



Interagency Dispatch Implementation Project (IDIP)

Dispatch Recruitment and Retention Strategies

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Problem

Recent outreach and announcement efforts often fail to yield adequate numbers of qualified individuals on certificates of eligibility for dispatch position. Individuals currently in dispatch positions frequently move after serving minimum time in grade to other opportunities for promotion or relocation. Specialized experience requirements, inconsistent use between agencies of position descriptions, series and grades further complicates the situation.

Key Issues

- The absence of a direct career path from field (primary) wildland fire positions to entry level (secondary) dispatch positions hinders the ability to successfully recruit individuals into these positions.
- Recruitment efforts do not adequately promote dispatch as an operational fire management career path.
- The current model is unable to recruit and retain adequate entry level candidates into dispatch positions.
- Unfilled vacancies impacts existing staff with additional workload contributing to stress and burnout. ¹
- Access to initial, intermediate and advanced training opportunities is limited.
- Initial attack dispatch positions are secondary firefighter covered.

Recommendations

- The recently chartered National Wildfire Coordinating Group (NWCG) National Coordination System Committee (NCSC) implement the [Interagency Wildland Fire Career Dispatcher Development Curriculum](#) (non-Redcard) outlined by IDIP.
- NCSC will collaboratively work to identify and recommend appropriate position descriptions, series and grades for standardized use throughout wildland fire dispatch centers. The intent is to ensure that workload and staffing are commensurate with complexity and to provide clear and consistent career ladder opportunities. NCSC will appropriately elevate these recommendations to agency leadership for approval.
- NCSC will develop methodology to address complexity and workload capacity to determine grade levels and staffing.

Benefits of Implementation

- Enhanced recruitment and retention throughout the dispatch community.
- Development of a career path option within the fire and dispatch community to ensure the opportunity for prolonged retention and successional planning models.
- Standardize grade levels throughout wildland fire dispatch based on complexity and workload.
- Enhanced employee work-life balance, improvements to employee recruitment and retention.
- Cost avoidance through decreased revolving door recruitment, onboarding and training.

Additional Information - Kolleen Beesley – IDIP Project Lead – 208-906-0326 – kkbeesley@fs.fed.us

¹ Stress and Coping in Wildland Firefighting Dispatchers, Palmer CG