

Line Officer (Agency Administrator) Reference Guide

Line Authority

MT Department of Natural Resources & Conservation (DNRC) Line Officers (Agency Administrators) implement authority that flows from the Governor to the Agency Director to the Division Administrator to the Area Managers and to the Unit Managers. When we write a delegation of authority, we are implementing authorities as delegated from the Director and Governor.

Line Officer (Agency Administrator) Definition

A Line Officer (Agency Administrator) is the official responsible, as defined by the National Wildfire Coordinating Group, for the management of a geographic unit or functional area. Line Officers (Agency Administrators) are the managing officer of an agency, division thereof, or jurisdiction having statutory responsibility for incident mitigation and management. Some examples include: Area Manager, Unit Manager, Area FMO.

Line Officer Responsibilities

The Line Officer (LO) manages the land and resources on their organizational unit. Fire management is part of that responsibility.

LO's are responsible for safety oversight, and may request additional safety oversight as needed.

Situations that may require additional safety oversight:

- A fire escapes initial attack or when extended attack is probable;
- There is complex or critical fire behavior;
- There is a complex air operation;
- The fire is in the wildland urban interface; and
- Other extraordinary circumstances, i.e., prolonged period of fire activity where fatigue may be a factor or fire is threatening highly value assets or resources.

The LO establishes specific performance objectives for the Incident Commander (IC) and delegates the authority to the IC to take specific actions to meet those objectives. LO responsibilities to an Incident Management Team (IMT) include:

- Conduct an initial briefing to the Incident Management Team.
- Provide an approved Incident Situation Assessment (ISA) (See Section 1 – Line Officers Toolkit).
- Complete a Wildfire Risk and Complexity Assessment (See Section 2 – Line Officers Toolkit).
- Coordinate with neighboring agencies on multi-jurisdiction fires to issue a joint Delegation of Authority and develop a single Published Decision in Wildland Fire Decision Support System (WFDSS) for the management of unplanned ignitions (See Section 4 – Line Officers Toolkit).
- Issue a written Delegation of Authority to the Incident Commander and to other appropriate officials, LO Representative, Resource Advisor, and Incident Business Advisor. The delegation should:
 - State specific and measurable objectives, priorities, expectations, LO's intent, constraints, and other required direction;
 - Establish the specific time for transfer of command;
 - Assign clear responsibilities for initial attack;
 - Define your role in the management of the incident;

- Describe procedures for conducting during incident reviews with the IC;
- Define your highly valued resources and assets;
- Discuss your expectations for dealing with invasive species;
- Assign a resource advisor(s) to the IMT;
- Define public information responsibilities;
- Address accident investigation procedures and notification requirements for fire managers, line officer(s), and dispatch/coordination centers;
- Assign a local government liaison to the IMT (if necessary);
- Assign a local fire management liaison to the IMT (if necessary);
- Assign an Incident Business Advisor (IBA) to provide incident business management oversight commensurate with complexity; and
- Direct the IMT to address rehabilitation of areas affected by suppression activities.
- Coordinate mobilization with the IC:
 - Negotiate the number, positions and trainees to fill the mobilization order with the IC;
 - Establish time and location of Line Officer's briefing;
 - Consider approving support staff additional to the IMT as requested by the IC; and
 - Consider authorizing transportation needs as requested by the IC.
- Provide pertinent support materials and documents (Land/Resource Management Plan, Fire Management Plan, GIS data, local unit SOP's, maps, logistical information, etc.) to the IMT.

In situations where one agency provides fire protection under agreement to the jurisdictional agency, both jurisdictional and protecting agencies will be involved in the development of the Delegation of Authority to the Incident Management Teams and the Published Decision in WFDSS or the ISA.

LO Expectations of Incident Management Team (IMT)

Incident Management Teams are ordered when the complexity of an incident or multiple incidents and/or the span-of-control has exceeded the protecting agency's capacity to manage an incident while still managing their areas of responsibility.

The primary objectives of an IMT are to assist the LO:

- Meeting operational objectives, while managing risk;
- Providing oversight, direction, coordination, and evaluation;
- Striving for cost effective incident management;
- Maintaining positive relationships with agencies, cooperators, stakeholders, public, elected officials, etc.;
- Resolving conflicts;
- Thinking strategically and providing both short and long term planning capabilities, and;
- Providing LO's with advice and suggestions for a successful operation.

