. On May 10, 11th, 12th, and 13th, all but the southeast corner were under a Red Flag Warning. The final Red Flag Warning day of the Spring occurred on May 20 in the Arrowhead region. Minimal fire activity occurred throughout the summer as timely rains helped keep the fire danger low.

The only notable wildfire-related issue that occurred throughout the summer was several rounds of unhealthy wildfire smoke that spread across the state between the end of May through mid- August due to the Canadian wildfires.



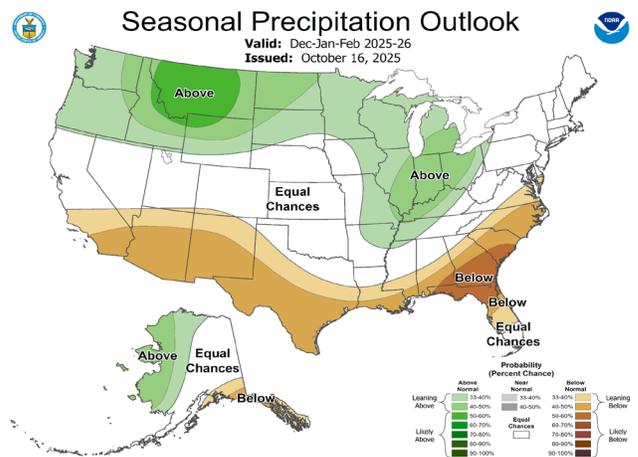
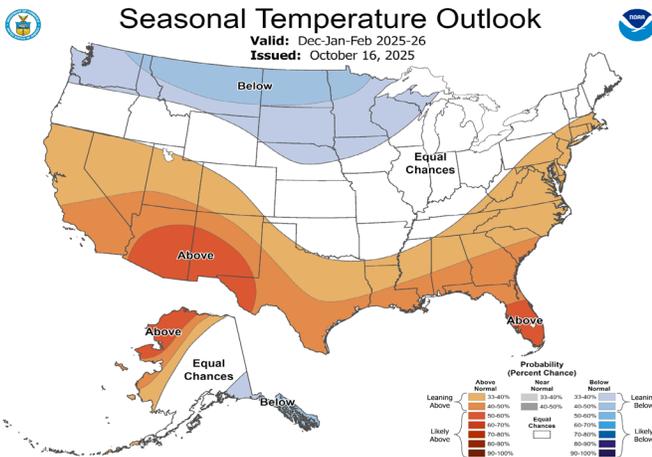
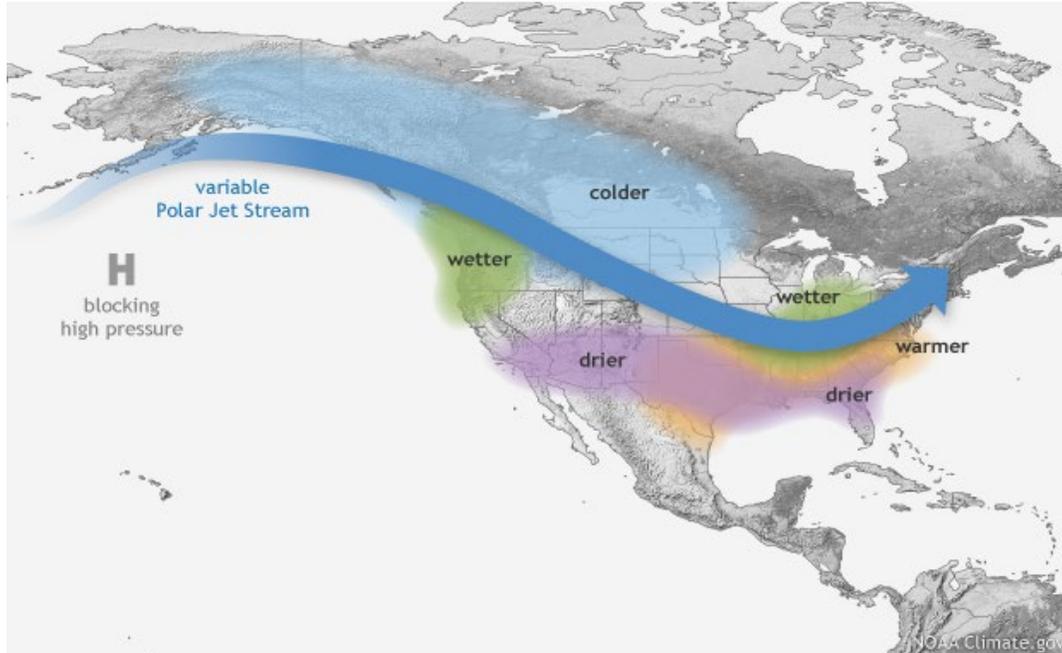
Air quality alerts issued 30 days by the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency between May 28 through August 13, 2025, due to the Canadian wildfire smoke.

As summer turned to fall, the weather pattern grew drier, with drought conditions returning in the north. A lack of windy, dry weather systems kept us from seeing much critical fire weather this fall, except for one Red Flag Warning on November 3 in the Duluth area.

# OUTLOOK

Similar to last winter, a weak La Niña is expected during the upcoming 2025-2026 winter. La Niña weather patterns during the winter months tend to favor cold air outbreaks and more opportunities for snow. As a result, winter this year is expected to be a more typical of a Minnesota winter, with the outlook slightly favoring below-normal temperatures and above-normal precipitation.

Wintertime La Niña pattern



NOAA winter (December through January) temperature outlook

NOAA winter (December through January) precipitation outlook

# Minnesota Interagency Coordination Center



## Minnesota Interagency Coordination Center Season Review

The 2025 season at Minnesota Interagency Coordination Center (MNCC) was active and challenging. The prescribed fire operations began early, starting in January. With the arrival of aviation assets in March, the MNCC began seven-day staffing, which continued through the end of October. The true fire season began in earnest in March, and the demand for dispatch services at MNCC quickly followed. Although the early start presented challenges, the support we received from staff—both within Minnesota and out-of-state was invaluable as we transitioned into another active fall season. In total, we MNCC operations dispatched 24 fires across the two forests, which burned 16,542 acres, and 12 fires in the Two Harbors area, accounting for 12,375.6 acres. Additionally, MNCC assisted with 30 Search and Rescue missions throughout the year.

### Staffing Updates

2025 brought several staffing changes to MNCC:

- Ryan Kingsley – transitioned from the MNCC center manager into the Northeast Interagency Support Cache manager position.
- Ryan Johnson (RJ) transitioned from the MNCC operations assistant center manager (ACM) into the center manager position.
- Angela Porter transitioned from the initial attack dispatcher into the operations assistant center manager position.
- Jake Serfling, aviation dispatcher, left state service with a promotion to an assistant center manager position with the Northern Colorado Interagency Dispatch Center. While he is greatly missed, his promotion is well deserved.

Looking ahead, we will also be saying farewell to two valued members of our logistics dispatch team this coming spring – Tasha Woodwick, ACM of logistics, and Ginger Humphrey, logistics dispatcher. Both Tasha and Ginger are retiring after many years of dedicated service. Their knowledge, experience, and contributions have been integral to MNCC's success. We extend our heartfelt congratulations and sincere gratitude for their many years of support.

### Acknowledgements

A special note of thanks to all the 69 dispatch detailers who supported MNCC across all functional areas this year. These dispatchers joined us from across the country, including California, North Carolina, Oregon, Wyoming, Michigan, Wisconsin, Idaho, Nevada, Montana, Pennsylvania, Alabama, Mississippi, and Arkansas. Their commitment, professionalism, and teamwork were essential in helping us navigate a demanding and productive season.

