



**DEPARTMENT OF  
NATURAL RESOURCES**

**WILDLAND FIRE MANAGEMENT  
DIVISION**

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2/27/2023

**MEMORANDUM**

**TO: Gary Berndt and David Way, CIMT Transition Working Group Leads**

**FROM: George Geissler, WA State Forester/Deputy Supervisor Wildland Fire Mgmt**

**SUBJECT: Transition to Complex Incident Management Teams in Washington**

**Issue Summary**

In April of 2021 wildland fire response in the United States adopted Complex Incident Management as its new business model. Transitioning to this new model requires systemic changes to be implemented by the subgroups under the authority of the Fire Management Board (FMB), National Wildfire Coordinating Group (NWCG) Executive Board, and National Multi-Agency Coordinating Group (NMAC) with full implementation expected by spring of 2024. As a part of this new model, existing Type 1 and Type 2 Incident Management Teams (IMTs) will be reclassified as Complex Incident Management Teams (CIMT) resulting in one configuration of IMT for all large complex fires.

Currently in the Northwest Region (Oregon and Washington) there are 15 Incident Management Teams (IMTs) hosted by the Northwest Geographic Coordinating Center (GACC). Six of these are Oregon-based Teams (three Oregon Department of Forestry Type 1 and three Oregon State Fire Marshal Type 2) managed for state response. The remaining nine teams are interagency teams (two Type 1 and seven Type 2) managed at the regional level (NW Region 6 – Oregon and Washington).

While the CIM transition effects on team member participation and availability are still uncertain, within the region it is expected all PNW-based teams will transition to CIMT by the 2024 deadline. Oregon teams will continue to be managed for utilization at the state response level while the remaining interagency teams are expected to transition to CIMT and become part of the national rotation with undefined implications for Washington state and the region.

DNR is evaluating the impact this will have on IMT availability for wildland fire response in Washington. There is expressed concern as teams are transitioned to CIMT and considered participating in the national rotation Washington could find itself lacking available NW CIMTs to respond to high-complexity fires quickly due to activity in other states or regions. Much like past

reliance on federal aviation availability, this could result in DNR being uncomfortably dependent upon what will now be considered federal resources.

### **Task Outline**

The work group comprised of Fire Service, DNR and federal partners will evaluate the FMB/NMAC directed transition from Type 1 and Type 2 teams to CIMTs on Washington's ability to respond to large-scale complex incidents at the state level and review the progress of the ongoing transition of PNW IMTs to the CIMT structure to provide insight, guidance, and recommendations to the state forester.

### **Key Deliverables**

1. Overview of the progress of ongoing transition to CIMT in Washington
2. Provide insight, guidance, and recommendations regarding the ongoing use of CIMT (including CIMT/Type3 IMT relationship and interaction) and ensure adequate availability of IMT at the state level.
3. Clear prioritization of any recommendations (with description of pros/cons considered) with expected implementation process, timeline and needs.

The project overview and deliverables will be compiled into a final report and submitted to the State Forester by September 1, 2023, in time for the WFAC Fall Meeting on September 21, 2023.

DNR's Wildland Fire Advisory Committee (WFAC) should be considered as a resource to the work group and periodically updated on work group progress.

**Facilitators:** Gary Berndt (Retired), David Way (DNR WFMD ADM Operations)

**Subject Matter Expert:** Russ Lane, DNR WFM Division Manager

**Administrative Support:** Kelli Messegee, DNR Executive Assistant to State Forester

### **Work Group Membership**

- DNR – Wyatt Leighton, Southeast Region ARM
- DNR – Don Melton, South Puget Sound Region ARM
- Federal – Brian Gales, US Fish and Wildlife Service, Incident Commander NW Team 13
- Fire Service - Bob Gear, City of Pasco, Chief
- Fire Service - Leonard Johnson, McLane Black Lake Fire Department, Chief
- Fire Service – Rich Elliott, Kittitas Valley Fire and Rescue, Deputy Chief
- Fire Service – Cody Rohrbach, Spokane County Fire District 3, Chief
- Tribal – Cody Desautel, Colville Tribe

**Contact:** George Geissler at [george.geissler@dnr.wa.gov](mailto:george.geissler@dnr.wa.gov) or (360) 902-1684.

**Attachment(s):** CIMT Presentation (January 24, 2023)

cc:

DNR Region Managers and Wildland Fire Assistant Regional Managers  
DNR WFM ADMs  
Russ Lane, DNR WFM Division Manager  
Kelli Messegee, DNR Executive Assistant to State Forester  
Allen Lebovitz, WFAC Chair