



National Wildfire Coordinating Group

National Interagency Fire Center
3833 S Development Avenue
Boise, Idaho 83705-5354

MEMORANDUM

Reference: NWCG#016-2012

To: NWCG Committee Chairs
Geographic Area Coordinating Group (GACG) Chairs
National IC/AC Council Chair

From: NWCG Chair *Arthur Bidabun*

Date: September 25, 2012

Subject: Management Guidance for the Remote Automated Weather Station (RAWS) Network

The interagency Remote Automated Weather Station (RAWS) Network is an essential asset for wildland fire and resource management programs across the United States. Approximately 2,100 stations provide weather observations that are used for creating fire danger ratings, calculating fire behavior predictions, generating spot forecasts, monitoring peak wind speeds, and many other purposes. The remote location of the stations makes this network unique, giving its observations great value to the land management agencies who own them and to weather forecasters, climatologists, and other stakeholders. For example, the network is an important source of observations for initializing the Real-Time Mesoscale Analysis (RTMA), which generates National Weather Service models used for fire weather forecasting.

The National Wildfire Coordinating Group (NWCG) maintains observation standards for the weather stations in the RAWS Network. As agency budgets continue to decline, NWCG has sought to provide guidance for meeting the interagency need for weather observations while managing the size and coverage of the network. Tools have been developed for assessing the value of an individual station's observations, and the impacts of changing station location or station density on data analysis and decision-making. Information is also available about other observation networks and how to include them in routine analyses as an alternative to incurring costs associated with expanding the RAWS Network.

1. The tools for assessing your stations and information about other existing weather networks are presented in the PMS 1003, "[Report to the NWCG: What Is the Appropriate RAWS Network?](#)" In the attached briefing paper (see Attachment A), the NWCG Fire

Environment Committee (FENC) outlines key points from the report, offers recommendations for implementation, and describes its plans for on-going support to the field for managing the RAWS Network.

2. A summary of the steps necessary to include other weather station network data in the Weather Information Management System (WIMS) – the national processor for fire danger rating – is provided in the attached document (see Attachment B), “*Standards for Weather Stations from Non-Fire Agency Networks.*” Note, ingest of a non-RAWS weather station’s data into WIMS must be accompanied by a commitment from a local land management agency to manage the data in WIMS.

The latest revision to the PMS 426-3, *Interagency Wildland Fire Weather Station Standards and Guidelines*, has been published and is available at:

<http://www.nwcg.gov/pms/pubs/426/index.htm>.

Questions can be directed to Paul Schlobohm, NWCG Equipment and Technology Branch Coordinator, (208) 387-5269 or pschlobo@blm.gov.

Attachment A: Fire Environment Committee Briefing Paper 2012-1: RAWS Network Analysis

Attachment B: Standards for Weather Stations from Non-Fire Agency Networks

cc: NWCG Executive Board
NWCG Program Management Unit (PMU)
NWCG Budget Advisory Unit (BAU) Chair
Roy Johnson, OWF Deputy Director
Rod Bloms, OWF Program Analyst
Brit Rosso, LLC Center Manager