



NATIONAL WILDFIRE COORDINATING GROUP

National Coordination System Committee (NCSC) Memorandum 23-05

April 20, 2023

TO: Geographic Area Coordination Center (GACC) Center Managers
FROM: National Coordination System Committee (NCSC)
SUBJECT: National Dispatch Academy Task Group Membership

GACC Center Managers,

The federal land management agencies are in a crisis to fill positions within the dispatch and coordination system, particularly at the tier three local dispatch centers. A poll in November, 2022 of all ten geographic area coordination centers and over 200 local interagency dispatch centers showed nearly 400 vacancies nationally. These staffing shortages have a significant impact to the individuals who are currently working in these centers and the wildland fire community that they serve.

The lack of adequate, qualified staff has created chronic stress, burnout, and severe deterioration of the mental health of our dispatchers, which affects the personal life of our employees who cannot maintain a work life balance and further contributes to the increasing rates of attrition within the dispatch community. Members of the NCSC have clearly heard from the dispatch community, fire managers and senior agency leadership that change is desperately needed on an interagency basis to modernize the dispatch and coordination system.

This interagency modernization effort must start at the foundational level of the dispatch community, which is the ability to recruit and fill dispatchers, particularly at the tier three local level. While fire operations can hire a firefighter at a lower general schedule level, with no prior fire experience, there is currently no mechanism in place for an individual without wildland firefighting experience to be hired into an initial attack dispatch center at the apprenticeship level.

To remedy this disparity, NCSC is seeking to form a task group to formalize a process enabling the creation of a National Dispatch Academy. This dispatch academy will lay the foundation as the primary instrument to allow apprentice level employees who lack wildland fire experience an opportunity to receive established formal training at the entry, intermediate and advanced level of the dispatch and coordination system with a path towards permanent full-time employment in the national dispatch and coordination system.

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.

For consideration to be part of this task group, GACC Center Managers should work with their interagency leadership and local dispatch center management to consolidate a list of individuals within their respective boundaries and submit a single email to NCSC Chair, Sean Peterson at speterson@blm.gov with the following information by May 15th:

- Name
- Center
- Agency
- Position and years of experience in dispatch
- Any additional relevant information

Sincerely,

SEAN
PETERSON

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PETERSON
Date: 2023.04.20 16:28:14
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Sean Peterson

Chair, NCSC