

# Final Fire Report

## MT DNRC Guidance for the Narrative Data Field

This document provides general guidance for the narrative data field in final DNRC wildland fire reports, including those recorded in the Interagency Fire Occurrence Reporting Modules (InFORM) application. The contents of the narrative remain largely at the discretion of the person filing the report, and there are few constraints on how the narrative can or should be used. Nonetheless, some sensitive information must never be included in the narrative (or any other data field). This document identifies the few requirements (most importantly, what not to include in the narrative), but also identifies general expectations and some best practices to better ensure the quality and usefulness of final fire report narratives.

### What is the final fire report narrative and how is it used?

The final fire report narrative is a free form text field supplementing the regular fire report data. When used, the typical narrative is a succinct but meaningful entry of notable information that cannot be reported elsewhere on the fire report, but provides a fuller understanding of the incident's circumstances, events, and outcomes. The narrative field in InFORM can be up to 4000 characters. Should you have a longer narrative you will need to attach it as supplemental fire narrative documentation with the final fire report.

### What are some similar, but not equivalent, information sources?

It is important to differentiate between the final fire report narrative and seemingly similar data fields in other applications and products. Final fire report narratives must be entered manually – no information is automatically transferred from other applications or documents, nor should such information be copied in its entirety from any other source into the final fire report narrative. Following is a list of other information sources that can be associated (i.e. linked via the fire's IRWIN ID and/or unique incident identifier) with the final fire report. If information from these sources is deemed pertinent for the final fire report narrative, it should be distilled and summarized to extract just key events and other notable data that otherwise cannot be easily queried from the source directly. If any of these other sources are pertinent, they will need to be attached to the final fire report and included as supplemental documentation. Other common narrative-type data fields include:

- Size-up and Incident Commander notes
- Log entries and other user-entered documentation from Computer Aided Dispatch (CAD) applications
- User-entered documentation for resources in the Interagency Resource Ordering Capability (IROC) application
- Remarks field and other free-form text fields in Incident Status Summary (ICS-209) reports

### Which fires typically have important information that is documented in the final fire report narrative?

The essential information for most small and routine wildfires can be captured in other data fields on the report. Fires with unusual circumstances, or fires with notable outcomes will benefit by having those details summarized and noted in the final fire report narrative. A narrative is often valuable for:

- Larger fires
- Fires that burned across multiple ownerships or jurisdictions
- Fires where the protection and/or response involved units and resources other than the jurisdictional unit
- Fires for which suppression (100% perimeter containment) was not the primary strategy
- Costly fires
- Fires with property losses
- Fires likely to result in claims or legal actions
- Fires resulting in serious injuries or fatalities
- Fires of political or cultural significance
- Fires with a delayed response

### What information should be documented in the final fire report narrative?

Following is a list of important information that is typically included in the narrative because it is not available from other sources or captured in other data fields on the final fire report:

- Unique hazards that affected the response, management, and outcomes relating to the fire
- Weather and fire behavior characteristics key to the incident
- Supplemental information to complement/explain the use of “other” or “unknown” in another specific data field
- Incident Commander/Teams name(s) and transition dates
- Unique information pertaining to jurisdiction or protection, such as offsets or other protection agreements
- Factors resulting in atypical response/capability (draw-down due to other fires, use of severity resources, etc)
- Whether the fire contributed to a pattern or trend in occurrence
- Whether the fire resulted from an escaped prescribed burn, plus information pertaining to the corresponding prescribed fire report (e.g. prescribed burn name and IRWIN ID)
- Details regarding parent/child relationships with other incidents, such as the name(s) of complex(es) in which the fire was included or subordinate fires that merged with this one
- Data that is beneficial for the local unit or agency and is not otherwise captured elsewhere in the fire report
- Documentation of response resources who are in a support role through mutual aid or agreement
- IMT transitions documented

### **What information should not be documented in the final fire report narrative?**

Because the final fire report data contents are publicly accessible, certain sensitive information must never be included in the narrative or any free-text data field. Do not include any of the following:

- Personally Identifiable Information (PII), which is defined as “Information which can be used to distinguish or trace an individual's identity, such as their name, social security number, biometric records, etc. alone, or when combined with other personal or identifying information which is linked or linkable to a specific individual, such as date and place of birth, mother’s maiden name, etc”. [Confidential Information Handling Notice - PII.PDF \(mt.gov\)](#) [Part 15. State Agency Protection of Personal Information - Table of Contents, Title 2, Chapter 6, MCA \(mt.gov\)](#)
- Specific information pertaining to injuries, fatalities, accidents, burn-overs, etc
- Estimated monetary value of damaged or destroyed property
- Individual ownership data (e.g. parcel number, name of owner, list of damages, etc.)
- Name of fire investigator
- Speculation regarding fire cause, culpability, negligence, or other factors relating to negative fire impacts and outcomes, fire investigation information should be annotated on the F-1021 or F-1004 as supplemental documentation

### **What are the best practices for a high-quality final fire report narrative?**

Consider these recommendations to create effective, valuable final fire report narratives:

- Check the grammar, spelling, and clarity of your narrative to be sure that others can understand it.
- Don't include redundant information (e.g. repeating info already provided in the fire report's other data fields), unless repeating it in the narrative provides a more flowing/contextual narrative.
- Avoid rambling narratives with too much detail – the narrative should be a summary of key events and information.
- Don't include uncondensed or trivial information that is already reported in another authoritative source. The following information is available from other sources and can be associated with the final fire report via the IRWIN ID, so do not repeat this information in the final fire report narrative:
  - Full chronology of events (if already documented in the CAD log)
  - Listing of all resources assigned to the fire (if already documented in the CAD or IROC)

### **What is the documentation guidance when a fire is managed by a team?**

NWCG documentation standards are generally referenced as the baseline documentation requirements in delegations of authority documentation. It is at the discretion of the agency line office and FMO to determine documentation and records management requirements. NWCG guidance and tools can be found at the link below.

[Documentation | NWCG](#)

[Incident Planning Subcommittee | NWCG](#)