

CHAPTER 3 – THE CONCEPT OF OPERATION

I. General

This section of the Annex presents key guidelines that can be used to make key decisions during the course of the event. These decisions will be based on experience, the best evaluation of the current situation, and the forecast for the near future.

All wildfire responses will fall under the umbrella of the Unified State Command and will use the National Interagency Incident Management System (NIIMS) as the emergency response organizational management structure.

Based on joint considerations discussed and determined by the State liaison agencies of the Unified Command (Division of Forestry, the Division of Emergency Management, the Florida Fire Chiefs Association, and the Division of State Fire Marshal), several guidelines for the three levels of activation (Monitoring, Partial, and Full) for the State Emergency Operations Center during a wildfire event have been developed.

II. Level Three, Monitoring Phase:

The Division of Emergency Management will maintain a liaison with the Division of Forestry. The Division of Forestry will maintain contact with the liaison and or the on-duty Operations Officer for the Division of Emergency Management, and notify them of any significant wildfire activity. This activity may require increased awareness or activity from the Division of Emergency Management or Emergency Support Functions in the State Emergency Operations Center. The Emergency Management liaison will remain in contact with the Division of Forestry and the Operations Chief for the State Emergency Operations Center and a joint determination will be made as to if and when to increase the level of activation in the State Emergency Operations Center. The Division of Emergency Management's liaison will be a part of the Unified Command Team once established by the Division of Forestry.

III. Level Two, Partial Activation

The State Emergency Operations Center may be activated to a Level Two based on a variety of considerations.

A. The request for issuing an Executive Order

When appropriate, the Division of Emergency Management will request an Executive Order, signed by the Governor, that is based on the following factors:

1. When the Division of Forestry requires the assistance of the Florida National Guard air assets for wildfire suppression. The

Division of Forestry will estimate the need for the National Guard assets more than 24 hours before initiating the request.

2. When a Division of Forestry overhead team requires the support of the State Emergency Response Team for a wildfire that is out of control for longer than 24 hours.
3. When Emergency Support Function 4 (Firefighting) partially activates for any of the following criteria:
 - a. A wildfire event requiring the mobilization and deployment of Florida Fire Chiefs Association resources to the Region of impact from other Region(s) within the State. Those forces are required on-scene for longer than 24 hours and may require logistical support.
 - b. A wildfire burning (un-checked) into the urban/interface where multi-family homes and large subdivisions are being threatened.
 - c. When the Division of Forestry, in consultation with the Florida Fire Chiefs Association, identifies a need for out of State resources that can best be obtained through the Emergency Management Assistance Compact (EMAC).

Only those Emergency Support Functions needed to support the Division of Forestry will be activated.

B. The Division of Forestry's Liaison to the State Emergency Operations Center

Once the State Emergency Operations Center has gone to Level Two, the Division of Forestry will provide liaisons to the State Emergency Operations Center and provide information coordination for the State Emergency Support Functions.

IV. Level One, Full Activation

A. The Division of Emergency Management Guidelines to Fully Activate the State Emergency Operations Center

The State Coordinating Officer (usually the Director of the Division of Emergency Management), in consultation with the State Emergency Response Team Chief, will make the decision when to activate the State Emergency Operations Center to a Level One. The following factors may be used in the decision-making process:

1. When a response to a wildfire event requires the resource and or logistical support from a majority of the State Emergency Response Team's Emergency Support Functions.
2. When a wildfire event necessitates evacuations that require resource support from neighboring counties.

B. The Division of Forestry's Coordination With the Division of Emergency Management

The Division of Forestry and the Division of Emergency Management will coordinate several critical functions as follows:

1. Emergency Support Function 4 will provide logistical liaisons to the Florida Division of Forestry/US Forest Service offices or at the Unified Expanded Dispatch.
2. A Joint Information Center (JIC) will be established with Emergency Support Function 14 (Public Information). The Division of Forestry will provide briefing points on the wildfire situation through Emergency Support Function 14. Emergency Support Function 14 will then coordinate this consistent information message with other Public Information Officers throughout the State.
3. A Division of Emergency Management liaison will be included in the planning process with Unified Command personnel in the formation of the Incident Action Plan (IAP) for the wildfire event.
4. The Unified Command will provide liaisons to the State Emergency Response Team's Emergency Support Function 5 (Information and Planning) to consolidate the planning process and provide input into the situation reports issued from the State Emergency Operations Center.
5. The Division of Forestry will provide liaisons to the Division of Emergency Management for all financial matters regarding decisions to provide funding for the wildfire event and the consequences of the disaster.