## MNCC Logistics Mobilizations and Requests National

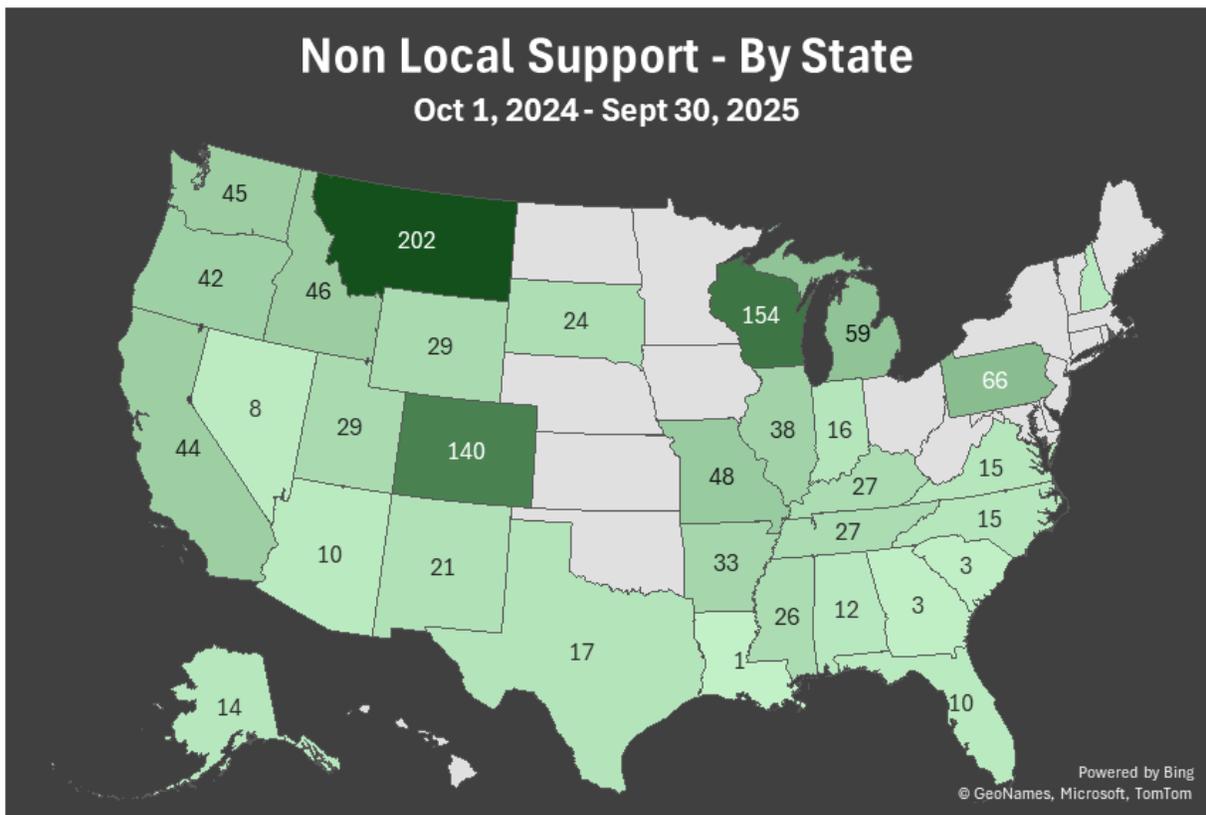
The spring of 2025 brought a steady demand for resources across Minnesota to support initial attack operations and prescribed burning. Agencies relied heavily on local resources, while also bringing in out-of-state support to bolster capacity during periods of heightened activity.

In May, worsening fire conditions driven by a lack of precipitation led to the mobilization of two MNICS Type 3 Incident Management Teams to support three significant incidents: Camp House, Jenkins Creek, and Munger Shaw. As fire complexity increased, Camp House and Jenkins Creek escalated to the point that a Complex Incident Management Team (CIMT) support was required. During this time, the Complex IMT also assisted with the Horse River incident.

Following the Complex Incident Management Team (CIMT), a National Incident Management Organization (NIMO) Team assumed command of Camp House, Jenkins Creek, and Horse River, providing extended support before transitioning management back to local fire agencies.

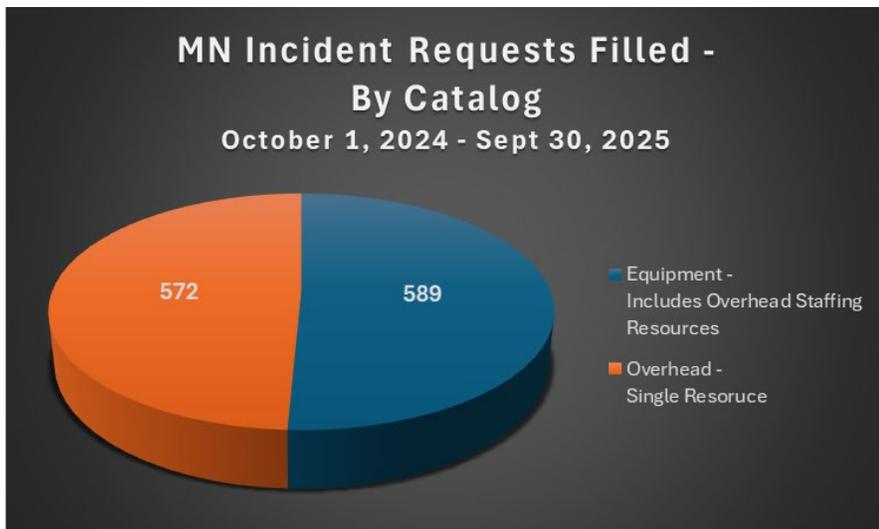
These extended operations required substantial logistical coordination, resulting in a surge of out-of-state resources deployed to assist Minnesota agencies. As conditions trended back toward drought in parts of Minnesota from late summer into fall, both local and non-local resources continued to provide critical support.

### Non-Local Assistance – By State



*Number of non-local resources that supported Minnesota and the state they represent.*

## Local Resource Support – Equipment and Overhead



## Local Resource Support – By Agency



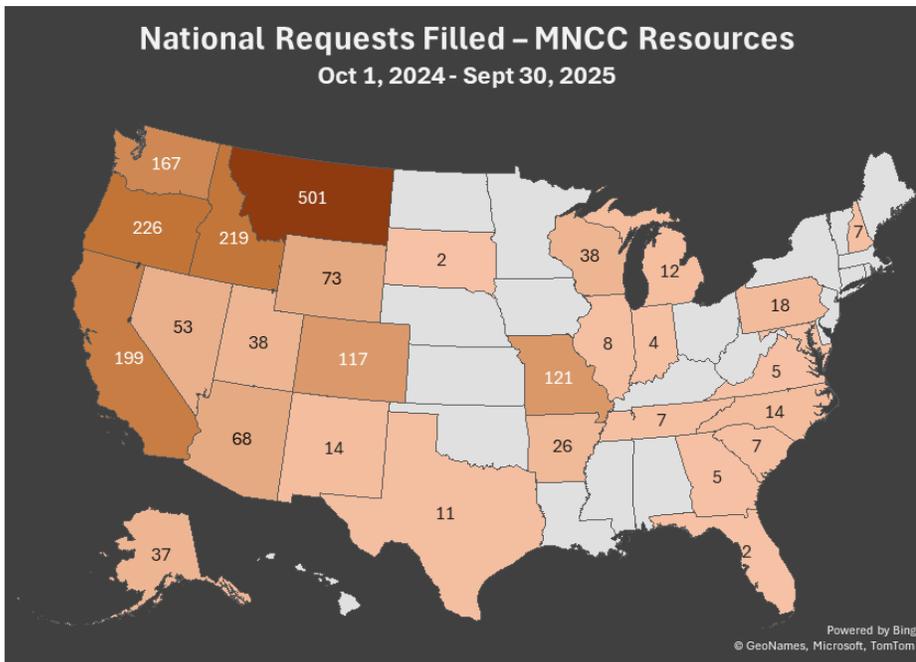
## 2025 National Mobilization Summary – MNCC Resources

National mobilizations began early in calendar year 2025, with the first non-local resource orders dispatched to Texas on January 12, 2025. The season maintained a steady pace, highlighted by an extended period at Preparedness Level 4, reflecting sustained national demand.

