Executive Summary September 2012

Project Overview

On April 24, 2011 the Forest Service, Department of Interior, and State Executive Leadership’s committed to the California Interagency Dispatch Optimization Pilot Project (IDOPP) under the nationally chartered project (http://www.iiog.gov/IDIP/IDOPP/Final_IDOPP_Project_Plan_02-03-11.pdf) and the IDOPP Bridge Team. The California Interagency Dispatch Optimization Pilot Project was chartered to evaluate and optimize dispatch operations, including dispatch for fire, law enforcement, and other field going personnel. The pilot project included federal, state, and tribal stakeholders. The California Executive Oversight Group provided within-area leadership support for the project. The California Sub-Team of subject matter experts (SMEs) identified key issues, business needs and user requirements and developed alternatives to optimize dispatch services and operations, and recommendations for dispatch standards in the future as described in the California IDOPP Final Report.

In January 2012, the California Executive Oversight Group established that “the safety of our employees and the public is paramount for all stakeholders.” They agreed that “interagency partnerships” was another core value meeting the intent of the National Cohesive Wildland Fire Management Strategy. They also confirmed some basic principles of dispatch consolidation and criteria to evaluate alternatives.

In May through September 2011, the IDOPP Data Call was completed by 100% of 51 Emergency Command/Coordination Center Managers (including Hawaii); 69% of 396 dispatch center employees responded to the IDOPP survey; and 69% of 559 resource protection/public safety officers responded to the IDOPP Law Enforcement Data Call. The consultant services by Management Analysis, Inc. (MAI) provided the extensive data analysis for the project. The Sub-Team used this analysis in developing alternatives, options, and recommendations for the California IDOPP Final Report.

The Sub-Team had four physical meetings and numerous virtual meetings to accomplish this task. As the Sub-Team engaged the project there were several topics that needed alternatives developed for management decision: Geographic Area Coordination Centers; Emergency Command/Communications Centers; Federal Law Enforcement Dispatch Services; Radio Communications Infrastructure Analysis; and Federal overarching issues that need to be addressed regardless of alternatives selected. Following are the recommendations of the Sub-Team with a more in-depth explanation in the California IDOPP Final Report. CAL FIRE Leader’s Intent statements were taken into consideration in all alternatives developed by the Sub-Team.
Recommendations

Geographic Area Coordination Centers (GACCs): Currently California has two GACCs, the Northern California Coordination Center (ONCC) at Redding, CA and the Southern California Coordination Center (OSCC) at Riverside, CA. CAL FIRE and CAL EMA have a shared Center in Sacramento, CA. The estimated total annual cost for these centers is $5,811,140, however due to missing operational costs the estimate should be slightly higher.

Recommendation: Given the following the Sub-Team’s recommendation is to keep the current configuration of two GACCs in California (GACC Alternative 1). The two GACCs provide support to roughly 101 million acres of federal, state, and local government responsibility lands with a population of approximately 38 million resulting in a complex wildland urban interface environment. The GACCs support not only wildland fire (10 year average of approximately 8,500 fires and 604,000 acres) but various all-hazard responses in a disaster prone state. The current redundancy provided for between the two centers is a necessity for a state as large and complex as California for Continuity of Operations. No other GACC could assume coordination responsibilities in California because of business practices and relationships with state, emergency management, and local government in California. This redundancy also distributes the workload between two GACCs; both being more than equivalent to the NICC in resource orders processed. The current configuration supports interagency partnerships; a core value of the California IDOPP Executive Oversight Group and the National Cohesive Wildland Fire Management Strategy. The unique combination of coordination and operations that currently exists at the GACCs supports the NorCal MAC or SoCal MAC groups; where Federal, State, CalEMA, and local government share responsibility for prioritization of incidents and allocation of resources. This best practice has evolved over time and is sanctioned by FIRESCOPE. Two GACCs also supports CAL FIRE’s Northern and Southern Regions being combined with federal partners at each facility. The costs of the GACCs are justified in light of the efficiencies, best practices, cooperation, and reciprocal facilities agreement of the current configuration.
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Emergency Command/Communications Centers (ECCs): Currently there are thirty-seven Emergency Communications/Command Centers in California and Hawaii within the scope of this project: fourteen Federal Emergency Communications Centers (ECCs), fourteen CAL FIRE Emergency Command Centers (ECCs), seven Interagency CAL FIRE/Federal ECCs, one US Park Police ECC, and one Tribal ECC. The total annual cost estimate for the local ECCs in California is $63,767,211. The Center costs ranged from $12,601,554 to $321,797. This project gathered as much information as possible to tell the story of the current dispatch/coordination system in California and Hawaii, but by no means is it all inclusive. This report has the potential to be a blueprint for the next 10 years or longer for opportunities to consolidate ECCs. Any of the Options laid out in this report will need supportive management and willing partners. Each Option should be evaluated for the cost and efficiencies to be gained by sharing infrastructure, staffing, and facilities. This can be the opportunity to “retool” our dispatch centers for the future. For instance, with larger staffs EECs may implement an Intelligence position or provide 24/7 services to LE. The Sub-Team decided to only address the centers with Low Complexity as determined by the Average Normalized Score in the Alternative 1. Any consolidations need to be monitored for their successes and challenges as lessons learned. The agencies should prioritize and coordinate target opportunities for future investment.

