

Interagency Dispatch Improvement Project Charter

Background

Dispatch operations in the USDA Forest Service and the Department of the Interior offices and agencies that support law enforcement, wildland fire, aviation, all-hazard response, emergency services, structural fire, and other land management and resource management programs have stretched current capabilities beyond intended design. Numerous studies have identified problems with communications interoperability, staffing, business tools, technology, ability to work with non-federal partners, and inefficient locations. Solving these problems requires a concerted and coordinated effort of programs (fire, law enforcement, others), information technology, and line management.

Wildland fire dispatch activity began some 100 years ago to provide communication support to each of the DOI Bureaus and USDA Forest Service personnel. This safety function has evolved into the nation's largest federally operated logistical support and communications system blanketing 687 million acres of federal and tribal lands, in partnership with state and local entities and is identified under the DHS National Emergency Communications Plan to perform as a key component of "homeland defense to protect the Nation." The centers annually process a conservative average of 350,000 fire incident orders, perform over 200,000 law enforcement actions, support 26,000 emergency services (including Search and Rescue) operations, assist DHS-FEMA on 150 requests under state and federal disaster declarations, as well as performing routine "check-in/check-out" contact and other support for field-going personnel in all the agencies.

A large portion of the dispatch capability and capacity of the agencies is built around the needs of the wildland fire community, which is the biggest user of dispatch services. In addition to monitoring location and status of personnel, wildland fire dispatch operations order and manage all firefighting resources, analyze conditions and outlook, and maintain records on fire incidents. Generally there is a three-tier system of dispatch functions, from local units to the National Interagency Coordination Center. Additionally, at the unit level some agencies (the National Park Service, in particular) operate significant dispatch functions for visitor services, law enforcement, maintenance, emergency services, structural fire, and other programs. Most law enforcement dispatch for federal land managing agencies takes place in partnership with local law enforcement entities (often the county sheriff). Much of wildland fire's dispatch work takes place in partnership with non-federal (local, county, state) wildland fire organizations.

In 2008 the USDA Forest Service and the Department of the Interior completed and released the "Management Efficiency Assessment of the Interagency Wildland Fire Dispatch and Related Services." This study included a number of recommendations ranging from improving technology and connectivity, improving business tools (e.g. computer aided dispatch), addressing workload and staffing, and consolidating and redefining dispatch locations and functions. Agency leadership was briefed on the results and agreed that the issues and recommendations should be addressed. However, no specific mechanism or plan was developed.

In 2009 the Interagency Interoperability Oversight Group (IIOG) examined the results of the wildland fire dispatch study along with issues in law enforcement dispatch and dispatch for other field going

personnel. As a result of these deliberations the IIOG agreed to sponsor an integrated (across programs, federal and non-federal agencies, and functions) effort to address and implement recommendations and concerns that have been identified by dispatchers and their users. The IIOG chose this approach because:

- No single program or office “owns” nor has the entire “picture” of dispatch operations within DOI Bureaus and USDA Agencies.
- Dispatch is a cross-cutting function spanning multiple programs internally and externally, including states, local governments and tribal governments. Increasing demands on the dispatch system have resulted in inconsistency in staffing and incompatibilities in technology, business processes and program delivery, have created risks to employee and public safety.
- Numerous independent (contract) and in-house analyses have been conducted on the dispatch organization(s) along program business lines. Each business line assessment / study produced viable recommendations to improve the individual area of responsibility. However few recommendations have been implemented. Within the scope of these studies there was no examination of cross-program issues, or identification of the program boundaries and interconnections between the agencies, including those between federal and non-federal. Four themes emerge from the various reviews and studies:
 - Governance
 - Technology
 - Business Practices
 - Staffing

Vision

Efficient and cost-effective interagency dispatch capability meets the business needs of stakeholders at all levels through standards, integration, and interoperability.

Approach

Through a collaboration of business representatives, technology providers, and line managers, including both federal and non-federal perspectives, develop the following: a strategic plan; national dispatch governance structure; a field-based pilot approach oriented to plan and produce on the ground changes in the dispatch infrastructure; interagency standards to address technology and application issues; operational recommendations to more efficiently meet mission requirements; methodologies and standards to improve workforce management.

Two over-arching issues should be explored:

1. Co-location

Examine opportunities for efficiency and economy in co-locating functional dispatch operations (especially fire, law enforcement, emergency services, and structural fire,) to take advantage of facilities, technologies, common skill sets, operations, and management.

2. Integration/Coordination of Federal and Non-Federal Entities

Wildland fire, law enforcement, emergency services, and structural fire operate in environments of close day-to-day coordination and cooperation between and among federal and non-federal (state, local, tribal) organizations. Consideration of the four primary areas of concern must include the requirements to function effectively across federal and non-federal organizational lines, as well as across program lines (ie. EMS, Fire, Aviation, Law Enforcement, and others).

Deliverables

Deliverables from the project will include:

- A national, strategic plan that outlines the vision, goals, objectives, and strategies for dispatch.
- A recommendation for a permanent governance structure to meet the mission requirements of local, state and national stakeholders in order to provide leadership, accountability, and operational efficiency for dispatch.
- An “optimization” study that will map, analyze, and provide methodologies directed towards integrating and consolidating pilot dispatch centers to be planned and implemented in coordination with partners, with outcome monitoring for lessons learned.
- Short term actions, consistent with the strategic vision for dispatch, to be implemented as soon as possible.

