



Notes

January 8, 2026, MNICS Task Force Meeting

Task Force: Cory Berg (Chair), William Glesener, Darrin Franco, Kelvin McCuskey, Nick Petrack, Justin O'Brien and Greg Carlson

Non-Task Force Attendees: Leanne Langeberg (Notes), Ryan Kingsley, Kevin Carlisle, Shelly Greniger

DISCUSSION TOPIC	NOTES
MNICS Budget Update	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- The Task Force reviewed the monthly budget expenses and uncommitted funds.- The Task Force discussed the payment for the MNCC dispatch area monitors. The Task Force had previously approved \$ 3,000 of MNICS coop general funds for purchasing smart boards, and the remaining costs will be covered by the Minnesota DNR Division of Forestry aviation program funding sources.- The NEK cache requested \$1028 to replace the Tool Cat broom attachment used to clear snow from the MIFC facility sidewalk, and \$1500 to retrofit the pump jig on the new Watson pumps. The Task Force approved both requests.
MIFC Building Update	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- The MIFC building exterior light was repaired.- The NEK cache plans to replace the Tool Cat broom attachment.- The Watson Pumps arrived but require jig adjustments before distribution.- The MIFC building committee received 100 additional security access cards and requested that the Task Force make a final decision on who, beyond the 40 MIFC staff, will be issued a card. The Task Force agreed that the tanker and helibases could be scaled back and will coordinate with DNR aviation to determine the appropriate number to issue. ProTech will reprogram the current security system for selective cache access at no charge.- The USDA Forest Service has awarded funding for the pump shop expansion project, but has not decided on the radio shop. Because the projects are separate, the pump shop funding can not be combined with any potential radio shop funding. The approved pump shop design will expand from the current NEK cache. The NEK cache manager will recommend that the designs be drawn so that the radio shop can be added on later.- The Task Force will look into the radio cache workspace requirements to determine how best to fit them into USDA's work pace plans. Should the USDA Forest Service require the current radio shop facility be demolished, MIFC will need to find a temporary lease space. The topic will be revisited after the Forest Service learns more from its contracting and engineering staff.- The Elevator project has started. The contractor is awaiting a structural steel part. The project is estimated to be completed by the end of February or early March.- The State's transition to softphones will affect the paging system at MIFC. Phones with paging capability will be limited to desks with regular phones. Carlisle will host a MIFC staff-wide softphone training in the next couple of weeks.
Excess Cache Inventory Items	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- The excess fire equipment in the cache was inventoried and ready to distribute.- The Task Force agreed to distribute the hose paces to the Forest Service, and the remaining bags will be distributed to those who want them.- All remaining items will be distributed on a first-come, first-served basis..- The NEK cache manager will send an email to the Task Force with information on when the items can be picked up.



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MNICS Annual Meeting 2025 review and 2026 planning updates	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The Task Force expressed overall consensus that the meeting went well this year and was pleased with the turnout for the networking session despite not having a guest speaker. - The 2026 planning committee has expressed some great ideas. The next planning meeting has not been set; Langeberg will focus on finding a meeting date in February.
MNICS Working Team Follow-up	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The Operations Working Team requested the addition of a representative from the State Fire Chiefs' Association or the State Fire Marshal's Office. Glesener will share the request with Lundgren, and if an option is available, the Task Force will send a message to the chair of the MNICS Board of Directors. - The Training Working team has decided to continue hosting the Minnesota Wildfire Academy at Minnesota North College, Itasca campus, and will work with the college to identify a new cost structure that better aligns with a per-student cost. The Task Force will revise the Minnesota Wildfire Academy topic in February. - The Aviation Working Team has proposed forming a UAS subcommittee as early as 2026. - The Prescribe Fire and Fuels Working Team discussed building a list of available portable RAWS stations. - The Communications Working Team discussed options for bringing the National Park Service into the MNCC dispatch system. - The Public Information and Prevention Working Team has completed its charter. A copy will be forwarded to the Task Force Chair. - The Logistics Working Team plans to host their first quarterly meeting in January. The group discussed the RSS coordination training to be held in June, which will include all C&G team members.
Fire Danger Operating Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The Forest Service and MNICS predictive services are working on the Fire Danger Operating Plan and will send a draft to the Forest Service and DNR task force reps that can then be reviewed by the operations prescribed fire and fuels working teams. - No official completion date has been established.
MNCC Updates	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The BIA and DNR are compiling the final data for the MNICS partners' communications infrastructure that will be included in the MNDOT proposal. - Glesener and Berg will draft the letter to MNDOT, which Lundgren will sign before January 16. - The NPS project to bring the national parks in Minnesota onto the MNCC dispatch service is still in progress, but, based on equipment needs, it may not be completed before the start of the 2026 fire season. - The Task Force is discussing options to ensure service continuity amid the expected retirements of the logistics dispatchers this spring.
U.S. Wildfire Service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The federal Task Force members did not have any new updates to share regarding the pending U.S. Wildfire Service, beyond the fact that a new chief had been selected and was expected to start on January 12.
Agency Updates	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - BIA – The Regional FMO position hiring process is still in progress. The agency has sent several resources to Oklahoma, including three engines and a couple of chase trucks. The Large air tanker contract will be on April 1, 2026. BIA is meeting on January 26 to discuss what land has been treated in the blowdown area. The agency is working through changes to its fire program involving pay and medical standards.



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	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- DNR – The replacement engine pumps have been procured, and the DNR is working on a distribution plan. The Watson pumps will go to the areas. DNR is working on hiring the dispatcher positions, with the intent to fill the logistics position before the end of March. The fire section is working to revamp the preparedness and response guide into a standard operations guide, with a final draft due by the end of February.- FWS – Fire staff are focused on planning and prepping for the spring burning season. The agency selected a second fire apprentice position at Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge and is working on the 1039 seasonal hires for next year. A couple of FWS staff will be providing local support to Texas and Florida.- HSEM – The State Emergency Operations Center was set to a partial activation. HSEM staff will visit MIFC on January 20 for MNICS 101 and a tour. The three MNICS incident commanders are all set to present at the Governor’s conference. Jennifer Olson will serve as the acting HSEM rep for the NE region and MNICS upon McCuskey's retirement.- NPS – The assistant fire management officer position remains vacant and will be readvertised. Voyageurs National Park is awaiting their new fire engine, which is ready for pickup. The agency is updating fire management plans in the current zone.- USFS – An all-forest supervisors meeting at the Washington Office will be held next week and will focus on the reorganization. There have been some leadership changes in Region 9. Steve Miller is moving into the National Fire Director assistant position at the Washington Office level. Joe Alyea will temporarily fill the regional fire director position. The agency anticipates the budget will be filled by the end of January. Requests for additional resources to support Missouri are starting to come in.- PIO – Developing plans for the S-203 Introduction to Incident Information course to be held at MIFC, March 2-6. The announcement is scheduled to go out next week.

Next MNICS Task Force Meeting scheduled for February 5, 2026, at MIFC.