

CHAPTER 380
FEDERAL EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AGENCY ASSISTANCE
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381 GENERAL

Under certain defined conditions, the Federal Government, acting through the Department of Homeland Security, Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) may provide assistance to states for some state-responsibility fires. Montana has successfully applied for and received such assistance in recent years and may do so again, if conditions so warrant.

A. CRITERIA FOR ASSISTANCE

FEMA assistance may be provided ". . .when such help is deemed necessary to suppress any fire on publicly or privately owned forest or grassland which threatens such destruction as would constitute a major disaster." The key phrase here is "*major disaster.*" *Most DNRC fires are not major disasters.*

See Appendix in this manual for Fire Management Assistance Grant Program (FMAG) Declaration processes, eligibility and criteria information.

FEMA provides some criteria to be considered in evaluating whether a fire is a major disaster. This criteria is:

- IMMINENT threat to lives and improved property
- Availability of State and local resources
- High fire danger conditions (National indices)
- Potential MAJOR economic impact

In addition to these criteria for determining a major fire disaster, states must also satisfy certain FEMA financial criteria, which basically verify that the state is spending at least its normal amount of money for fire suppression. This is called the "threshold." In Montana, there is either an individual fire cost threshold of \$100,000 per declared fire or a cumulative fire cost threshold when total costs for all declared and non-declared forest or grassland fires in the calendar year meet or exceed \$500,000.

B. DNRC STANDARDS

When such conditions exist, and Montana successfully applies for and receives FEMA assistance, DNRC responsibility fire suppression operations will continue to be managed to existing DNRC standards. In other words, no extraordinary practices will be exercised just because of FEMA Fire Management Assistance. Regular DNRC standards of safety, economy, cooperation, supervision, etc. and regular DNRC procedures will continue to apply with or without FEMA assistance.

C. INCIDENT PERIOD

When FEMA approves a State application for assistance, normally very early in the fire suppression operation for an individual major fire disaster, a period

known as an “incident period” begins. The incident period would normally end when the fire is controlled and the threat of a major disaster no longer exists.

382 REQUIRED INFORMATION

Among the requirements for obtaining FEMA assistance for a major fire disaster, DNRC must prepare and submit to FEMA a Request for Federal Aid. The majority of this information must originate at the fire scene and be reported through the responsible Land Office to the Fire and Aviation Management Bureau, Forestry Division, who will prepare the request for the approval and signature of a designated Montana Governor’s Authorized Representative.

See information the Land Office is responsible for supplying on the “FEMA Decision Checklist” form in the Appendix of this manual and on the DNRC Fire & Aviation, Fire Business website:

<http://dnrc.mt.gov/forestry/fire/business/default.asp>

383 MT DNRC FMAG PROCEDURE MANUAL

For complete detailed information in regards to DNRC processes and procedures, please see the “MTDNRC FMAG Procedure Manual”. A copy of this manual is on file at the Fire and Aviation Management Bureau, Forestry Division and available on the web at:

<http://www.dnrc.mt.gov/forestry/fire/Manuals/manuals.asp>

384 FEMA HANDBOOK

For the many additional required detailed procedures, FEMA provides for state use a guide entitled "Fire Management Assistance Grant Program Guide". A copy of this guide is on file at the Fire and Aviation Management Bureau, Forestry Division, Missoula.

385 MONTANA/FEMA COOPERATIVE AGREEMENT

FEMA Fire Suppression Assistance to Montana is provided through an existing cooperative agreement (see Chapter 350 of this manual). This agreement specifies legal authorities, considerable detailed procedures, requirements, etc. A copy of the current Montana State/FEMA Agreement is on the DNRC Fire & Aviation, Fire Business website at:

<http://dnrc.mt.gov/Forestry/Fire/Business/Documents/CostShare/2013/2013FEMA.pdf> and on file at the Fire and Aviation Management Bureau, Forestry Division, Missoula.

Among the provisions of this agreement is the designation, by name, of those Montana officials who are authorized as the Governor's Authorized Representative (GAR) or Alternate GARs to place requests for assistance to FEMA. These are presently listed as:

- Robert A. Harrington, Administrator, Forestry Division, Missoula (AGAR)
- Ted Mead, Chief, Fire and Aviation Management Bureau, Missoula (AGAR)
- John Monzie, Deputy Chief, Fire and Aviation Management Bureau, Missoula (AGAR)
- Bruce Suenram, Deputy Chief, Fire and Aviation Management Bureau, Missoula (AGAR)
- Incident Business Coordinator, Fire and Aviation Management Bureau, Missoula (AGAR)