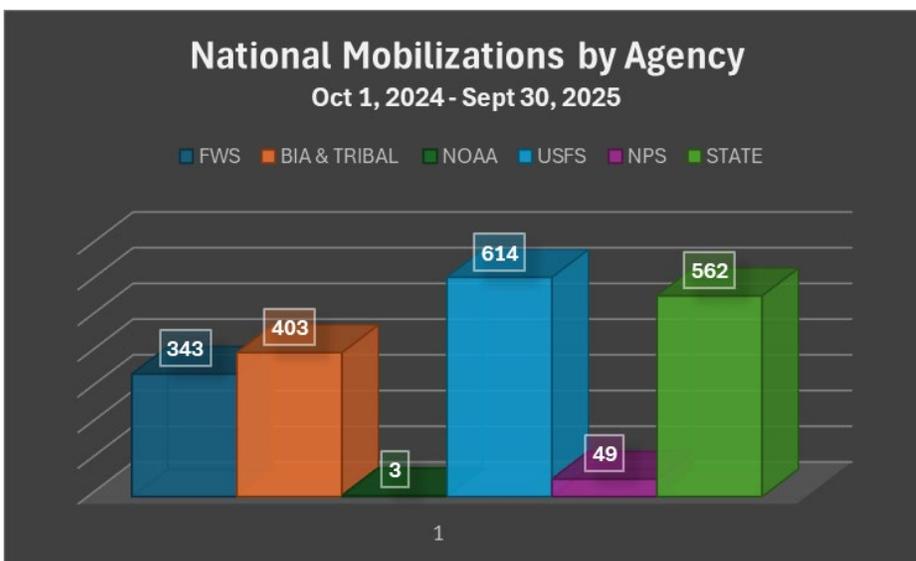
While resource needs were generally consistent, several spikes in demand exceeded available capacity, further straining coordination efforts. This elevated tempo continued through mid-September, after which ordering activity gradually tapered off.

Between October 2024 and September 2025, MNCC Logistics coordinated over 2,000 resources—including overhead, crews, and equipment—from Minnesota to support incidents in 29 states. Many of these personnel and assets were reassigned to multiple incidents, while others deployed multiple times, demonstrating both flexibility and a strong commitment to evolving national priorities.

## National Requests Filled – MNCC Resources



## MNCC Resource Mobilizations by Agency

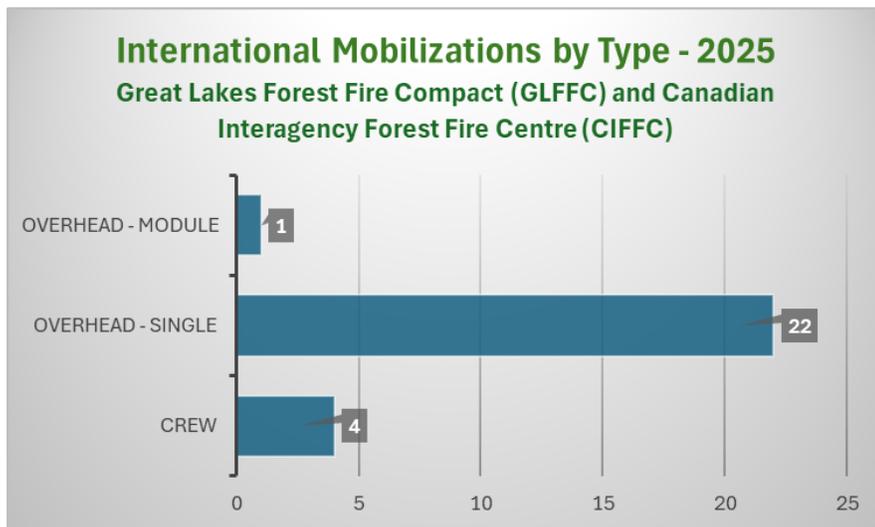


## International Mobilization – Great Lakes Forest Fire Compact (GLFFC) and Canadian Interagency Forest Fire Centre (CIFFC)

Through its active participation in the Great Lakes Forest Fire Compact (GLFFC), the State of Minnesota continues to support international wildfire response efforts. In 2025, Minnesota mobilized 99 state resources, including smokechasers, to assist with wildfire suppression operations in Manitoba, Canada. This deployment highlights the strong cross-border collaboration and mutual aid between Compact partners, particularly with the provinces of Ontario and Manitoba.

In addition, several federal fire support resources were requested through the Canadian Interagency Forest Fire Centre (CIFFC) to assist with wildfire support roles in Alberta, further strengthening international cooperation in wildfire management.

## International Requests Filled



## MNICS Type 3 IMT Mobilizations

The MNICS Type 3 Incident Management Teams mobilized on three Minnesota incidents earlier this year. These teams continue to prove themselves as a valuable resource during Minnesota's fast-moving spring and fall fire seasons. The ability of our local teams to mobilize quickly and engage with partner agencies to support emerging large fires has significantly enhanced our regional response capacity. Their adaptability, local knowledge, and interagency coordination remain critical to protecting lives, property, and natural resources.

### Camp House

Incident Number: MN-2QS-001729  
Mobilization Date: May 11, 2025

### Munger Shaw

Incident Number: MN-2PS-001825  
Mobilization Date: May 12, 2025

### Jenkins Creek

Incident Number: MN-SUF-001789  
Mobilization Date: May 12, 2025

# MNCC AVIATION AIR DESK



## 2025 FIRE SEASON STATISTICS (3/01/24 – 10/28/2025)

### Aviation Dispatches

MNCC Aviation desk received 299 aircraft requests on 127 fires.

- Helicopter – 129
- Air Attack – 58
- Tankers – 112

### Helicopters

First mission was flown on March 25 and the last on October 12

- Responded to 107 DNR fires
- Responded to 3 USFS fires
- Responded to 2 BIA fires
- Responded to 1 NPS fire
- 

### Air Attack

First mission was flown on April 13 and the last on October 11

- Responded to 31 DNR fires
- Responded to 2 USFS fires
- Responded to 4 BIA fires
- Responded to 1 NPS fire

### Fixed Wing Tankers

First mission was flown on April 13 and the last on October 11

- Responded to 33 DNR fires
- Responded to 4 USFS fires
- Responded to 4 BIA fires
- Responded to 1 USFWS fire
- Responded to 1 NPS fire

## 2025 MNICS AVIATION PROGRAM SUMMARY

Contracted, Utilized or Shared Aircraft (Spring 2025 – Oct.28, 2025)

### Single-engine aircraft

| Agency       | SEAT EU  | SEAT CWN | SES EU   | SES CWN  |
|--------------|----------|----------|----------|----------|
| BIA          | 1        | 1        | 1        | 1        |
| DNR Forestry | 2        | 2        | 4        | 2        |
| USFS         | -        | -        | -        | 2        |
| <b>Total</b> | <b>3</b> | <b>3</b> | <b>5</b> | <b>5</b> |

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

| Agency       | LAT      | CL 215/ 415 | ATGS     | Lt F/W    | UAS      |
|--------------|----------|-------------|----------|-----------|----------|
| BIA          | -        | -           | 1        | -         | -        |
| DNR Forestry | -        | -           | 3        | 15        | -        |
| USFS         | 1        | 4           | 1        | 2         | -        |
| DNR Enforce. | -        | -           | -        | 3         | -        |
| <b>Total</b> | <b>1</b> | <b>-</b>    | <b>4</b> | <b>18</b> | <b>9</b> |

### Helicopters

| Agency       | T3 EU     | T3 CWN   | T2 CWN   | T1 EU    | T1 CWN   |
|--------------|-----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|
| BIA          | 1         | 2        | -        | -        | -        |
| DNR Forestry | 7         | 1        | 1        | -        | -        |
| USFS         | 3         | -        | -        | 2        | 2        |
| MNARNG       |           |          |          | 3        |          |
| <b>Total</b> | <b>11</b> | <b>3</b> | <b>1</b> | <b>5</b> | <b>2</b> |

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

MNARNG - Minnesota Air National Guard

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 UAS and GLFFC Terms of Reference

### Training and Briefings

- Annual Minnesota Aviation Workshop
- Provided cadre for the Minnesota Wildfire Academy S-270 Basic Air Operations
- Conducted a live-fire training with the Minnesota Army National Guard

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

- Received assistance from the following aviation positions: RAMP, MXMS, ATGS, FWPT-T, HMGB, HECM and SEMG
- Aircraft dispatcher support to the Air Desk cam from Nevada, California, Arkansas, Montana, Idaho, New Mexico, Alabama and Wisconsin.