The sponsors of the project will review the deliverables from the project and, upon acceptance, take the actions necessary to adopt as agency policy and procedure to ensure a common approach to dispatch services that meets the business needs of the agencies. Products and deliverables from this project will ensure that both the emergency and routine non-emergency dispatch of resources are supported in the outcomes and recommendations; and that agency heads are provided a sufficient opportunity at every juncture to review and concur on all actions affecting system operations or impacting policy.

Project Organization

1. Dispatch Improvement Steering Committee

The Dispatch Improvement Steering Committee is comprised of senior personnel drawn from the affected bureaus and program areas to provide direction and oversight of the Dispatch Improvement Project. The Steering Committee will provide initial direction and expectations to the project leader, monitor progress, refine direction and expectations based on interim results, and approve products. The Steering Committee will assist the project leader in identifying subject matter experts and other resources necessary to accomplish the tasks of the project. The Steering Committee will meet as needed, using virtual meetings as much as possible. The membership will be the following:

- Department of the Interior, Senior Advisor to the Deputy Assistant Secretary – Law Enforcement, Security and Emergency Management - *Chair*
- USDA Forest Service, Chief Information Officer
- Bureau of Land Management, Arizona State Director
- USDA Forest Service, Region 3 Regional Forester
- Department of the Interior, Director of Law Enforcement
- USDA Forest Service, National Interagency Coordination Center, Center Manager

- National Association of State Foresters, Forest Fire Protection Committee Representative
- National Wildfire Coordinating Group Representative
- National Park Service, Deputy Assoc. Director of Visitor and Resource Protection
- USDA Forest Service, Director for Law Enforcement and Investigations
- National Park Service, Deputy Chief, Emergency Services, Visitor and Resource Protection

The current membership of the Steering Committee is found in Appendix 1.

II. Dispatch Improvement Project Leader

The Dispatch Improvement Project Leader, working under the direction of the steering committee, is responsible for organizing information and analyses of dispatch issues and producing recommended solutions for approval/adoption by the affected agencies within the Department of Agriculture and the Department of the Interior. The project leader will be assisted by personnel from each of the sponsoring organizations and subject matter experts in wildland fire, law enforcement, emergency services, structural fire, information technology, radios, and other relevant business areas. The project leader may establish committees, working groups, or other mechanisms to organize the work to produce the desired results. The project leader, directly or through other personnel, is expected to consult and coordinate with non-federal organizations and personnel as necessary to ensure that the recommendations allow for appropriate interoperability and cooperation between federal and non-federal dispatch activities and business needs.

The Dispatch Improvement Project Leader will be a term employee, hosted by the Bureau of Land Management and jointly funded by the Bureau of Land Management and the USDA Forest Service.

Schedule

The project leader, in consultation with the steering committee, will develop a project schedule.

Project Sponsors

Thomas J. Cadwell 2/25/10

Chief, USDA Forest Service

Date

Director, Bureau of Land Management

Date

Director, National Park Service

Date

Director, US Fish and Wildlife Service

Date

Director, Bureau of Indian Affairs

Date

President, National Association of
State Foresters

Date

Project Sponsors

Chief, USDA Forest Service Date

Robert C. Callery 2-3-11

Director, Bureau of Land Management Date

Director, National Park Service Date

Director, US Fish and Wildlife Service Date

Director, Bureau of Indian Affairs Date

President, National Association of
State Foresters Date

Project Sponsors

Chief, USDA Forest Service Date

Director, Bureau of Land Management Date

 3/22/2011

Director, National Park Service Date

Director, US Fish and Wildlife Service Date

Director, Bureau of Indian Affairs Date

President, National Association of State Foresters Date

Project Sponsors

Chief, USDA Forest Service Date

Director, Bureau of Land Management Date

Director, National Park Service Date

Gregory E. S. ... 10 March 2011

Director, US Fish and Wildlife Service Date

Director, Bureau of Indian Affairs Date

President, National Association of
State Foresters Date

Project Sponsors

Chief, USDA Forest Service Date

Director, Bureau of Land Management Date

Director, National Park Service Date

Director, US Fish and Wildlife Service Date

 2/9/2011

Director, Bureau of Indian Affairs Date

President, National Association of
State Foresters Date

Project Sponsors

Chief, USDA Forest Service Date

Director, Bureau of Land Management Date

Director, National Park Service Date

Director, US Fish and Wildlife Service Date

Director, Bureau of Indian Affairs Date

 3/3/11
President, National Association of State Foresters Date

Appendix 1 – Dispatch Improvement Steering Committee Membership

Jim Douglas, Department of the Interior, Senior Advisor to the Deputy Assistant Secretary – Law Enforcement, Security and Emergency Management

Douglas Nash, USDA Forest Service, Chief Information Officer

Jim Kenna, Bureau of Land Management, Arizona State Director

Corbin Newman, USDA Forest Service, Region 3 Regional Forester

Kim Thorsen, Department of the Interior, Deputy Assistant Secretary – Law Enforcement, Security and Emergency Management

Kim Christensen, USDA Forest Service, National Interagency Coordination Center, Center Manager

Mark Stanford, National Association of State Foresters, Forest Fire Protection Committee Representative

Dan Smith, National Wildfire Coordinating Group Representative

Louis Rowe, National Park Service, Deputy Assoc. Director of Visitor and Resource Protection

Tim Lynn, USDA Forest Service, Assistant Director for Law Enforcement and Investigations

Dean Ross, National Park Service, Deputy Chief, Emergency Services, Visitor and Resource Protection