

A close-up photograph of a person wearing a yellow safety vest and glasses, looking down at a map. The map is held by their hands, and the background is a blurred outdoor setting. A semi-transparent green rectangular overlay covers the upper portion of the image, containing the title text.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES:

BEST PRACTICES FOR NATIONAL GUARD RESOURCES



NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF STATE FORESTERS

INTRODUCTION

This document — "**Guiding Principles: Best Practices for National Guard Resources**" — was developed by regional wildland fire chiefs, managers, and supervisors to assist states and their constituents in the deployment of National Guard resources. This edition was approved by the National Association of State Foresters' Wildland Fire Committee in 2018.

The National Guard supports wildland firefighting in various ways. Through comprehensive post-fire reviews, state forestry agencies have identified best practices for utilizing National Guard resources that are shareable and scaleable. These lessons learned are particularly helpful at present given that the need for National Guard resources is likely to increase along with the complexity and scale of future wildfire incidents.

This guide is not intended to be "one size fits all." Instead, it details common areas of consideration and provides a process for utilizing National Guard resources that respects each state's internal administrative policies, regulations, automatic and mutual aid agreements, resources constraints, and needs.

DEFINITIONS

DOD — United States Department of Defense

DOI — United States Department of the Interior

NG — National Guard

USFS — United States Forest Service

SAD — State Active Duty Orders

MOU — Memorandum of Understanding

IMT — Incident Management Team

Overhead — Supervisory Positions

ROSS — Resource Ordering Status System

PL — Preparedness Level

PPE — Personal Protective Equipment

MTDC — Missoula Technology and Development Center

EMAC — Emergency Management Assistance Compact

DLA — Defense Logistics Agency

PIO — Public Information Officer

JIC — Joint Information Center

RT 130 — Annual Firefighter Refresher Training



PRE-EVENT

Coordination, communication, and relationships are keys to success. Before any wildfire incident occurs, states should take the lead in developing MOUs, operating agreements, and/or other mobilization plans with their NG units, and commit to updating those documents annually.

NG units should be the primary military sourcing solution within a state. If those resources become exhausted, another states' NG forces could be considered next under an EMAC agreement or similar arrangement. If additional military assets are needed, a state's NG can coordinate for the employment of active duty DOD Title 10 forces as required.

PRE-EVENT RECOMMENDATIONS

- Manage the expectations for the use of DOD and NG resources, such as hand crews. The right people at the right time for the right mission, strong statements of intent from leadership, and honest communication will ensure buy-in, commitment, and success.
- Share examples of agreements, best practices, and NG domestic operations plans among all states and NG units. Best practices can include pre-defined packaging of NG resources such as a medivac helicopter, bucket mission helicopter, and traffic control point staffing.
- Update and train staff and IMTs on internal policies, procedures, mechanisms for reimbursement, and claims payments, etc.
- Understand that some states may have strict limitations or prohibitions on using NG personnel on SAD. Limitations or prohibitions on NG use may also apply to jurisdictions within a state, especially for use of state NG resources by federal agencies.
- Review procedures for federal agency requests for NG resources. Study the feasibility of putting NG resources into ROSS at the local or zone dispatch level in a Geographical Area.
- Initiate or review procedures for ordering NG aviation resources through interagency dispatch centers.
- Work with local USFS or DOI liaison to ensure that NG fixed wing and rotor resources are carded or have letters of authorization for federal use prior to the fire season on an annual basis.



PRE-EVENT CONTINUED

- Prepare preseason agreements for use of NG aviation resources that spell out needed agency or military supervision of fixed wing and rotor management (i. e. need for agency helicopter managers vs. military crew chiefs).
- Consider conducting preseason meetings and/or exercises with the local NG.
- Review the updated Military Use Handbook for use with NG and develop a supplement if needed.
- Base trigger points for mobilization on PLs, activity, fire danger, ERC, outlooks, etc.
- Train NG personnel to meet state minimum standards well in advance of use.
- Consider acceptance of prior military training. Due to part-time duty, turnover, and other factors, just in time training may be the best fit for ground troops if minimum standards can be met. Advance training should be limited to personnel most likely to still be in service during time when NG use is expected. Federal and state fire managers need to recognize that training requirements may differ significantly for NG on SAD in other jurisdictions within or outside the state and may affect the ability to use NG resources in the other jurisdictions.
- Keep overhead with the crews from the start of training throughout the assignment to create crew cohesion. Utilizing overhead that are current or prior military or NG is helpful. Utilize Vet Crews for assistance if available.
- Provide RT 130 refresher training for previously trained units.
- Develop an orientation video for NG and DOD ground troops on what to expect on a fire assignment. (NOTE: USFS is currently taking the lead on this project.)
- Ensure that all required PPE is available, particularly footwear, which is always the biggest issue. (NOTE: USFS is working with MTDC and DLA to have an accepted boot available through DLA.)



DURING AND AFTER EVENT

When a wildfire incident occurs, having appropriate protocols, procedures, policies, and training in place are essential to effective and efficient response.

DURING-EVENT RECOMMENDATIONS

- Utilize appropriate liaisons at incidents from the NG and the requesting agency.
- Encourage NG liaison or unit representatives to participate in planning meetings with IMTs at the incident.
- Plan a location for a NG trailer or NG tent in the fire camp for use by the NG unit liaison officers or representatives, other sections, and Command and General Staff.
- Use overhead with current or prior military experience whenever available. With the appropriate number of qualified overhead, the ability to break the 20-person crew into 10-person squad might be an option.
- Ensure that the incident logistics section is aware of ground troop deployments and the footprint they will bring with them to the incident base camp. NG and DOD crews often come with multiple support units and equipment.
- Incorporate a saw team with overhead into NG or DOD hand crews to help make the crews more efficient.
- Integrate NG PIOs both on incident and at JICs.
- Plan on using NG fueling assets and tracking reimbursable fuels costs for aviation resources.
- Coordinate accounting and reconciliation between state fire agencies and NG offices at pre-fire season meetings.

AFTER-EVENT RECOMMENDATION: After an event occurs, conduct an After Action Review.