### Out-of-State Assistance (3/21—10/30)

- DNR 198 Day Exclusive Use helicopter supported Idaho Department of Lands in Lewiston, Grangeville and Coeur d'Alene from 7/1 - 9/8/25.
- ATBM, SEMG, RAMP, FWPT, ATIM personnel to CO, WY, WA, OR, ID, MT, NV, TX and CA
- ATGS supported incidents in Manitoba, Canada and WA
- ACDP supported incidents in ID, MT, CO, AK, AL, and NC

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

- Aerial Herbicide Application – 684 ac.
- Aerial Seeding - Spring - 565 ac., Fall – 572 ac.
- State-wide photos that support wetland monitoring, forest regeneration, blow-down, old growth, and forest health surveys

### Forest Service - Superior & Chippewa NF

- R9 USFS Issued 22 Coop Letters
- Conducted first Rappel on a Fire in R9
- Conducted first Short haul operation of a civilian in R9
- USFS Resources in State:
  - 3-Type 3 Helicopters
  - 2 Type 1 EU Helicopters
  - 2 Type 1 CWN Helicopters
  - 2 CWN Single Engine Scoopers
  - 2 Large Airtankers
  - 4 Multi Engine Scoopers
  - 5 ATGS Platforms

# INTERAGENCY AVIATION COORDINATION



## Superior Helitack:

- 120 Day Contract
- Total Flight Hours- 99
- Secured Helitorch Equipment
- Rx Acres – 20,635 across Region 9

## Ely Tanker Base:

- 183 Operational Days
- Aircraft Gallons Delivered-1,030,419
- Fire Retardant Delivered-19,511
- Air Attack Flight Hours-45
- Multi Engine Water Scooper Hours-57
- ATBM Assignments off Forest-14 days
- Trainees-3 FWPT, 2 RTCM, 1 ATIM
- 14 Base Detailers

## DHC-2 Beaver Program:

- Fire Patrol/Recon
- Firefighter Transport
- Medivac/Search and Rescue/Recovery
- Fish Stocking
- Lake Surveys

## Unpersoned Aviation (UAS)

- 5 additional certified UAS pilots
- Hours Flown on wildfires – 100
- Missions Flown – Rx Aerial Ignition, Wildfire, Natural Resource Management





## Northeast Interagency Support Cache & National Symbols Program



### Northeast Interagency Support Cache (NEK)

During the 2025 fire season, the Northeast Interagency Support Cache (NEK cache) supported three-Type 3 incidents along with our regular annual business. We sent supplies to Michigan, West Virginia, Ohio, Illinois, Missouri, New York, New Hampshire, and Maine this year. Due to the national rollout of the Interagency Cache Logistics Inventory Program (ICLIP) at the start of June, we are unable to pull order numbers and dollar amounts at the time of writing. Despite these challenges, and based on conversations, the season was normal overall for business.

The Cache used the National Cache System, bringing in a substantial number of items from other caches to support fires in the Eastern Area and sending many 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 totaling more than \$500K for the following training sessions:

- 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
- MN Wildfire Academy

NEK staff supported the western fire season with the following positions: Small Engine Mechanic (x3), Warehouse Worker (x4) and Dispatch (x3). Cache personnel completed 10 western fire assignments, totaling approximately 1680 hours away from the home unit.

### National Symbols Program

The National Symbols Cache processed 3,194 orders in fiscal year 2025 for \$1,100,000 in sales. A very average year for the symbols program.

Currently, 150 products are stocked along with 29 digital downloadable products are available. All products, along with our standard product offerings, can be viewed and ordered on the website at [www.symbols.gov](http://www.symbols.gov).

### Staffing

The cache welcomed Ryan Kingsley – Cache Manager, Nathan Comte – Assistant Manager (Symbols), and Patrick Jones-Hughes – Symbols Supply Tech to the cache this last year.

We also saw the retirements of Brian Wise, Deb Bruyere, and Jay Lauer in the last year. We wish them well in their future journeys!



## Bureau of Indian Affairs



### 2025 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 proudly serve their communities and assist our interagency partners.

Fire season began early for the BIA and Tribal firefighters this year. The Minnesota Agency mobilized a suppression module to Los Angeles to support South Ops operations. The firefighters who mobilized were honored by the Minnesota Twins in May when the California Angels came to Target Field. BJ Gotchie (crew boss on the assignment) from Leech Lake threw out the game’s first pitch.

| Reservation   | Wildfires  | Acres        | Prescribed Fires | Acres         |
|---------------|------------|--------------|------------------|---------------|
| Red Lake      | 179        | 1378         | 12               | 12,818        |
| White Earth   | 52         | 88           | 51               | 689           |
| Fond du Lac   | 4          | 2            | 11               | 110           |
| Mille Lacs    | 5          | 16           | 4                | 44            |
| Bois Forte    | 3          | 2            | 5                | 17            |
| Grand Portage | 3          | 1            | 10               | 57            |
| Leech Lake*   | N/A        | N/A          | 1                | 7             |
| <b>Total</b>  | <b>243</b> | <b>1,487</b> | <b>94</b>        | <b>13,742</b> |

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

Minnesota’s BIA and Tribal firefighters continued to provide steady support of operations in Oklahoma throughout the winter of 2025. In addition to providing resources for the National Surge Task Forces, resources primarily supported the severity needs of other Tribes around the country. Aviation resources were also frequently mobilized to support BIA helitack modules, staff the BIA enhanced air attack platform, and support air tanker bases.

In 2025, the Midwest Region welcomed Brian “Vince” McGough to the staff as the regional training specialist.

This fall, the BIA hosted another engine operator (ENOP) academy at the Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe Community Center. Local BIA and Tribal firefighters joined the national cadre from the BIA, Bureau of Land Management (BLM), and the National Park Service (NPS) to deliver a great course.

# Minnesota Department of Natural Resources



## 2025 Wildfire Section Season Review

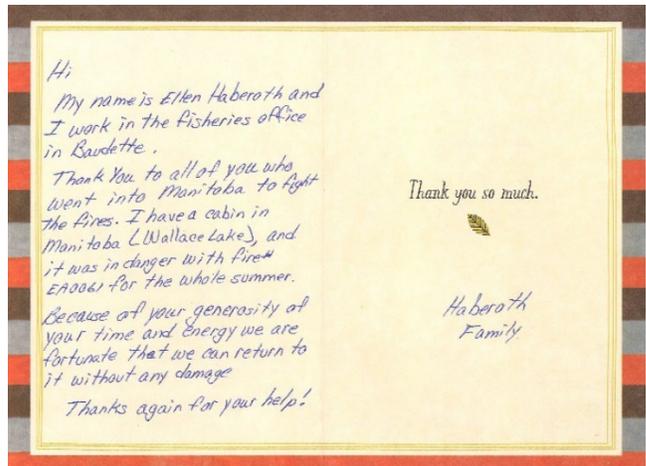
The 2025 wildfire season produced another busy response year for the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR). Between January 1 through the end of October, Minnesota DNR reported 1,038 wildfires, which burned 25,728 acres on private and state-managed lands. The three largest DNR fires of the season included the Camp House (12,071 acres), Partridge 2 (2065 acres) and the Munger Shaw (1,259 ac), which all occurred between April 17 to May 12, 2025.

