

Boise National Forest

L I G H T N I N G P L A N

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I. INTRODUCTION

Lightning is a major source of fire activity on the Boise National Forest, and multiple fire starts in the same day are common. Boise Dispatch Center (BDC) is responsible for centralized wildland fire dispatching for the Boise NF, Boise District BLM, and Southwest Area of the Idaho Department of Lands; the impact of multiple lightning caused fires can be very significant. This plan was developed to assist the Forest in managing multiple fire starts as a result of lightning storms. The total number of lightning fires that may occur from a thunderstorm event in this area can vary from 10 to over 50 new starts. Although rare, there have been storms that have ignited 50+ fires in one day on a single zone. In addition, there have been situations where one or both zones were managing several extended attack fires simultaneously with new starts.

II. LIGHTNING PLAN GOAL AND OBJECTIVES

- A. GOAL: This plan has been developed with the intent to provide a standardized procedure for managing multiple incidents that are exceeding the command and control capabilities of centralized dispatching.
- B. OBJECTIVES:
 - 1. Prioritize fire suppression actions within the urban interface to provide for public safety and protection of communities.
 - 2. Prioritize fire suppression actions to provide for protection of natural and cultural resources based on objectives within the Boise NF Fire Management Plan (FMP) and Land and Resource Management Plan (LRMP).
 - 3. Apply the appropriate management response (including WFU) for new starts within each Zone's area of responsibility.

III. PLAN DEVELOPMENT

This plan was developed to standardize the procedures used by the Boise National Forest and provide for coordination with cooperating agencies that may be affected by the activation of the Lightning Plan.

The Lightning Plan is used to manage multiple incidents as a result of lightning. It does not address large fire operations involving an Incident Management Team (IMT). A fire that exceeds the capability of local initial attack may be treated as a separate incident outside the scope of the lightning plan.

IV. ACTIVATION OF THE PLAN

Activation of the Lightning Plan will occur when several of the following conditions exists, keeping in mind there may be outside influences or local conditions that may justify plan activation.

A. GUIDELINES FOR ACTIVATION

1. Current tempo of new fire starts results in insufficient resources available to continue use of pre-planned response.
2. Additional lightning is imminently forecasted or occurring.
3. Additional off-unit resources are required, and are being staged for initial attack.

B. AUTHORITY FOR ACTIVATION

The decision to activate the Lightning Plan will be made jointly between the Zone Duty Officer, Forest Duty Officer and BDC Center Manager. Once the decision has been made to activate the Lightning Plan, BDC will notify all field units by radio broadcast that the lightning plan has been activated for the affected Zone.

V. **OPERATING PROCEDURES**

Every effort should be made to ensure that a smooth transition occurs during the shift from centralized dispatching to the Lightning Plan.

LIGHTNING PLAN

Under the Lightning Plan, command and control of the new fires will shift to one or more ICP's located throughout the Forest. The primary purpose of this shift is to provide Zone Duty Officers with direct command and control of initial attack resources and incidents on their zones. At this point, BDC will revert to support and logistical functions, and will continue to conduct aviation management such as ordering of aircraft and flight following.

The Zone Duty Officer will activate a Type 3 organization at the ICP location, filling appropriate command and general staff positions as deemed necessary. As applicable, the Zone Duty Officer may establish one or more staging areas on the zone to pre-position resources for response, as well as establish a logistical support organization. These staging areas and all tactical resources assigned to the lightning plan area will be under direct control of the Zone Duty Officer. Newly arriving resources will be required to check-in at either the Lightning Plan ICP or Helibase. In the event smokejumper or neighboring helitack modules are used, those resources are to be instructed by BDC to contact the appropriate Zone ICP.

BDC will continue to receive all new fire reports, plot their location, and assign an incident number. BDC will then inform the appropriate Zone ICP of new the fire. From that point onwards, the Zone Duty Officer will be responsible for setting priorities for appropriate management response, establishing command and control for each of the

incidents, managing tactical assignments, staffing the new incidents, and providing logistical support for on-going incidents.

The ZDO will also be required to keep BDC updated on the status and progress of fires being managed within the Lightning Plan. This update should occur at least once a day, or more often as necessary.

DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

1. Zone Duty Officer:

- a. Consult with the Forest Duty Officer and BDC Center Manager on activation of the Lightning Plan.
- b. Establish an ICP and activate a Type 3-level organization to manage the multiple fire situations. Appropriate command and general staff positions will be activated as deemed necessary.
- c. Establish command and control from the designated ICP with all on-going incidents and resources assigned to the Lightning Plan area.
- d. Set overall priorities of fires within the Lightning Plan area, and direct tactical deployment of resources from the designated Zone ICP.
- e. Ensure District Line Officers and Zone resources are informed of fire situation and activation of decentralized Lightning Plan.
- f. Order additional resources thru BDC if local resource shortage is anticipated.
- g. Order Air Attack/Detection flights, Retardant, Lead Planes, and Smokejumpers thru BDC.
- h. Organize zone resources into appropriate initial attack or extended attack organizations at the designated ICP or established staging areas as needed.
- i. Set up a logistical organization to support on-going and anticipated fires, and resources staged on the zone.
- j. Maintain incident logs for all incidents within the Zone's Lightning Plan.
- k. Ensure BDC receives daily updates on the status of fires within Lightning Plan. **It is extremely important to ensure proper documentation on all incidents.**
- l. Initiate Strategic Fire Size-Up for all new fire starts within Fire Management Unit #1 (FMU1) for evaluation as a WFU candidate.
- m. Recommend to the Forest Duty Officer and BDC Center Manager when the Lightning Plan can be deactivated.

2. INCIDENT COMMANDERS:

- a. Report fire size-up directly to Zone ICP, once on-scene.
- b. Request all tactical and logistical orders through Zone ICP.
- c. Provide real time report on conditions and fire situation updates through Zone ICP; including containment, control, and demobilization plans.
- d. Report any new fire starts to BDC.

3. BDC:

- a. Provide a dispatcher, if requested, to the Zone ICP for documentation and tracking purposes.
- b. Continue to receive initial fire reports and assign incident numbers.
- c. Continue to be the central ordering point of additional resources not currently assigned to the affected Zone.
- d. Ensure that Zone ICP is informed of new fire starts, and relay pertinent information.
- e. Coordinate all aircraft requests for Air Attack/Detection flights, Retardant, Lead Planes, and Smokejumpers.
- f. Provide flight following for all aircraft, including helicopters within the Lightning Plan area.
- g. Coordinate jointly between Forest FMO, Zone Duty Officer on activation or deactivation of Lightning Plan.
- h. Coordinate daily Mini-MAC conference calls to share information among cooperators.

4. FOREST DUTY OFFICER:

- a. Keep abreast of the complete situation and monitor organizational expansion. Serve as "Area Commander" by coordinating with the Zone ICP's to set priorities for use of critical resources national shared resources, off-unit resource ordering, and setting priorities between zones if they cannot be resolved.
- b. Oversee operations and be available for consultation from Zone Duty Officers.
- c. Ensure Forest Supervisor is informed of fire situation and activation of Lightning Plan.
- d. Coordinate with cooperators as a member of the local Mini-MAC group.
- e. Monitor Fire Use protocol and provide support as necessary. Keep Forest Fire Staff and Forest Supervisor informed.

DETECTION

1. FIXED DETECTION

Lookouts will continue to report all new fires to BDC during activation of Lightning Plan.

- a. All fire reports will be reported by azimuth, approximate distance, legal location, and geographical landmark. Size-up should also be included. BDC will be responsible to determine if the reported smoke is within the Zone's Lightning Plan area, and issue the appropriate agency specific Incident Number.
- b. If the fire report is on the boundary between two cooperating protection agencies, the center section of the estimated legal location will be used to

determine which protection agency has responsibility to take initial action. Once an on-scene Lat/Long is obtained and verified, the appropriate agency can assume responsibility for the incident.

- c. If the fire report is within an adjoining cooperator's protection jurisdiction that has not activated the Lightning Plan, normal centralized dispatching protocol by BDC will apply for that new incident.
- d. If a Lookout observes a new fire start outside of BDC's dispatch area, BDC will relay the fire report to the responsible agency. If the fire report is close to the BDC boundary, they will inform both agencies.

2. AERIAL DETECTION

Aerial reconnaissance should be assigned whenever there is lightning activity, and will be used in conjunction with fixed detection, suppression, and air tanker operations.