Alternative 2: This Alternative has the opportunity to address 12 of the 16 Low Complexity Centers. 3 Low Complexity centers are CAL FIRE not in proximity to other Federal centers. 1 Low Complexity center is already collated with CAL FIRE. Recommendation: Establish an interagency Board to work with local groups to determine the feasibility of each option. The interagency Board would establish the funding strategies and priorities for consolidation. The interagency Board could look at other options of consolidation of Moderate and/or High Complexity Centers.
Federal Law Enforcement Dispatch Services: Law Enforcement (LE) incidents are on an upward trend at 6% per year from 2006-2010, as reported through the IDOPP Data Call. A total of a 28% increase over five years. This workload was reported by the ECCs, and does not reflect the after-hours workload through local Sheriff’s Offices or other law enforcement centers. There are a total of 559 resource protection/public safety officers in California and Hawaii: Bureau of Land Management (BLM) 62; CAL FIRE 174; Forest Service (USFS) 122; Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) 10; and National Park Service (NPS) 191. A total of 21 out of 23 Federal dispatch centers (91%) perform NCIC/State Authorized LE dispatch in the CA Region.

Alternative 1: The Scope of Federal Dispatch Services is inclusive of Fire, Aviation, and LE. In this alternative, all 23 federal dispatch centers (100%) would provide NCIC/State Authorized law enforcement dispatch services in the California Region.

Alternative 2: Partner Federal LE dispatch services with LE communication centers such as: Sheriff’s Offices, CA State F&G/Parks, or NPS centers.

Alternative 3: Establish one or multiple Federal Law Enforcement dispatch centers.

Recommendation: The Sub-Team could not develop a recommendation between the alternatives until the CA Executive Oversight Group decides that LE dispatching services are to be included, or not, in Federal ECCs in California. The Sub-Team highlighted specific findings and where the agencies maybe at the greatest risk. The Sub-Team does recommend a bridge solution during the interim:

1) Fully implement the proposed LE Net in Region 5 with tone guard, P25 compliance, encryption and operational procedures;
2) Maximize existing LE frequencies and use, through interagency agreements;
3) Develop and implement interagency Standard Operating Procedures for LE Dispatching Services; and
4) Develop a certified, interagency LE Training program for LE Dispatching Services and then train the dispatch workforce.
Radio Communications Infrastructure: The data was gathered for all of the participating agencies except Tribal, and analyzed through a geospatial information system. California has a total of 4,940 various radio/communication devices across the landscape. All of the agencies are facing budget and personnel challenges in maintaining the current system, much less meeting future needs and compliances.

Recommendation: Any dispatch optimization alternatives must consider analyzing further the radio tower infrastructure in California. Communications/radio systems, as identified in this report, are vital to the operations of the dispatch/coordination system. The Federal Radio Program Managers thought that a complete interagency analysis of the radio systems in California is necessary. This would be a huge undertaking and beyond the current capabilities of the agencies staffs. They suggested that this task be contracted out. This was a suggested statement of work; “A contractor should be prepared to integrate various technology from legacy to new and modern for seamless operations. This should be done by evaluating currently used systems and then designing, procuring and implementing technology so that all systems operate for the customer in the same seamless fashion.”

Federal issues that need to be addressed for the Dispatch/Coordination System regardless of selected Options or LE Alternatives: A table was developed showing the issues and the status.

National Issues: Some of the issues the IDOPP Bridge Team will be taking forward as issues that are national in scope: clearly defining the mission and scope of dispatch centers; establishing a governance structure for dispatch centers; establishing an Interagency Standard Operating Guide for dispatch centers; developing an excepted Workload Analysis and Staffing tool, etc.

California Issues: Some of the issues are more California concentric and could be national in scope. The agencies are providing LE dispatching services, then the forming of interagency task groups will be needed to address: Standard Operating Procedures for LE dispatching; development of a federal certified, interagency LE Dispatching training program and qualifications for LE dispatching; and addressing positions description issues for dispatchers. Some briefing papers have been attached to the California IDOPP Final Report, as time constraints on this project did not allow them to be incorporated.
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Conclusion

The California dispatch/coordination system is complex and reasonably efficient. However, in changing times, with rapidly changing technologies, and declining budgets, it is prudent to take a fresh look at the current system and potentially “retool” our dispatching system for the next generation. The dispatch/coordination system requires that staffing, infrastructure, and equipment in the future is reliable, adaptable, and sustainable in achieving our stakeholders’ missions. Cost is a concern of all agencies. A mindful approach and a commitment to resilience are necessary in developing a long term strategy toward improving efficiency and effectiveness of the dispatch/coordination system.

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