## Out-State Support

The Minnesota DNR's out-state support started a little earlier than usual with support to Southern California's tragic wildfire outbreak in January. The DNR mobilized a type 2 initial attack hand crew on January 24, 2025. The Minnesota crew repositioned for initial attack on the Angeles National Forest at the San Francisquito station outside of Santa Clarita, California.

Throughout the season, individuals from all levels of wildfire response – firefighters, support personnel, line supervisors, and incident managers – mobilized and supported our local, state, federal and international partners.

- Nationally, DNR mobilized 417 personnel to 16 states
- Internationally, DNR mobilized three interagency type 2 initial attack suppression modules and a total of 107 staff to support Manitoba through the Great Lake Forest Fire Compact.



## Incident Management Teams

The Minnesota DNR continues to support the MNICS Type 3 incident management teams and the Eastern Area Complex Incident Management Team with qualified and trainee team members. Throughout the spring and summer, DNR supported the MNICS teams on the Camp House, Jenkins Creek and Munger Shaw fires, and the Eastern Area team on the Brimson Complex (Camp House and Jenkins Creek) and the Cottonwood Peak fire in Nevada.

## Aviation

The DNR's wildfire aviation program continues making progress toward developing a UAS (uncrewed aircraft system) program to support wildfire hotspot detection, perimeter mapping, and overall wildfire situational awareness. The Hibbing tanker base facility project is underway, with ground-breaking concrete work commencing this past this fall. The project will improve the base's parking areas and access road, and result in a new ramp along with a modernized facility for staff. Funding for the project is supported by the 2023 infrastructure bonding bill.



## Rural Fire Program

The Forestry Division's rural fire program awarded 130 Volunteer Fire Assistance (VFA) program grants, totaling \$464,106 in funding. Proceeds from Minnesota's 25% fireworks sales tax helped fund 47 of these grants.

The DNR distributed 260 pieces of equipment this year, valued at nearly \$1.8 million. The rural fire program also distributed 60 assets, including 15 pickups, three Freightliners, and five tracked vehicles to rural fire programs.

## Fire Prevention

The DNR's fire prevention program developed a fact-based educational billboard and social media campaign targeting high travel-use areas in central and northern Minnesota. The prevention program also advertised fire prevention messages in the DNR's hunting regulation book and the Vikings football yearbook.

New this year, the prevention program rolled out a fresh wildfire prevention exhibit at the Minnesota State Fair with a more cohesive theme and appearance. Some of the top highlights include a new wildfire try-on gear station, fresh new interactive displays, an aerial detection video and Firewise audio stories.

The Minnesota DNR's wildfire risk portal went live this year. It offers risk assessment in a geospatial format, comprising multiple risk assessment and analysis layers that help community members and emergency response planners evaluate wildfire risk in their community.

The Firewise program awarded six new Firewise community grants this year. The program's outreach efforts reached 400 community members and leaders in the metro area, as well as in Walker, Cass, Becker, and Pine counties. The program also assisted nine Minnesota counties with their Federal Community Wildfire Defense Grants applications.

The DNR continues to work closely with federal and tribal fire partners to update the Class 3 burning restrictions, which help provide a more unified front when deciding to implement higher-level restrictions.



## Homeland Security & Emergency Management



### More than a building; new State Emergency Operations Center opens

On Friday, August 22, Homeland Security and Emergency Management (HSEM) officially opened the new State Emergency Operations Center (SEOC), the completion of a project years in the making.

The new facility provides the tools and space to:

- Respond faster and more effectively during emergencies
- Improve coordination and communication across agencies
- Better protect and support communities during times of crisis

It's a space where local, state, federal and private partners can come together when Minnesotans need them most.

"We find ourselves in a new era, and this new SEOC represents exactly that," said HSEM Director Allison Farole. "This building is not just stone and glass but a symbol of resilience, collaboration and Minnesota's unwavering commitment to protecting our communities."

The opening came during National Emergency Awareness month, underscoring the SEOC's critical role in supporting emergency managers statewide.



*Visitors take a tour of the SEOC.*

## Allison Farole joins the Department of Public Safety as new Homeland Security and Emergency Management director



*Allison Farole, Homeland Security and Emergency Management director*

Allison Farole was named the Minnesota Department of Public Safety's Homeland Security and Emergency Management (HSEM) director.

She comes to HSEM from Grand Rapids, Michigan, where she was the city's emergency management administrator.

Farole, who officially began with HSEM on May 7, 2025, oversees the division's efforts to help build communities that can effectively prepare for, respond to, and recover from emergencies and disasters.

"We are delighted to have Allison as the new director of HSEM," DPS Assistant Commissioner T. John Cunningham said. "Her proven leadership and commitment to excellence will undoubtedly be invaluable as we continue to serve our residents, businesses and visitors when they need us the most."

Farole has over a decade of experience in emergency management leadership roles in Virginia and Michigan.

"I am grateful for the opportunity to work with such a dedicated team," Farole said. "Together, we will continue to support communities, building their resilience and empowering them to meet all challenges with the backing of our team."

The Homeland Security and Emergency Management division of the Department of Public Safety helps Minnesota mitigate, prepare for, respond to and recover from disasters. The division's primary purpose is to build communities that are prepared to respond to emergencies and have the perseverance to quickly recover from the effects of the disaster.

## A Year of Disasters: 2025 in Minnesota

Although there were no federal disaster declarations as of November 2025, Gov. Tim Walz authorized the use of the State Disaster Contingency Account for nine state-declared disasters, including high winds, flooding, and wildfires that affected 34 counties and four Tribal Nations. The multiple state-level declarations show the growing reliance on the state's contingency fund. Federal thresholds for FEMA assistance were not met, leaving state programs to fill the gap. Events in 2025 ranged from wildfires and derechos to repeated flooding. The multiple state-level declarations show the growing reliance on the state's contingency fund. Federal thresholds for FEMA assistance were not met, leaving state programs to fill the gap. Events in 2025 ranged from wildfires and derechos to repeated flooding. Many of the declarations were county-specific rather than statewide.



*Damage in Bemidji from a derecho – photo credit of the Star Tribune*

On the morning of June 21, a violent line of storms ripped across northwest Minnesota, producing a derecho/microburst with hurricane-force winds that left whole neighborhoods and forests in ruins. The event prompted multiple local emergency declarations, requests for state disaster assistance and a wave of cleanup and recovery work that continues months later – with Bemidji among the places hardest hit. Officials estimated that the storm knocked down millions of trees across the county, reshaping landscapes and creating a massive, costly cleanup task.

The State was granted a Fire Management Assistance Grant (FMAG) in May for the Munger Shaw Fire in St. Louis County. The declaration was made to supplement state and local efforts to manage, mitigate and control the fire. The FEMA funding covers 75% of the state’s eligible firefighting costs. The Munger Shaw fire was just one of three simultaneous fires in St Louis County that month.

In summary, 2025 has seen multiple hazard events across Minnesota. The year highlights Minnesota’s resilience and its proactive approach to disaster recovery and preparedness. HSEM recovery specialists continue working with affected jurisdictions and communities as they rebuild and transition to long-term recovery.