- a. New fires detected by aerial reconnaissance will be reported to BDC even during Lightning Plan activation. In the early stages of a lightning event, aircraft should check with Lookouts in the area where they may be seeing a "new smoke", before reporting it to BDC. The Look-out may have already turned the smoke in, and this may avoid getting "duplicate" reports.
- b. Zone ICP's may request Air Attack to work directly with Incident Commanders or to coordinate helicopters and air tankers.
- c. BDC will advise aircraft of areas to conduct aerial reconnaissance after checking with Zone ICP's or lookouts for areas of high lightning activity.
- d. Requests for additional aerial reconnaissance aircraft or air tactical attack should be ordered through BDC.

3. BOISE DISPATCH CENTER

Upon detection, all new fires will be plotted and assigned to the appropriate protection agency. The agency specific incident number will be assigned and forwarded onto the appropriate Zone ICP when Lightning Plan is activated.

Communications

An area-wide communications frequency plan has been developed between the Boise NF, Boise BLM, and Southwest IDL. Specifically, Group 11 has been developed for the North Zone, Group 12 for the South Zone, and Group 14 for IDL.

Initial Attack modules should use their normally assigned agency frequencies during all tactical operations. Off-unit resources should be provided with a copy of the Boise NF frequency plan by the Zone ICP's, and instructed in use.

After a lightning event has occurred in which numerous starts are detected, communications can become very challenging. There are a few procedures that may help to mitigate the main Forest/Zone frequency from becoming too congested:

- Aircraft should use the flight following frequency for routine contact with BDC, though coverage on this frequency is sketchy in a few areas, but should at least help to alleviate extra congestion on the primary repeater channels. In an emergency, or if no other option works, dispatch can be contacted on Air Guard.
- If there are multiple fires being staffed, IAIC's or the Zone ICP should designate separate tactical frequencies for fires within the same drainage.

Alternate Air to Ground frequencies can be designated also if one is not serving the needs. Either one of the existing tactical frequencies can be used, or another A/G can be requested through BDC.

VI. ESCAPED FIRE

If one or more fires contained within the Zone Lightning Plan expands beyond local extended attack capabilities (ie exceeds complexity and/or span of control of the Zone's Type 3 organization), the Zone Duty Officer may have that incident removed from the Lightning Plan with concurrence of the Forest Duty Officer and BDC Center Manager. A separate fire organization under one of the local area's Type 3 Teams, or a Type 2 or 1 IMT will be mobilized depending on the outcome of the complexity analysis under normal procedures outlined in the Interagency Standards for Fire and Aviation Operations (Redbook).

VII. WILDLAND FIRE USE

As required by FSM 5130 policy, all wildland fire ignitions within an area approved for Wildland Fire Use (WFU) will undergo a Strategic Fire Size-up to determine the appropriate management response. The Boise NF has identified Fire Management Unit #1 (FMU1) as an approved area for WFU provided that certain implementation criteria are met. The WFU standard operating procedures and implementation criteria are contained within the Boise NF WFU Protocol, and will be adhered to even if the affected zone has activated the Lightning Plan.

If the result of the Strategic Fire Size-up recommends further evaluation of the new fire as a potential WFU candidate, the Zone Duty Officer, or designee, will follow Boise NF WFU Protocol and proceed with the Decision Criteria Checklist with Line Officer involvement. The recommendation to further evaluate a candidate fire for WFU can

only be made by a District Ranger, and a WFIP can only be approved at the Supervisor Office level.

References: Boise NF WFU Protocol (FMP Appendix S-2), and the Boise NF WFU Implementation Reference Guide (FMP Appendix E-2).

VIII. LIGHTNING PLAN DEACTIVATION

In deactivating the Lightning Plan, command and control of initial attack will revert back to BDC, and all centralized dispatching operating plans as described in the Area Dispatch Plan will resume.

Prior to deactivation of the Lightning Plan the following guidelines should be met:

1. All fires under Lightning Pan will have had appropriate management response taken (contain/control, confine, or WFU).
2. Sufficient IA resources will be in place and available for a return to centralized dispatching using pre-planned response.
3. The decision to deactivate the Lightning Plan will be made jointly between the Zone Duty Officer, Forest Duty Officer, and BDC Center Manager.
4. Any out of area resources should be considered for release.
5. BDC will announce over the radio that the Zone has gone out of the Lightning Plan, and to resume centralized dispatching.