Although the State Emergency Operations Center may be at Level One (full activation), the wildfire events may not have escalated to the point where all elements of the Division of Forestry staff will need to be co-located at the State Emergency Operations Center. The Division of Forestry may be a part of a Unified Command and co-located with the United States Forest Service due to the large logistical coordination needed with that agency.

C. The Division of Forestry's Co-location To The State Emergency Operations Center

The directors for the Division of Forestry and the Division of Emergency Management will jointly determine when and what portions of the Unified Command structure should co-locate to the State Emergency Operations Center. The Division of Emergency Management will provide all support resources for such co-location. The joint decision to co-locate will be based on guidelines including:

1. The Division of Forestry in its Unified Command with the United States Forest Service continues to command and control all operational elements of the wildfire incidents. The Division of Emergency Management will manage the overall disaster and all other areas including those areas related to consequence management.
2. The number of wildfire incidents requires continual coordination and logistical support from various State Emergency Response Team Emergency Support Functions. The liaisons initially provided by the Division of Forestry during a Level three activation are overwhelmed with the amount of coordination required.
3. The number of wildfire incidents requires the formation and possible forward insertion of an Area Command or multiple Area Commands.
4. Key operational decisions made by the Unified Command rely on and or directly affect those Emergency Support Functions dealing with the question of consequence management in response to the operational decisions made by Command.

Due to the large number of personnel that may need to be co-located to the State Emergency Operations Center, a decision will be made by the Unified Incident Commanders when and if to move the Unified Expanded Dispatch from the US Forest Service Center to the State Emergency Operations Center. Until (and if) the Unified Expanded Dispatch is moved, coordination for this effort will be directed by the following guidelines:

1. Emergency Support Function 4 will provide logistical support to the Expanded Dispatch where all requests for fire resources within the State will be coordinated.
2. The Logistics Section will provide a liaison to the Unified Expanded Dispatch for coordination of out of state requests that may go through the Emergency Management Assistance Compact.

3. All firefighting assets (the Division of Forestry, the United States Department of Agriculture Forest Service, the Florida Fire Chiefs Association, the Division of State Fire Marshal and/or the Emergency Management Assistance Compact) will be directed into the wildfire incident through the Unified Expanded Dispatch. This will ensure that all fire resources are coordinated from a central command, logistically supported, and are efficiently utilized in the affected area.

V. Medical Unit Activation

A medical unit may be activated when an incident management team is put in place to coordinate large numbers of firefighters or emergency personnel. If the Incident Management Team requests a Medical Unit, the request will go through the Unified Expanded Dispatch. A mission will be tasked to Emergency Support Function 8 from the Unified Expanded Dispatch making the request for specific elements of the medical team.

VI. Air Operations

The Division of Forestry and the United States Department of Agriculture, Forest Service may, under increased wildfire activity, establish Unified Air Operations for statewide wildfire aviation coordination. The Unified Air Operations will establish an Air Operations Plan that will coordinate all aircraft associated with fire operations or flying within wildland fire aviation air space. This includes:

- Forestry Aircraft
- Fire agency aircraft
- Law Enforcement aircraft
- Military aircraft
- Contractor aircraft
- Media aircraft

VII. Resources

The Division of Forestry, in its Unified State Command role with the United States Department of Agriculture, Forest Service or other federal jurisdictional agencies, will be responsible for command and control of all operational elements of the wildfire response to include resource ordering for wildfire incidents through state wildfire compacts or the national ordering system. The Division of Emergency Management will support the Division of Forestry operations by managing and coordination any non-wildfire resource ordering through the Emergency Support Functions, Emergency Management Assistance Compact, Federal Emergency Management Agency, and fiscal issues as they relate to resources. All resource ordering will be coordinated within the expanded dispatch system when established.

VIII. Logistical Support

This Section identifies the roles of the agencies involved in the logistical support of the Unified Command during wildfire events. Separate processes exist for the ordering of resources and other logistical support for the wildfire events and the Incident Management Teams commanding the suppression of wildfires. In addition, the linkage needed between these resource and logistical ordering processes to provide the correct resource, to ensure that it is provide it in a timely manner, and that they are provided cost-effectively is identified.

The primary methods in which resources and logistical support is ordered for wildfire events include:

1. Unified Expanded Dispatch, including State Wildfire Compacts and the National Wildfire Resource Ordering System.
2. The Florida Fire Chiefs Association Disaster Response Plan in support of the Division of State Fire Marshal as the lead agency for Emergency Support Function 4 (Firefighting).
3. The Logistics Section of the State Emergency Operations Center.
4. Emergency Management Assistance Compacts through the Mutual Aid Branch.

Included within these processes will be the triggers for resource prioritization and re-allocation of resources throughout the State based on established criteria.