

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

Fire Management Assistance is available to States and local and tribal governments, for the mitigation, management and control of “fires on public or private owned forests or grasslands, which threaten 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 has established four (4) criteria which are used to evaluate the threat posed by a fire or fire complex:

1. Threat to lives and improved property, including threats to critical facilities/infrastructure, and critical watershed areas;
2. Availability of State and local firefighting resources;
3. High fire danger conditions, as indicated by nationally accepted indices; and
4. Potential major economic impact

In addition to meeting the major fire disaster criteria, before a FMAG grant can be awarded, a State must demonstrate that total eligible costs for the declared fire meet or exceed either the individual fire cost threshold, which is applied to a single fire, or the cumulative fire cost threshold, which recognizes numerous smaller fires burning throughout the State. For Montana, the individual fire cost threshold is \$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 for 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. Established DNRC standards of safety, economy, cooperation, supervision, etc. and established DNRC procedures will continue to apply with or without FEMA assistance.

C. Incident Period

The FEMA Regional Administrator, in consultation with the Governor's Authorized Representative (GAR) and the Principal Advisor determine the start and end dates of the incident period, which is usually not established until the fire is controlled.

The incident period may start on the date of the FEMA declaration or with the initial firefighting actions at the time when the fire threatens such destruction as would constitute a major disaster. While the incident period is normally considered closed when the fire is controlled, the final decision rests with the FEMA Regional Administrator, GAR, and Regional Advisor. The end of a shift or a workday normally marks the closing of the incident period.

382 REQUIRED INFORMATION for the DECLARATION REQUEST

Among the requirements for obtaining FEMA assistance for a major fire disaster, DNRC must prepare and submit to FEMA a Request for Fire Management Assistance Declaration, FEMA form 078-0-1. The majority of this information must originate at the fire scene and be reported through the responsible Land Office to the Fire Protection Bureau, Forestry Division, who will prepare the request for the approval and signature of a designated Montana GAR.

For FEMA to apply the evaluation criteria, the following information, if available, should be included in both the verbal and written requests to FEMA:

1. Size of fire(s) in acres or square miles;
2. Name, location, and population of community(ies) threatened;
3. Number of primary and secondary residences and businesses threatened;
4. Distance of fire to nearest communities;
5. Number of persons evacuated to date, if applicable;
6. Current and predicted (24-hour) weather conditions; and
7. Degree to which State and local resources are committed to this fire and other fires in Federal, State, or local jurisdictions.

See complete 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 Protection Bureau, Fire Business website: <http://dnrc.mt.gov/divisions/forestry/fire-and-aviation/fire-business/forms-and-information>.

383 MT DNRC FMAG PROCEDURE MANUAL

For complete detailed information regarding DNRC processes and procedures, please see the "MTDNRC FMAG Procedure Manual". A copy of this manual is on file at the Fire Protection Bureau, Forestry Division.

384 FEMA HANDBOOK

For the many additional required detailed procedures, refer to the "Fire Management Assistance Grant Program Guide at the following link: <https://www.fema.gov/media-library/assets/documents/92379>.

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 Protection Bureau, Fire Business website (<http://dnrc.mt.gov/divisions/forestry/fire-and-aviation/fire-business/agreements-plans-and-guides>) and on file at the Fire Protection 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:

- Sonya Germann, Administrator, Forestry Division, Missoula (AGAR)
- Sue Clark, Deputy Administrator, Forestry Division, Missoula (GAR)
- Mike DeGrosky, Chief, Fire Protection Bureau, Missoula (AGAR)
- John Monzie, Deputy Chief, Fire Protection Bureau, Missoula (AGAR)