

# Incident Workforce Development Group



National Multi-Agency Coordinating Group

IWDG Memorandum 20-02  
20 February 2020

TO: Tom Remus, Chair, Coordinating Group Advisory Council

FROM: Jesse Bender, Chair, Incident Workforce Development Group

SUBJECT: Incident Management Teams to Support Complex Incident Management

The Incident Workforce Development Group (IWDG) recently held a workshop with representatives from the Coordinating Group Advisory Council (CGAC) and the National Incident Commander/Area Commander Advisory Council (NICACC) to develop specific management roles and responsibilities that will support and facilitate successional planning in a changing incident management workforce environment.

The existing model for interagency Incident Management Teams (IMT) was created in a business environment much different from today's. Critical challenges in rostering and managing IMTs is leading to a decrease in the number of teams available for an increasing number of complex incidents.

- The wildland fire environment is increasingly severe and highly-complex incidents are becoming more frequent. The future IMT staffing model must be capable of meeting the number and complexity of incidents.
- The social and cultural values of agency employees have changed over time as has the number of non-fire employees traditionally available to fill in as IMT members. The volunteer/militia support model of the past can no longer sustain team capacity into the future.
- In recent years, the number of available teams has decreased at an increasing rate.
- Duration and number of IMT assignments is increasing without equitable distribution of the workload. Type 2 IMTs absorb the bulk of the assignments, largely based on number of incidents. Similarly, sustaining Type 1 assignments with a small number of teams creates serious fatigue and resilience issues.
- The practice of maintaining individual team rosters, along with reserving large numbers of individuals in shared positions, limits the overall capability of the system to staff a large number of IMTs especially, with multiple team types.
- Agency priorities no longer support nor incentivize IMT participation.
- Incident Commanders and members of their Command and General Staff disproportionately carry team management and governance responsibilities.

To meet the needs of a changing environment and evolving workforce, the IWDG supports a move towards holistic complex incident management. This cultural shift will require different composition, rotation, and management of IMTs. The Coordinating Group Advisory Council and associated Geographic Area Coordinating Groups must provide the necessary leadership for change:

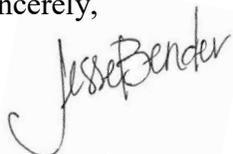
- Determine a sustainable number of teams necessary to meet the needs of the geographic area.
- Provide more direct coordinating group oversight to IMTs and all aspects of IMT succession.
- Actively recruit and retain more ICs.
- Provide participation incentives for ICs and IMT members.

- Efficiently manage IMT rotations to reduce fatigue and create more equitable distribution of assignments.
- Ensure an interagency and intergovernmental composition of IMTs.
- Begin evolving toward a three-tier Incident Management Team structure (Initial Attack, Extended Attack/Emerging Incidents, Complex Incident Management).
- Work toward utilizing a geographic area pool to fill necessary positions on IMTs that are not part of the IMT's roster of core positions (between 20 and 30).

The IWDG depends upon its representative members to initiate conversations and make decisions to enable change at all levels of the organization. To that end, the IWDG requests that NICACC and CGAC coordinate in addressing the steps mentioned above. Agency Administrators must be engaged in addressing these challenges and provide effective leadership for change. A follow up to the February workshop is tentatively planned for May of 2020 in order to discuss intended pathways that can be communicated throughout the summer months and vetted with all levels of incident management and support. A final proposed plan is requested for the NMAC-CGAC meeting in January 2021.

For more information, please contact the CGAC representatives to IWDG: Dan O'Brien and Mike Haydon.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jesse Bender". The signature is written in a cursive style and is positioned above the typed name.

Jesse Bender  
Chair, IWDG

CC: Leon Ben, Chair, Fire Management Board  
Frank Guzman, Chair, NWCG Executive Board  
Josh Simmons, Chair, National Multi-Agency Coordinating Group