

Guiding Principles for Best Practices for National Guard Resources



For more information about this report contact Dan Smith, NASF Wildland Fire Director:
desmith@blm.gov | (208) 867-0908



Introduction

These Guiding Principles for Best Practices for National Guard (NG) are being established to assist States and their constituents with training and deploying National Guard Resources. National Guard and Department of Defense (DoD) resources support wildland firefighting in various ways. There is general consensus that the use of National Guard resources will continue and likely increase in the future.

Lessons learned from after action reviews following past fire seasons have provided many good recommendations for best practices that can be shared.

While it is difficult to develop a “one size fits all” for all 50 states and territories, this document is intended to provide some specific common areas for consideration when training and deploying National Guard Resources. Internal administrative policies, State regulations, automatic and mutual aid agreements, etc., will define how states train and deploy National Guard Resources. These Guiding Principles will provide a single suggested philosophy or process while respecting each State’s authorities, restrictions, and resource limitations.

Pre-event

- States should take the lead in developing agreements and mobilization plans with their National Guard units. National Guard units should be the primary military sourcing solution within a state. If those resources become exhausted, another state’s National Guard forces could be considered next under an EMAC agreement or similar arrangement. If additional military assets are needed, a state’s National Guard can coordinate for the employment of active duty Title 10 forces (DoD) as required.
- Coordination, communication and relationships are keys to success.
- Managing the expectations for the use of DoD and NG resources such as hand crews is critical. The right people at the right time for the right mission. Strong leader's intent statements and honest communication will ensure buy in and commitment.



Definitions

DoD - Department of Defense
NG - National Guard
SAD - State Active Duty Orders



- States should have MOU's or agreements with their National Guard units. These documents should be reviewed and updated on an annual basis. Operating plans are also recommended.
- Sharing examples of agreements, best practices, and National Guard domestic operations plans should be encouraged among all states and National Guard units. Best practices can include pre-defined packaging of National Guard resources such as a medivac helicopter, bucket mission helicopter, and traffic control point staffing.
- States and NG staff should update and train staff and IMTs on internal policies, procedures, mechanisms for reimbursement, and claims payments. etc.



- Federal and state fire managers need to understand that there can be strict limitations or prohibitions on using NG personnel on SAD in other jurisdictions outside of their own state.
- 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 the ordering of 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 annual basis.
- Preseason agreements for use of NG aviation resources should 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 preseason meetings and/or exercises with the National Guard.

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- Review the updated Military Use Handbook for use with NG and develop a supplement if needed.
- Trigger points for mobilization? Based on PL's, activity, fire danger, ERC, outlooks, etc.
- Just in time training seems to be the best fit for ground troops with a few exceptions. Online training was discussed but not seen as a desirable option. The USFS has a condensed training for DOD, 2 day classroom at the installation and 2 day field training at the incident. The U.S. Forest Service accepts DOD fitness standards as equivalent. The U.S. Forest Service does not enter DOD ground troops into IQCS or ROSS and no red cards are issued. Several states issue red cards to qualified NG ground troops.
- Alpha to Omega concept for training, keeping the overhead with the crews from the start of training throughout the assignment creates crew cohesion. Utilize overhead that are current or prior military or NG is helpful. Utilize Vet Crews for assistance if available.
- 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. USFS is taking the lead.
- Ensure that all required PPE is available. Footwear is always the biggest issue. USFS is working with MTDC and DLA to have an accepted boot available through DLA.
- To the maximum extent possible when it appears NG assets will be needed, prior coordination and notification with the NG will greatly enhanced response time.



During the Incident

When an incident occurs, having appropriate protocols, procedures, policies and training in place is essential.

- Utilize appropriate liaisons at incidents from the NG and the requesting agency.

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- Encourage NG liaison or unit representatives to participate in planning meetings with IMT's at the incident
- IMT's logistics section should plan for location for a NG trailer or NG tent for an area in the fire camp that could station NG unit liaison officers or representatives in the same area as the other sections and Command and General Staff.
- Having the right amount of fully qualified, quality overhead is critical. 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 a 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.
 - Incorporating a saw team with overhead into NG or DOD hand crews could make the crews more efficient.
 - Integration of NG PIO's both on incident and at JIC's.
- Forward thinking of fueling needs for aviation resources. Plan on using NG fueling assets and tracking reimbursable fuels costs.
- Accounting and reconciliation between state fire agencies and NG USPFO/AGC offices is critical and should be coordinated thru pre-fire season meetings.

After the event occurs

- Conduct After Action Reviews.