## 2025 Declarations Table

| State Disaster Number | Incident Period   | Incident Type                         | Jurisdictions Included in Declaration                                                                         |
|-----------------------|-------------------|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| SD-083                | 5/11/22-5/24/2025 | Wild Land Fires                       | St Louis County                                                                                               |
| SD-084                | 6/2/2025          | Storms and Flooding                   | Cottonwood, Renville and Sibley Counties                                                                      |
| SD-085                | 6/13/2025         | Storms and Flooding                   | Big Stone, Freeborn and Kandiyohi Counties                                                                    |
| SD-086                | 6/21/2025         | Storms with Strong Winds and Flooding | Beltrami, Cass, Clearwater, Hubbard, Mahnomen, Norman, Todd Counties and White Earth Band of Chippewa Indians |
| SD-087                | 6/25-28/2025      | Heavy Rains and Flooding              | Big Stone, Houston, Lac qui Parle, Renville and Yellow Medicine                                               |
| SD-088                | 7/18/2025         | Storms with Winds and Flooding        | Blue Earth and Lyon                                                                                           |
| SD-089                | 7/27-29/2025      | Storms with Winds and Flooding        | Big Stone, Fillmore, Houston, Kandiyohi, Pope Steele, Stevens, Swift and Traverse                             |
| SD-090                | 8/8/2025          | Storms with Strong Winds and Flooding | Freeborn, Norman and Red Lake                                                                                 |
| SD-091                | 8/15-18/2025      | Storms with Strong Winds and Flooding | Lyon, Martin and Traverse                                                                                     |

## National Park Service



### 2025 Fire Season Review

The border parks zone experienced periods of very high fire danger but low wildfire occurrence during the 2025 season. Voyageurs National Park did have one three-acre fire in a remote location North of Little Trout Lake. Our interagency MNICS partners assisted the NPS fire staff in taking suppression action on the fire. The western portion of the zone stayed wet and green for most of the 2025 season but did report several small wildfires from the numerous coal Vein fires that continue to burn at Theodore Roosevelt National Park.

Significant progress was made in the spring of 2025 with mechanical fuels work at Voyageurs, particularly in the Ash River and Kettle Falls areas. The staff at Voyageurs will be busy in the winter of 2025-2026 burning piles that were created as a result. Grand Portage completed their meadow prescribed fire with help from BIA and Tribal resources. Efforts to burn invasive cattails at Voyageurs National Park were unsuccessful in the spring of 2025 due to poor weather but will continue in the spring of 2026.

The engine crew at Voyageurs spent much of the season assisting with the western firefighting effort. The NPS and Minnesota DNR are increasingly helping each other with initial attack at Voyageurs National Park and the surrounding area. It's good to see this positive trend, and we hope to continue taking advantage of the opportunity MNICS offers us.

#### Equipment:

Voyageurs National Park will be picking up a new Type 6 engine. The truck is currently in Texas and ready for pick up.

#### Personnel:

- Dan Angelo accepted the fire management officer position for the border parks zone.
- Currently, the assistant fire management officer position is vacant.

Numerous retirements across the border parks zone. Many of these positions are non-fire but support the fire program or serve as fire points of contact. Most of the turnover was in the park superintendent and chief ranger positions.

2026 will be a year of rebuilding and getting new employees acquainted with their roles in the Border Parks fire program and in MNICS.

**USDA  
Forest  
Service**



## Wildland Fire Response

The Chippewa National Forest had 12 human-caused fires, totaling 35 acres. The first fire of the season was on April 1, 2025. The largest Chippewa NF fire was the Leech River 2 Fire on May 22, 2025, at 19 acres.

The Superior National Forest had its first wildfire on January 22, 2025. In all, 9 human-caused and 3 lightning fires burned 16,507 acres. The largest fire was the Jenkins Creek Fire, which occurred on May 12, 2025, at 16,490 acres.

Both Forests had numerous mutual aid responses with our partnering agencies.



*View of Camp House (MN DNR) and Jenkins Creek Fires (US Forest Service). Photo by MNICS*

## 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 10 projects, totaling 537 acres, and the Superior National Forest completed 22 projects, totaling over 1,967 acres.



*Chippewa National Forest fire crews conduct a prescribed burn on Sunken Lake utilizing UAS in May 2025. USDA Forest Service photo by A. Cook*

## 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. Overall, 20 missions were recorded for search and rescue, medical aid and public assistance.

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

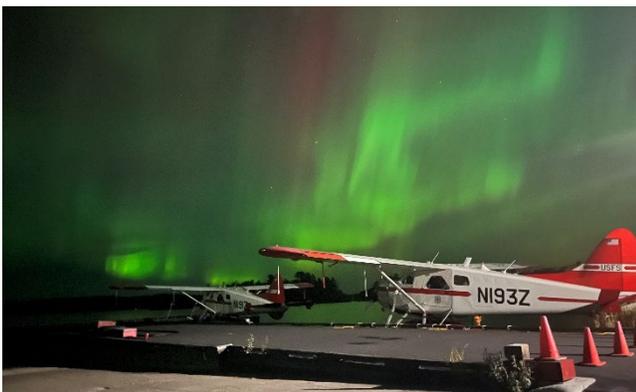
## Personnel Changes

This year, the Forest Service had several personnel that have changed positions and welcomed new/returning faces to the area:

Stepping into new roles include:

- Justin O'Brien, Assistant Forest Fire Management Officer, Superior National Forest
- Michael Crook, East Zone Fire Management Officer, Superior National Forest
- Sam Westlin, Engine Captain- Seagull
- Aaron Badillo, FEO-Seagull
- Joseph Friedmeyer, Engine Captain-Kawishiwi
- Ryan Kingsley, Cache Manager-NEK & Symbols Program
- Nathan Comte, Assistant Cache Manager-Symbols Program
- Patrick Jones-Hughes, Supply Technician-Symbols Program
- Ryan Johnson, Center Manager-MNCC
- Angela Porter, Assistant Center Manager-Operations-MNCC
- Justin Etheridge, Beaver Pilot-Seaplane Base.

The Chippewa National Forest's fire organization had no changes.



*Northern Lights over the Beaver aircraft from the Seaplane Base in Ely, MN. USDA Forest Service photo by J. Harmon*



*Superior National Forest, Eastern Area CIMT Incident Commander, Brian Jenkins engages the public at a community meeting on the Brimson Complex, consisting of the Jenkins Creek Fire and the Camp House Fire. Photo by EA CIMT*

## U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service



### 2025 Season Review

The primary focus in 2025 for FWS personnel was to continue implementing fuels treatments under the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA). Projects ranged from landscape-level prescribed fire to invasive species treatment to fuel break implementation. Several prescribed fires were implemented, notably the Big Kandi prescribed burn project at Litchfield Wetlands Management District. This 600-acre treatment in Kandiyohi County was completed with the cooperation of our partners, including Mid-Columbia NWR in WA, Malheur NWR in OR, The Nature Conservancy, National Park Service, and Conservation Corps Minnesota.



*Big Kandi Prescribed Fire, Litchfield WMD. Photo Credit: D. Franco*

The westward expansion of the National Interagency Prescribed Fire Training Center (NIPFTC) continued in 2025. FWS supported the program by providing a module leader and an assistant module leader. In May, PFTC was hosted by Sherburne and Litchfield. Together, they provided training opportunities for 15 prescribed fire projects treating over 6,000 acres in MN with FWS staff.

The Dugdale wildfire in Polk County was a shining example of how our wildland agencies in MN are coordinating together on planning, training and logistical needs. The fire was ignited by a lightning strike on April 9 on Glacial Ridge NWR. Suppression resources were hampered by terrain and access issues created by numerous marshes and wetlands in the area. Fire leadership from multiple land management organizations agreed that the safest and most efficient strategy would be to burn the unit out. Using pre-established control lines that included land ownership from USFWS, MN DNR, and TNC, forces contained the fire at 3,744 acres. During this incident, ten trainees obtained signatures in their task books.



*Group photo from the Dugdale wildfire on Glacial Ridge NWR. Credit: Eric Mark*

The Wildland Fire Apprenticeship Program (WFAP) continued in 2025, with two apprentices in MN pursuing training and experience across the country. Krishna Parthasarathy was our first graduate this year from the WFAP program in January. Recruitment for the next apprentice position is underway.

