

ANNEX C

WILDFIRE OPERATIONS

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Wildfire Operations Annex to the City of North Port Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan identifies the actions that may be taken by the Florida Forest Service and those State and local agencies in support of the Forest Service in preparing for, responding to, and recovering from wildfire event(s). This Annex addresses the role of State and local government in providing the necessary support to the Florida Forest Service in its statutory responsibilities in responding to, controlling and suppressing wildfires. The City of North Port Fire Rescue, in cooperation with the Forest Service, will update and coordinate the plans with other response and support agencies.

The Annex is a living document; being reviewed and updated after a major wild land fire event or annually. It is presently divided into four (4) Chapters as follows:

- I. **Introduction:** Provides a discussion of the purpose and planning assumptions used to prepare the annex.
- II. **Response Organization:** Identifies the various levels of support that may be provided through a Unified Command structure. It describes the circumstances under which the various agencies will unify under a single command structure in responding to, controlling and suppressing wildfires and the responsibilities of the Unified Command components (agencies). This Chapter also addresses the delegation of authority during a wildfire event.
- III. **Responsibilities:** Identifies the response organizations, and their roles and responsibilities specific to wildfire operations.
- IV. **Method of Operation:** Presents the key guidelines that will be used to make key decisions during the event. Based on joint considerations discussed and determined by the City's liaison agencies of the Unified Command (Forest Service, North Port Fire Rescue), guidelines for the three levels of activation (Monitoring, Partial, and Full) for the City of North Port Emergency Operations Center during a wildfire event have been developed. This Chapter also addresses medical unit activation, air operations, logistical support, and resources.
- IV. **Public Information and Information Flow:** Discusses the notification process for active wildfires to the public, and State Warning Point, and the coordination of situation reports and incident action plans.

I. INTRODUCTION

A. General

This Annex identifies the actions that may be taken by the Florida Forest Service and those State and local agencies in support of the Forest Service in preparing for, responding to, and recovering from wildfire event(s). This Annex addresses the role of State and local government in providing the necessary support to the Florida Forest Service in its statutory responsibilities in responding to, controlling and suppressing wildfires.

B. Scope and Purpose

This Annex covers all wildfires to which the City of North Port that the Forest Service respond. The purpose of the response is to contain, control and extinguish the wildfire.

C. Planning Assumptions

1. The Forest Service is statutorily responsible for wildfire prevention, detection, and suppression on 26,000,000 acres in Florida.
2. The United States Forest Service and the Department of Interior are responsible for wildfire suppression on their respective Federal lands throughout the State.
3. Each year, lightning fires that are associated with Florida's thunderstorm season (April through September) can create tremendous wildfire activity when associated with the State's dry Spring conditions.
4. Nationwide, from 2000 through 2016, an average of 73,303 wildfires occurred per year, burning an average of 114,323,903 acres¹.
5. In Florida, the Deceiving Wildfire burned 173,000 acres in 1999 – which represented the most significant wildfire from 1981 to 2008². However, the most intense fire season on record occurred in 1998 due to the escalating wildland/urban interface in the State.
6. The President of the United States is authorized to aid, including grants, equipment, supplies, and personnel, to any State for the suppression of

¹ https://www.nifc.gov/fireInfo/fireInfo_stats_totalFires.html

² <http://www.freshfromflorida.com/Divisions-Offices/Florida-Forest-Service/Wildland-Fire/Significant-Wildfires-in-Florida-1981-2008>

any fire on publicly or privately-owned forest or grassland, which threatens such destruction as would constitute a major disaster.

II. RESPONSE ORGANIZATION

A. General

This Chapter of the Annex describes the organization to be used to coordinate the City of North Port's agencies support of the Forest Service's response during wildfire events. It describes the Unified Command structure the various agencies will work under to control and suppress wildfires. Also, it addresses the circumstances under which the unified structure will support Forestry in its response to wildfires. The Unified Command structure will be the process used to manage serious wildfire events.

B. Response Organization

1. Local

The Incident Management Team (IMT) comprised of locally-trained State and local firefighters will be used to manage fire-fighting operation when two mutual aid departments and Forest Service assets are engaged in a wildland fire-fighting operation. The Incident Management Team will request activation of the City and County Emergency Operations Center and/or State's response system when the wildland fire is expected to exceed local firefighting capabilities.

2. State

The Unified Command is established as conditions warrant based on a joint decision by the State Forester and the Forest Supervisor of the National Forest in Florida and/or a representative of the Department of the Interior. Unified Command is organized like a State Multi-Agency Coordination (MAC) group, but with the important difference being that the Unified State Command also retains operational command of resources as well as provides logistical coordination. The Unified Command is set up so that an Incident Commander is provided from the primary jurisdictional agencies on which the wildfires are occurring. Unified Commanders will include the Florida Forest Service and either the USDA Forest Service, National Park Service, the United States Fish and Wildlife Service, or the Bureau of Indian Affairs.

