03/21/2025

To: NWCG Executive Board

From: Patrick Murphy, ITSS Working Group

                Julie Bennett, Chairperson, NWCG Interagency Incident Business Committee

Purpose: The purpose of this memorandum is to provide considerations when establishing internet services for an incident.

Background and Collaboration: As technological advancements continue to reshape the way we connect and communicate, the evolution of internet services in remote locations has seen remarkable improvements. The ITSS Working Group and the Incident Business Committee (IBC) jointly collaborated to standardize process and prioritization of incident internet services.

Issue/Action: Internet connectivity and data are key components to supporting an incident base camp. Many functions of an incident management team (IMT) operate in a digital environment requiring connectivity and data. Due to the variability of incident command posts, helibases, spike camps and vehicle mounted applications, the method of procuring internet is complex. Location of camps should be selected in part on the connectivity options available. As teams transition and fluctuate based on need of the incident, the risk of losing equipment, duplicating orders and improper ordering can occur.

Types of Internet Services

Preferred - Ground-based internet is the preferred service based on higher speeds, lower latency and greater consistency. The use of terrestrial infrastructure like underground cables and telephone lines to deliver internet services I are more affordable, more stable and a better all-around option for incidents. When ground-based internet service is not established at a potential camp location but within proximity, temporary cables and poles may be required for installation.

Ground-based internet services availability must be vetted before exploring other options.

Option 2 - Cellular carriers and other crisis response telecommunications providers may have available satellite devices in addition to cellular phones and satellite phones for an incident. These services are free from providers. Resource orders are required before dispatch or buying team can order the equipment.

Option 3 -. Satellite internet delivers connectivity through satellites orbiting in space. Installation and deployment are quick and require minimal upkeep. When ordering satellite internet, the vendor must use a commercial service plan and equipment in accordance with the terms of service of the provider. By using commercial service plans and equipment, the vendor can obtain priority service and substantial amount of data to support an IMT.

Key Information on Satellite Services

If satellite connectivity is unstable or the speed is slow, consider priority tokens the third-party vendor can obtain from satellite companies, relocate equipment or remove obstruction. Do not order more equipment as this will not increase speed or throughput. Consult with the ITSS and consider options like adding cabling or bridges as opposed to renting additional terminals where appropriate.

Ordering, Tracking Equipment and Transitioning Teams

To track equipment and prevent duplicative orders, designate a single point of contact, such as the Logistics Section or Incident Technology Support Specialist (ITSS), to handle internet service orders.

The request for internet service is submitted from the incident to expanded dispatch where a resource order is created in IROC. A warranted contracting officer will procure service based on the needs of the incident. When applicable, commercial agreements or Emergency Equipment Rental Agreements (EERA) should build in cost saving measures such as weekly and monthly rates, commercial service plans and equipment.

Incidents should appoint an individual to track all internet equipment while under the care of the government. Fields of information includes resource order, vendor name, agreement number, serial number, location on incident or GPS coordinates, responsible individual and contact information, date checked in and date released. The tracking sheet should be kept in FireNet, mentioned in the transition plan and discussed with the incoming team.

Resource Order	Vendor Name	Agreement #	Equipment Serial #	Actual Fire Location (GPS)	Location Name	Responsible Party Name	Responsible Party Contact Information (phone & email)	Date Checked Into Incident	Date Released From Incident
S-100	Smokey Bear Satellite internet	120H128K9999	M123456790	44.229380, -114.983671	Wapiti ICP	Jon Martin ITSS	(987) 654-3210	8/10/2024	10/6/2024

Incoming IMTs should wait to order additional devices until the needs of the incident are known. Coordination between outgoing and incoming teams will provide accountability and reduce duplicate orders.

Agency Owned Equipment

Federal, state or local government resources with agency owned devices may be charge to the incident for the days the device was activated in support of an incident. Before issuing a separate resource order (S#) for the device service, approval from an agency administrator (AA) or incident business advisor (INBA) is required to ensure appropriateness.

Existing agency owned or leased equipment that is a residential device does not have priority internet service.

<u>Personally Owned Equipment</u>

No contractor or personally owned equipment will be reimbursed or eligible for official use.

Contact: Technical contact or questions about practical application of these systems may be directed to Patrick Murphy at patrick.murphy@usda.gov or Erik Torres-Jacquez at erik_torres@nps.gov.

Questions on procuring may be directed to your agency IBC representative, https://www.nwcg.gov/committee/incident-business-committee/roster

Distribution:

NWCG Committee Chairs

NMAC Chair