## Personnel Changes

- Troy Boschee retired in February
- Zach Doffin transferred from Fergus Falls to Rachel Carson NWR in Maine
- Jacob Johnson resigned from his position in Glacial Ridge NWR
- Krishna Parathasarthy accepted a new position on a Wildland Fire Module in Colorado in May
- Durinda Hulett retired with DRP from her position in the West Zone as budget analyst

## Mobilizations

It was a busy year for FWS personnel mobilizations, both in-state and nationally. Personnel assisted MNICS partners with prescribed fire and wildfire response throughout the 2025 season. Out-of-state mobilizations included both RX and WF response in 13 states.

## U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Fire Statistics as of November 7, 2025

| Station            | Wildfires | WF Acres     | RX Burns   | RX Acres      |
|--------------------|-----------|--------------|------------|---------------|
| AGASSIZ NWR        | 0         | 0            | 2          | 438           |
| BIG STONE NWR      | 0         | 0            | 5          | 1,579         |
| CRANE MEADOWS NWR  | 0         | 0            | 3          | 23            |
| DETROIT LAKES WMD  | 7         | 328          | 9          | 1,539         |
| FERGUS FALLS WMD   | 1         | 57           | 18         | 2,588         |
| GLACIAL RIDGE NWR  | 2         | 4166         | 1          | 3,744         |
| HAMDEN SLOUGH NWR  | 0         | 0            | 1          | 200           |
| LITCHFIELD WMD     | 1         | 0.5          | 14         | 2,735         |
| MN VALLEY NWR      | 2         | 248          | 8          | 762           |
| MORRIS WMD         | 1         | 264          | 24         | 3,911         |
| RICE LAKE NWR      | 0         | 0            | 1          | 15            |
| RYDELL NWR         | 0         | 0            | 1          | 38            |
| SHERBURNE NWR      | 1         | 0.1          | 14         | 6,619         |
| TAMARAC NWR        | 0         | 0            | 0          | 0             |
| WINONA DIST        | 0         | 0            | 0          | 0             |
| WINDOM WMD         | 0         | 0            | 3          | 490           |
| <b>Zone Totals</b> | <b>15</b> | <b>5,065</b> | <b>106</b> | <b>30,760</b> |



## MNICS Working Teams

### Dispatch

The Dispatch Working Team is committed to reducing shortfall of qualified and trainee dispatchers by prioritizing training, workshops, meetings, and recruitment efforts.

The Minnesota Interagency Coordination Center (MNCC) supported national dispatch needs this year mobilizing 30 dispatchers and filling 41 out-of-area requests among 10 states. Additionally, 30 local dispatchers supported MNCC operations. Many of these individuals were trainees who gained valuable experience working on and completing their dispatch position task books.

Looking ahead to 2026, several training opportunities are scheduled:

- IROC Practice Sessions: virtual - dates TBA.
- D-110 (Virtual): Planned for Q1 2025 in partnership with the Mid Atlantic Compact.
- D-110 (In-Person): Scheduled for March 2026, hosted locally.
- IROC Workshop. Planned 3/31-4/1/2026.
- The Tri-GACC Dispatch Academy (Eastern, Southwest, and Southern Areas) continue offering annual 300-level courses: D-310: Support Dispatcher, D-311: Initial Attack Dispatcher, D-312: Aircraft Dispatcher. Course details are available on the Wildland Fire Learning Portal.
- The National Dispatch Academy is advancing with scheduled Intermediate and Advanced Dispatch Academy offerings. More information is also available on the WFLP.

Anyone wanting to gain experience or support dispatch operations (locally or nationally) reach out to a Dispatch Working Team member.

*David Blatz, Working Team Chair*



*MNCC expanded dispatcher training Session held in July 2025*

### Finance

The Finance Team held quarterly check-in meetings, offering the opportunity to provide informational training on the different units within Finance and to share expectations when assigned to an incident.

Training opportunities were found through the Northern Rockies Training Center, which offered L-975 and several Finance workshops, provided virtually by the Interagency Buying Team, with lots of vital information and updates.

The Finance Team spent the season supporting the Camp House, Munger-Shaw, and Jenkins Creek Fires locally and several fires nationally, both virtually and on-site. Members made progress in their task books and became qualified.

Our team has grown significantly over the last year, and we are proud to welcome all the new members.

*Kristi Henderson, Working Team Chair*

### Information Technology

The ITSS and GISS focused on upgrading equipment this year. Several Type 3 team kit laptops were replaced and new printers added. Efforts are underway to purchase a new plotter for MIFC for printing maps during in-state incidents.

ITSS worked on setting up the Type 3 IMT trailers and maintaining kit computers, network equipment, and printers. Teams will have access to a large printer

and plotter for their GISS to print maps. Our team plans to schedule time for folks to check inventory and reorganize the equipment.

Prior to the start of the season, several team members met at MIFC to inventory and consolidate the former two teams into one.

The Eastern Area (EA) team supported two assignments this year. During the Camphouse fire, the team experienced challenges locating adequate rental equipment and had poor internet service. Starlink internet access is becoming more commonplace, and after this year, the team now has a few contacts help get internet up and running on future assignments.

The team plans to purchase a team Starlink package, and ITSS will review the new software needs at the next team meeting to help determine the communication tools team members want to use and ensure Starlink is on the appropriate equipment. Minnesota is working with the Timmons group to build an ESRI dashboard for the Prescribed Burn Portal. The project will provide a central location for prescribed fire information and be a resource for the public and Minnesota DNR staff. The DNR is also compiling an enhancements list for other applications, such as the Fire Training calendar, FIRS, Burning Permits, and FRBS.

*Joel Perrington, Working Team Chair*

## Logistics

The 2025 season provided a few opportunities for the logistics personnel to come together and work well as a section.

In May, logistics personnel on MNICS Team C were called up to the Camphouse Fire in NE Minnesota. Concurrently, the Jenkins Creek and Munger Shaw fires began, and the assignment quickly changed to setting up the Brimson Complex for the Jenkins Creek and Camphouse incidents under the Eastern Area CIMT. At the same time, MNICS Team A assumed command of the Munger Shaw incident. Across all of these incidents, Logistics personnel worked closely with local DNR staff, Forest Service

staff, local fire departments, and township and county personnel to support them. DOT towers were utilized for seamless communication during the Munger Shaw Fire, as well as for heavy implementation of MNICS MiFi's and portable cellular boosters. Multiple donations from local businesses and citizens included snacks, fruit, lunch goodies, water, and Gatorade.



The medical section worked closely with an emerging piece of response equipment, the Sherp. This 4-wheeled off-road machine features an onboard inflation system, allowing it to crawl through various types of terrain, including swamps and water. This machine was used in conjunction with medical staff to support the remote nature of the work on the NE incidents and was a crucial part of keeping fire personnel safe and enabling them to be removed to infrastructure for transport.

These incidents also provided valuable insight into the need for continued coordination with our partners to ensure consistent, accurate responses. The logistics section will continue to work with the Fire Chiefs Association and the State Fire Marshal's Office to configure a sustainable, long-term method for ordering and tracking fire department resources on extended incidents with the MNICS organization.

In June, logistics personnel continued ongoing support over the years, working with Minnesota North College on the Itasca Campus for the Minnesota Wildland Fire Academy. This opportunity continues to be an opportunity for personnel and section development, taking on trainees in various areas of the logistics section.

Throughout the 2025 season, the logistics section continued to see opportunities for growth and development with several members signing off task books through opportunities to work with MNICS teams, the Eastern Area CIMT, and a NIMO team that came in to help transition the incidents across NE Minnesota back to their local units. The logistics section will continue to look for opportunities to recruit and meet the needs of the MNICS teams.

*Rebecca Arnesen, Working Team Chair*



## Operations

The Operations Working Team convened during the annual MNICS meeting in Duluth this December to review accomplishments, discuss ongoing initiatives, and plan for the upcoming year.

Progress continues on the Fire Danger Operating Plan (FDOP), which is being updated in collaboration with the Prescribed Fire and Fuels Working Group to ensure alignment with current operational needs and best practices. Throughout the season, the team also monitored crew movements and suppression module activities, resulting in updates to the Crew Standard Operating Guide (SOG) to reflect lessons learned and evolving standards.