In addition to the Incident Commanders and jurisdictional agency liaisons, the Command Staff will also include liaisons from several key support

agencies. These support agencies include the Division of Emergency Management, Division of State Fire Marshal, Florida Fire Chief's Association; Florida National Guard, and if involved, the Federal Emergency Management Agency.

III. RESPONSIBILITIES

A. City of North Port Fire Rescue and Emergency Management

1. Conduct wildland firefighting operations.
2. Operate and manage the City EOC.
3. Monitor the operation to request the City Commissioners issue a Local State of Emergency and issue warnings to the affected communities as the situation warrants.
4. Transmit resource requests to the Sarasota County EOC.

B. Sarasota County Emergency Management

1. Support wildland firefighting operations with logistical support.
2. Enter resource requests to the State Emergency Operations Center.
3. Monitor the operation to request the Board of County Commissioners issue a Local Declaration of Emergency and issue warnings to the affected communities as the situation warrants.
4. Activate the Emergency Alerting System to facilitate area evacuation(s).
5. Activate sheltering/cooling operations for those evacuated.

C. Florida Forest Service, Myakka District

The FFS Myakka District manager, or designated representative, will activate the Incident Management Team when the situation warrants.

D. Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Service, Forest Service

The Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, Forest Service has statutory responsibility for the suppression of wildland fires in the State of Florida. The Forest Service has the lead role in determining when a State Unified Command will be established. In consultation with other State and Federal partners, the

Forest Service will appoint one member of their organization and at least one alternate to serve as State Incident Commander. The Incident Commander will determine the scope and structure of the Unified Command for the wildland(s) burning in the State.

E. Florida Division of Emergency Management

The Florida Division of Emergency Management has statutory responsibility for coordinating State and local support to the Forest Service in the response and recovery from wildland fires. A liaison will be appointed to coordinate the Division's Support Role. Various support elements will be initiated as requested by the Incident Commander.

F. Florida Fire Chiefs' Association

The Florida Fire Chiefs' Association provides the Forest Service logistical support through the services of fire departments throughout the State. This support effort will be initiated per the Florida Fire Chiefs' Association State Emergency Response Plan (SERP) that is activated by request for Emergency Support Function 4, Firefighting.

G. Florida Division of State Fire Marshal

The State Fire Marshal appoints an Emergency Coordination Officer for Emergency Support Function 4, Firefighting. Emergency Support Function 4 is responsible for logistical request from State and local governments for firefighting and EMS resources. These resources are then dispatched per the requirements of the Florida Fire Chiefs' Association State Emergency Response Plan.

IV. METHOD OF OPERATION

A. General

This section of the Annex presents key guidelines that can be used to make key decisions during the event. These decisions will be based on experience, the best evaluation of the current situation, and the forecast for the near future. All wildfire responses will use the National Incident Management System (NIMS) as the emergency response organizational management structure.

Based on joint considerations discussed and determined by the liaison agencies of the Unified Command (Forest Service, and the Fire Chief(s) of the affected area(s)), guidelines for the three levels of activation (Monitoring, Partial, and Full) for the City of North Port Emergency Operations Center during a wildfire event will be

developed. When the EOC is activated in support of the Wildfire Response it will act as a Multi-Agency Coordination Center in support of the Unified Command.

B. Levels of Activation

1. Level III, Monitoring Phase

When two mutual-aid departments and Forest Service or one Strike Team is called out, the City of North Port Fire Rescue may deploy a liaison to the scene upon request of the Incident Commander. The City of North Port Fire Rescue will maintain a liaison with the Incident Management Team at the point when the Multi-Agency Coordination Vehicle Post is deployed. When wildland fire-fighting activities increase whereby greater logistical support is anticipated and the State's Incident Management Team is not in place, the City and/or County Emergency Operations Center will be activated to support all logistics operations. The Emergency Management liaison will remain in contact with the Forest Service and the Emergency Operations Center, unless a firefighter liaison is deployed to the EOC.

2. Level II, Partial Activation

The City and/or County Emergency Operations Center may be activated to a Level II based on a variety of considerations.

a. When appropriate, the City Manager and the Emergency Manager will request a Local State of Emergency from the City Commissioners based on the following factors:

- i. When the wildland fire is out of control and threatening a community.
- ii. When the Emergency Management Director or the IMT requests additional powers to speed the logistical support effort.
- iii. When community evacuations may be required.

3. Level I, Full Activation

a. The Emergency Manager, in consultation with the City Manager, will make the decision when to activate the City Emergency Operations Center to a Level I. The following factors may be used in the decision-making process:

- i. When a response to a wildfire event requires the resource and/or logistical support from most the City's Emergency Support Functions.
 - ii. When a wildfire event necessitates evacuations that require resource support from neighboring counties.
- b. The City of North Port Liaison to the County Emergency Operations Center

Once the County Emergency Operations Center has gone to Level I, the City of North Port Fire Rescue will liaison between the City and the County Emergency Operations Center, and provide information coordination for the County Emergency Support Functions.

