



National Wildfire Coordinating Group (NWCG)  
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### NWCG RMC Correspondence 2018-001

**Date:** August 8, 2018  
**To:** Geographic Area Coordination Group Chairs  
**From:** NWCG Risk Management Committee  
**Subject:** Fatigue Mitigation

It is well documented and uncontested that mental fatigue significantly affects human performance especially decision making, attention and concentration. Physical fatigue likewise affects the full range of physical and immunological human performance.

The summer of 2018 is proving to be especially challenging for firefighters, with many helitack, engine and type 2 crews nearing 600 hours of overtime. Most IHC crews significantly exceed this amount. A review of recent incidents as well as communication from the field indicates that fatigue is becoming a factor with many crews and support personnel. Well-rested firefighters and support personnel are a key component of safe operations and accident prevention. Risk Managers and Agency Administrators are witnessing the need take *additional* measures to mitigate fatigue. NMAC has already encouraged additional days off for employees involved in aviation operations.

Managers have many tools to help mitigate fatigue including shortened shift lengths, deferring availability, and increasing rest periods. Managers have also utilized increased home unit training, leadership development and team building as additional mitigations. The *NWCG Standards for Interagency Incident Business Management Handbook* chapter 10 page 14 displays additional authorities to mitigate fatigue as well.

The NWCG Risk Management Committee (RMC) emphasizes that the operational tempo of this fire season escalated sooner than normal and with a long season still ahead. RMC strongly encourages managers to assess the fatigue level of their fire personnel and take aggressive actions to mitigate existing fatigue and preemptively prevent fatigue with ample rest periods. In addition, firefighters should be free to speak up when they feel they need additional time for rest and recovery.

**Contact:** For questions or concerns, please contact NWCG RMC Chair, Mark Goeller at [Mark.Goeller@ag.ok.gov](mailto:Mark.Goeller@ag.ok.gov).

Cc: Dan Smith, NMAC Chair  
NWCG Risk Management Committee Members