Additional efforts included reviewing and enhancing content on the MNICS.org website and updating the MNICS Working Team Charter as needed.

The Operations Working Team extends sincere appreciation to the MNCC staff for their continued dedication and exceptional support in coordinating assignments and managing logistics throughout the year. Their behind-the-scenes efforts remain vital to the success of MNICS operations.

*Phil Millette, FWS, Working Team Chair*

## Prescribed Fire and Fuels

MNICS agencies Prescribed Fire Accomplished in 2025 (as of 10/31/2025)

- Bureau of Indian Affairs: 13,783 acres
- Camp Ripley: 15,120 acres
- Chippewa National Forest: 537 acres
- Minnesota DNR: 34,691 acres
- National Park Service: 155 acres
- Superior National Forest: 1,977 acres
- US Fish and Wildlife Service: 21,832 acres

The extent of impact the Federal government shutdown during the fall prescribed burn season had on prescribed burning accomplishments for the Federal Agencies remains uncertain.

Our 2025 tasking was to assist the Operations WT with updating the 2020 MN Fire Danger Operating Plan (FDOP). A sub-committee was created to work on the review and provide updates, and the work is expected to continue in 2026.

MNICS agencies continue to work with MPCA regarding air quality alerts that were again common throughout the early to mid-summer periods; mostly related to Canadian wildfire smoke.

*Jacob Froyum, Working Team Chair*

## Public Information & Prevention

The Information Management and Prevention Working Teams met jointly during the 2024 MNICS meeting. The group discussed merging the two working teams, focusing on what tasks the combined team would focus on. Some work was also done on writing a new team charter. The group talked about developing meaningful communication content for interagency us on topics like fire maps and factsheets for wildfires and prescribed burns, using standard graphics, understanding local areas for information distribution, prevention and risk mitigation efforts and outreach, and how fire restrictions are developed and communicated. The team also discussed increasing team membership and future PIO training needs. Additional topics included Unmanned Aerial Systems (UAS) use around wildfires awareness messaging and coordination of wildfire prevention and mitigation efforts.

The Working Team met again virtually in early February and did an extensive review and editing to make a combined team charter. The team also discussed the importance of using MNICS to collaborate and brainstormed some ideas for future messaging specifically with Unmanned Aerial Systems (UAS) or drone use around wildfire and prescribed fire. Due to an active spring wildfire season the team did not meet again until the December 2025 annual meeting.

Employees from several of the MNICS agencies continued their annual prevention and wildfire risk mitigation efforts throughout 2025. Some of these efforts included working with community groups, private landowners, government officials, hazard-mitigation planners, and wildland fire managers on planning, risk mitigation, and prevention. Several staff participated in community events and partner organization events to carry out the prevention and wildfire risk mitigation messaging in various forms.

Employees qualified as Public Information Officers from several of the MNICS agencies supported prescribed fire and wildfire public information needs through the spring and summer wildfire season in Minnesota. This included during the MNICS Type 3 Incident Management Team mobilizations for spring wildfires as well as several qualified PIOs going on western fire assignments with Complex Incident Management Teams. The Working Team will be providing support to a planned S-203 Introduction to Public Information course which is planned to be held in early March 2026 in Grand Rapids, MN. It has been several years since we have offered the S-203 course in Minnesota, and this will be a good opportunity to help some trainees complete their PIO3 qualification and hopefully recruit a few others to start working on their PIO3 qualification.

*Tim Engrav, Working Team Chair*



## Training

Upon the conclusion of the 2024 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 2025 Wildfire Academy. The Minnesota Wildfire Academy was held June 2-6, 2025, 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 Kelly Sande. The success of this academy is due to the excellent leadership (including IMT trainees), instructors, and cooperators, along with the seasoned support from Minnesota North College staff.

In addition to the academy planning, MNICS partners were busy hosting courses throughout the year. Together with the academy, MNICS partners offered over 30 courses, providing training to 700 students. MNICS member agencies also hosted fire courses to meet their agency employees' training needs. The Working Team is analyzing the 2026 Training Needs Assessment results and will soon have a proposed training course listing available for planned 2026 courses, including the academy, June 1-5, 2026. 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 2025/26 include Michael Hill (USFWS); Taylor

Schenk (MN DNR); Greg Gulan (USFS); Tyler Brink (NPS); Robert Lintelmann (BIA); Kara Bahr (MN DPS HSEM). Alternates and supporting members include Kelly Sande, Stacy Troumbly, Bennett Nelson, Joe Meyer, Amber Jackson. For 2026 Taylor Schenk (DNR) will remain the chair, and Mike Hill (FWS) will continue to serve as vice chair. 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 Kelly Sande and his Incident Management Team, Todd Manley and staff at MN North College, Holly Henriksen at ISD 318, and the many instructors and volunteers who made 2025 another successful training year.

*Taylor Schenk, Working Team Chair*



## Type 3 Incident Management

The MNICS Type 3 teams went on two assignments this year, both in Northern MN. MNICS Team C spent three shifts on the Camphouse fire which was a very fast paced and dynamic incident that ended up burning over 12,000 acres. The team was successful at building a foundation for a Complex Incident Management Team (CIMT) assigned to assume incident command. The team conducted a public meetings for the local community, and established a solid anchor point from which the CIMT operations team could engage. With the high potential for an IWI because of the pace and complexity, no

firefighters were seriously injured. On the financial side, things worked a lot better with the fire departments this year compared to years past.

MNICS Team A was assigned to the Munger Shaw Fire near Cotton, MN, from May 14–20. A key challenge was navigating the unknowns of the Fire Management Assistance Grant (FMAG), particularly ensuring financial documentation met FEMA reimbursement standards. Early communication from the DNR the USFS allowed the Finance Section (and other affected functions) to establish strong tracking systems from the start. Coordination with St. Louis County emergency managers and the sheriff's office led to effective evacuations and smooth repopulation. Resource sharing with the Eastern Area Complex Incident Management Team (EA CIMT) further strengthened operational capacity and response.

As we look ahead to the 2026 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 20\_26 team rosters and expect to announce team membership in early December. The annual team meeting is tentatively planned for March 11 and 12, 2026. 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.

Dan Paulson, Working Team Chair.



## In Memory



### *Isabella Oscarson*

Wildland firefighter Isabella "Bella" Grace Oscarson died in the line of duty on Sept. 26, 2025

Oscarson faithfully served with the Minnesota Conservation Corps, the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, and, most recently, with the Idaho Department of Lands.

She bravely fought wildfires in Minnesota, Idaho, and on assignments across the country and Canada, earning the respect and admiration of all who served alongside her.



### *Dave Cournoyer*

Dave Cournoyer, age 61, began his journey to the spirit world on November 7<sup>th</sup>, 2025.

Dave worked for Red Lake DNR Forestry as a wildland firefighter for over 30 years. Throughout his career he travelled much of the country to support other tribes and agencies and responded to countless fires on the Red Lake Reservation.

Dave was also an award-winning powwow dancer. His contagious laugh and presence will be missed.





# WILDFIRE ON ICE

January 16 & 17, 2026

Walker, Minnesota

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2025



MNICS  
AWARDS

## Leadership Award

Jeb Backe  
Kelly Sande  
Ryan Williams

## Service - MNICS Board of Directors

Bob DeGross  
Joe Neuberger

## Service - MNICS Task Force

Kelvin McCuskey

## Partnership

National Weather Service – Duluth Office  
MnFIRE  
MnLAST  
U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service  
Minnesota DNR Enforcement

## Outstanding Performance

Travis Verdegan

## Teamwork Award

Ginger Humphrey  
Tasha Woodwick

## Retirement Award

Robert DeGross  
Terry Flatley  
Ginger Humphrey  
Brian Jenkins  
Jay Lauer  
Kelvin McCuskey  
Ben Roy  
Nicole Selmer  
Tasha Woodwick