



## NATIONAL WILDFIRE COORDINATING GROUP

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NWCG Memorandum 24-002

February 23, 2024

TO: Heath Hockenberry, National Weather Service Executive Council

FROM: Aitor Bidaburu, Chair, NWCG Executive Board

SUBJECT: Discontinuing Use of the Haines Index and Lightning Activity Level in National Weather Service and NWCG Products

**Purpose:** The Fire Weather Subcommittee (FWSC) recommends discontinuing the use of Haines Index (HI) and Lightning Activity Level (LAL) in fire weather forecasts and in NWCG training and curricula. This is a formal notification to the National Weather Service (NWS) of this recommendation and to acknowledge NWCG's support. Should this recommendation be adopted by the NWS, FWSC drafted a transition plan to help guide the process. Please distribute this information through your agency channels.

**Issue/Action:** The Fire Environment Committee (FENC) and the Executive Board support and recommend removal of HI and LAL, understanding the potential significant impacts to both NWS and wildland fire operations and training. A draft transition plan was developed to aid in this change should NWS move forward with removing HI and LAL (NWCG Memorandum 24-002a). This transition plan could be completed within 12 months once implemented.

**Background and Coordination:** FWSC spent years working on these recommendations and consulted numerous subject matter experts while soliciting feedback from wildland fire personnel. HI is unsupported by research in predicting large fire growth and it is not a metric of atmospheric stability. Additionally, LAL is a duplicate of the thunderstorm coverage product that is already in the fire weather forecasts. Extensive interagency coordination and discussion have transpired, and peer-reviewed research has also been utilized during this decision process. If adopted, fire weather forecasts would contain information on atmospheric stability in the discussion section, and the potential for lightning within the sky weather section or in forecast grids for both CONUS and OCONUS interests. More detailed background information on the recommendations can be found in the attachments.

**Contact:** For questions, please contact Darren Clabo, Chair, FWSC at [darren.clabo@sdsmt.edu](mailto:darren.clabo@sdsmt.edu); Nick Nauslar, Chair, FENC at [nick.nauslar@noaa.gov](mailto:nick.nauslar@noaa.gov); or Dave Schultz, NWCG Coordinator, at [dschultz@blm.gov](mailto:dschultz@blm.gov).

**Attachments:** Transition Plan for Implementation of Discontinued Use and Removal of Haines Index and Lightning Activity Level in NWCG Products, Recommendation to Cease Using "Haines Index" in Wildland Fire Forecasts, and Recommendation to Cease Using "Lightning Activity Level" in Wildland Fire Forecasts

NWCG standards are interagency by design; however, the decision to adopt and utilize them is made independently by the individual member agencies and communicated through their respective directives systems.

**Distribution:**

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