In order to accomplish these objectives, a LO should expect the following from an IMT:

- Relieve protecting agency's fire staff to manage the area/zone/unit and on-going initial attack
- Perform smooth and responsive transitions
- Keep you informed of any critical issues
- Assure that no surprises result from communication failures

- Maintain positive interagency relations
- Clarify the IMT's expectations of your staff
- Consult you on your schedule
- Reflect positively on the agencies in surrounding communities
- Effectively manage human resources to enhance employee development and protect human rights
- Conduct frugal fiscal management consistent with values at risk
- Provide daily ICS-209 with detailed narrative
- Review ISA and/or WFDSS for adequacy and validity each operational period
- Participate in strategic planning meetings with Line Officer (Agency Administrators)
- Utilize Resource Advisor and respect staff input
- Follow the Delegation of Authority and WFDSS with updates
- Follow the agency's Business/Financial lead's advice
- Implement a pro-active risk management program
- Prepare a complete and accurate final fire package

The LO's should review the Prior to the IMT Arrival Checklist, on page 8 of this document.

IMT Expectations of an LO

It is highly desirable for the LO to participate personally, or to assign a Line Officer representative to work daily with the team. This individual should be identified in the Delegation of Authority and ideally will fill this role for the life of the incident in order to maintain consistency. The role of the Line Officer Representative is to:

- Ensure the needs and interests of the agency are considered and protected by the team
- Provide guidance to the team
- Provide local and institutional knowledge
- Answer policy questions
- Provide the periodic assessment of the ISA and/or WFDSS decision to determine if the objectives, constraints and courses of action remain valid.
- Assess the ongoing performance of the IMT and take corrective action as appropriate
- Review the daily cost estimates to ensure cost effectiveness strategies are implemented successfully
- Be available for consultation and collaboration, especially with the IC.

See the LO's Representative Duties and Responsibilities.

Delegation of Authority

The Delegation of Authority is a statement provided to the Incident Commander by the protecting and jurisdictional LO's who have the authority to delegate authority and assign responsibility. The Delegation of Authority can include objectives, priorities, expectations, constraints and other considerations or guidelines as needed. These objectives and constraints should tie directly back to the decision document published in the ISA and/or WFDSS. The Delegation of Authority should be provided to the Incident Commander prior to their

assuming command.

It is critical that the incident objectives as defined in the ISA and/or WFDSS are provided to the IMT in the Delegation of Authority. This can be accomplished in two ways; one, the Delegation can reference the incident objectives as described in the ISA and/or WFDSS and two, list the incident objectives in the Delegation as written in the ISA and/or WFDSS. Incident Commanders have expressed that it is helpful to have the objectives clearly written in the Delegation of Authority to avoid any confusion. If the objectives are listed in the Delegation and those objectives become outdated, then a new Delegation of Authority will need to be signed. A Delegation of Authority template is in Section 4 of the Line Officers Toolkit.

In-Briefing the IMT

Command and General Staff members of the IMT will plan to attend the initial in-briefing with the LO or their representative. This in-briefing should be focused on communicating the objectives and constraints being given to the team; a synopsis of the current fire situation; and the LO(s) expectations of the teams' performance. The in-briefing should not take more than one hour and should be immediately followed by breakout sessions with each section of the team with their local contacts (i.e. the Finance Section should meet with the Unit/Area admin staff or local Business/Financial lead, IBA, etc.).

In addition to a verbal in-briefing, the team should also be provided a written in-briefing packet (See Section 5 – Line Officers Toolkit).

Transfer of Command

The transfer of command between the current Incident Commander and the incoming Incident Commander should never be scheduled during the burning period. The preferred timeframe is just before shift begins. The incoming team will need to shadow the current organization to come up to speed on the situation, safety concerns, cooperators and relationships, and the geography. The time period spent shadowing is negotiated between the protecting LO, the incoming Incident Commander, and the current Incident Commander.

The current team remains in charge until the mutually agreed upon time for the transfer of command occurs.

IMT and Fire Status Reporting

The IMT will assume responsibility for submitting the daily ICS-209 Situation Status online. The IMT will also update general fire information including current size, land status by management option, values at risk, and containment/control dates.

Team Close-Out and Final Documentation Package

A completed final fire package will be submitted to the Protecting Agency prior to the team's departure.

Special care should be taken to review and finalize the finance package prior to the team's departure.

Team Performance Evaluation

It is beneficial for the IMT and the agencies to provide a written evaluation of the team's performance while assigned. The protecting agency, in collaboration with the jurisdictional agency, writes and delivers this evaluation prior to the IMT's departure. This evaluation is typically provided to the Incident Commander face-to-face in a timely manner so that he has the opportunity to share it with the rest of the IMT prior to their departure (See Section 8 – Line Officers Toolkit).

