



NORTHERN ROCKIES COORDINATING GROUP

Organizational Statement

Inter-governmental Cooperation

The Northern Rockies Coordination Group recognizes that a successful wildland fire suppression response requires strong interagency partnerships among federal, state, tribal, and local government agencies. Each level of government has authorities that make it responsible for some aspect of fire suppression, but since wildland fire respects no boundaries, all levels must work together in order to be effective. This principle of cooperation among governments is encouraged as a national policy and is repeatedly stated in the documents that make up the National Fire Plan.

The Northern Rockies Coordinating Group membership consists of representatives from government bodies at all levels *with statutory responsibilities related to fire suppression*. Governments include tax-based state, federal, local (including municipalities, counties, or other local authorities), and tribal government. The agencies that make up the Northern Rockies Coordinating Group embrace the approach of working with partners to accomplish our agency missions in the most efficient manner possible. The group operates on the principle that each member organization is an equal government partner and the members fully support each other in achieving our mutual missions.

The agencies that make up the Northern Rockies Coordinating Group welcome a strong relationship with private contractors and contractor organizations in order to obtain products and services for our taxpayers; however, membership in the Coordinating Group is limited to those with statutory responsibilities related to fire suppression due to the inherently governmental function and responsibility of oversight and control over contract performance.

Use of Government and Contract Resources

All governmental bodies have their own authorities and regulations that allow them to provide services to their constituents. Governments may enter into contracts or agreements with other government organizations or they may procure services from non-governmental sources. Either of these methods may be used to obtain assistance when fire workload exceeds the local capacity.

Since they have statutory responsibilities related to fire suppression, governments at all levels have long recognized the value of assisting each other with fire suppression and other fire management activities. For many years, specific fire suppression agreements have been

Montana DNRC
Montana Firewardens Association
Montana Division of Disaster
and Emergency Services
MT Sheriffs and Peace Officers' Association

Bureau of Indian Affairs
Bureau of Land Management
National Park Service
US Fish and Wildlife Service

USDA Forest Service
Idaho Department of Lands
North Dakota Forest Service
Fire Chief's Association

developed to specify how government organizations will cooperate with and help each other, and what reimbursements, if any, will be made.

Governments may also enter into contracts to help carry out their statutory responsibility of protecting lives and property. Private contractors, when properly used, provide a wide variety of useful services that play an important part in helping agencies to accomplish their missions. Agencies use service contracts to acquire special knowledge and skills not available in the government, obtain cost effective services, or obtain temporary or intermittent services, among other reasons. The decision to contract for assistance using taxpayer money, the responsibility for specifying the terms of the contract, and the oversight and control over contract performance lies solely with the government bodies and are inherently governmental functions. Agency personnel are accountable to taxpayers for their decisions.

It is the prerogative of each government body to determine when it is in their constituents' best interest to use the services of cooperating government agencies and when to use contractors for fire suppression assistance. Even when contracts are used, this does not preclude the government from using any agency or agency cooperator-owned resources before using resources mobilized under a contract. However, it is the Northern Rockies Coordinating Group's intent that reimbursement for fire suppression services between agencies and to contractors is calculated fairly, with consideration given to the inherent differences between government and non-government firefighting resources.

Specific details on the Northern Rockies Coordinating Group's strategy for use of private contract resources and the dispatching of contract resources may be found in other documents, including the Northern Rockies Mobilization Guide and the Northern Rockies Contracting Strategy.

/s/ James L. Kelton
JAMES L. KELTON
Chair, Northern Rockies Coordinating Group

09/26/2005
Date