Some factors to consider in the written evaluation of a team include:

- Compliance with Delegation of Authority.
- Implementation of ISA and/or WFDSS decision(s).
- Effectiveness of working relationship with the LO.
- Orderly Transitions: Unit to Team/Team to Unit/Team to Team.
- Human rights management.
- Personnel safety record.
- Invasive species management.
- Financial performance compared to agency expectations.
- Accountability of capitalized equipment/cache priority.
- Documentation of fire costs.
- Completeness of claims investigations/documentation.
- Media relations.
- Interaction with cooperating agencies/Units staff/neighbors.
- Effectiveness and documentation of trainee assignments.
- Orderly demobilization.
- Effectiveness of suppression repair.
- Completeness of final fire package.

Team Debrief and Closeout

A debriefing and closeout meeting with the team will be held by the protecting agency when an IMT demobilizes in order to:

- evaluate policy, procedures and management of actions occurring from the team's mobilization through demobilization;
- identify needed changes or corrections with the objective of improving management, not assign blame;
- review sensitivity to resource values and local citizen and governmental concerns;
- discuss interfacing with other agencies, coordinators, the coordination center, and other entities.

LO Representative Responsibilities

The Line Officer may appoint a Representative. The LO Representative serves as the on-scene point of contact and is responsible for representing the operational, political, social, and economic issues of the LO to the Incident Commander. This is accomplished by participating in the LO briefing, in the IMT planning meetings, Stakeholder meetings and in the operational briefings.

Responsibilities include representing the LO to the IMT regarding:

- Compliance with the Delegation of Authority and the published decision in the ISA and/or WFDSS;
- Public concerns (air quality, road or trail closures, smoke management, threats);
- Public safety (evacuations, access/use restrictions, temporary closures);
- Public information (fire size, resources assigned, threats, concerns, appeals for assistance);
- Socioeconomic, political, or tribal concerns;
- Land and property ownership concerns;
- Interagency and inter-governmental issues;
- Local agency participation and involvement;
- Wildland urban interface impacts; and
- Media contacts.

**Prior to the IMT Arrival
Checklist for
Line Officer (Agency Administrators)**

- ISA and/or WFDSS is prepared and published
- Delegation of Authority is completed and signed
- Compile an in-briefing package
- Consider the need for an Incident Business Advisor
- Develop briefing materials on local politics, agreements, issues, partners and stakeholders.
- Communicate in-briefing time and location to cooperators, key staff, and other interested parties
- Determine a recommended location of the incident command post (ICP)
- Coordinate ordering procedures for incoming IMT
- Schedule times needed and how to submit required reports (ICS 209, Cost Summaries, night reports, etc.)
- Consider ordering basic support equipment and supplies such as a NIFC radio kit, copy machines, computers, and telephones
- Order and assemble adequate quantities of maps, aerial photos, GIS data sets, fire weather forecasts, and other intelligence material to support the incident
- Determine transportation requirements for the team
- Establish Transfer of Command timeframe
- Assign Resource Advisor
- Establish link to Joint Information Center if applicable

Resource Advisor Responsibilities

The Resource Advisor is responsible for anticipating the impacts of fire operations on natural and cultural resources and for communicating protection requirements for those resources to the Incident Commander. The Resource Advisor should ensure IMT compliance with the Land/Resource Management Plan and Fire Management Plan. The Resource Advisor should provide the Incident Commander with information, analysis, and advice on these areas:

- Rehabilitation requirements and standards;
- Land ownership;
- Hazardous materials;
- Fuel breaks (locations and specifications);
- Water sources and ownership;
- Critical watersheds;
- Critical wildlife habitat;
- Noxious weeds/aquatic invasive species;
- Special status species (threatened, endangered, proposed, sensitive);
- Fisheries;
- Poisonous plants, insects and snakes;
- Mineral resources (oil, gas, mining activities);
- Archeological site, historic trails, paleontological sites;
- Riparian areas;
- Military issues;
- Utility rights-of-way (power, communication sites);
- Native allotments;
- Grazing allotments;
- Recreational areas; and
- Special management areas (wilderness areas, wilderness study areas, recommended wilderness, national monuments, national conservation areas, national historic landmarks, areas of critical environmental concern, research natural areas, wild and scenic rivers).

The Resource Advisor and LO Representative positions are generally filled by local unit personnel. These positions may be combined and performed by one individual. Duties are stated in the *Resource Advisor's Guide for Wildland Fire* (NWCG PMS 313, NFES 1831, Jan. 2004).