C. Medical Unit

A medical unit may be activated when an Incident Management Team is put in place to coordinate large numbers of firefighters or emergency personnel. If the Incident Management Team requests a Medical Unit, the request will go through the County Emergency Operations Center.

D. Air Operations

When the Forest Service and the United States Department of Agriculture, Forest Service, under increased wildfire activity, establish Unified Air Operations for statewide wildfire aviation coordination, the Unified Air Operations will establish an Air Operations Plan that will coordinate all aircraft associated with fire operations or flying within wildland fire aviation air space. Within Sarasota County, the Myakka District Forestry manager, or designated representative, oversees the local air space around the wildland fire. This includes:

- Forestry Aircraft
- Fire agency aircraft
- Law Enforcement aircraft
- Military aircraft
- Contractor aircraft
- Media aircraft

E. Resources

The Forest Service and North Port Fire Rescue will be responsible for command and control of all operational elements of the wildfire response to include

resource ordering for wildfire incidents. The City and County EOCs will support the wildland fire-fighting operations by managing and coordinating any non-wildfire resource ordering through the Emergency Support Functions and the State Emergency Operations Center. The Incident Commander will order fire-fighting resources through local dispatch.

F. Logistical Support

Separate processes exist for the ordering of resources and other logistical support for the wildfire events and the Incident Management Teams commanding the suppression of wildfires. In addition, the linkage needed between these resources and logistical ordering processes to provide the correct resource, to ensure that it is provided in a timely manner, and that they are provided cost-effectively.

The primary method in which resources and logistical support is ordered for wildfire events include:

1. The Logistics Section of the City and County Emergency Operations Centers.
2. The Florida Fire Chiefs' Association State Emergency Response Plan (SERP) in support of the Division of State Fire Marshal as the Lead Agency for Emergency Support Function 4 (Firefighting), 8 (Health and Medical), 9 (Search & Rescue) and 10 (Hazardous Materials).
3. Florida Forest Service.

V. PUBLIC INFORMATION AND INFORMATION FLOW

A. General

This Chapter provides how information will be shared during a wildfire event. During a wildfire event a Joint Information Center (JIC) will be established at the scene comprised of representatives of the City of North Port and the Florida Forest Service. During the activation of the City Emergency Operations Center, the EOC representative to the JIC will establish a mechanism that efficiently provides and disseminates information to the public. The EOC's lead Public Information Officer will facilitate the logistical support and orientation for all Public Information Officers working in the City Emergency Operations Center.

B. Unified Public Information

When the City Emergency Operations Center is activated (Level II or I), City, County and State agencies will provide experienced Public Information Officers or provide

access to Public Information Officers to respond to information requests of that agency. In the initial stages of an Incident Management Team Information Flow, a plan will be developed. During Level II Activation, the additional Public Information Officers may include:

- The Florida Division of Emergency Management
- The Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, Florida Forest Service

During Level I Activation, staffing may increase based on the needs of the response and may include the Federal Emergency Management Agency, the Florida National Guard, and others as warranted. Each agency will become part of the Unified Public Information.

C. Information Flow

1. Fire Activity

- a. The Forest Service, Myakka District will notify the State Watch Office of any significant fires that develop.
- b. The City of North Port Fire Rescue will notify the County Emergency Management liaison or Emergency Operations Center of any significant fires that develop.
- c. The criteria for significant fires includes:
 - i. Wildfires that threaten structures, or where structures are lost.
 - ii. That forces or has the potential to force evacuations of citizens.
 - iii. Wildfires that cause the injury or death.
 - iv. Wildfires that create significant smoke problems that may cause road closures to major thoroughfares.
 - v. Large significant wildfires that require movement of out of district forestry resources.

2. Situation Report Information
 - a. The Forest Service will continue to produce a daily wildfire summary, which is available at their website <http://www.freshfromflorida.com/Divisions-Offices/Florida-Forest-Service/Wildland-Fire/Current-Fire-Conditions>.
 - b. The City's PIO will extract pertinent information from that scene and liaison officers for its situation reports, which will be completed and transmitted to the County Emergency Operations Center.
3. Public Reporting
 - a. Information may be shared with the public in several ways:
 - i. City of North Port's Community Notification System.
 - ii. City's Web Site for local fire conditions and the social media sites Twitter and Facebook.
 - iii. Local government access Comcast channel 19 or Verizon FIOS channel 32.
 - iv. Variable message boards positioned at strategic locations.
 - v. CodeRED emergency notification system

VI. AUTHORTIES AND REFERENCES

The authority for the development, implementation and maintenance of this Annex and all compatible county/municipal plans in support of the Florida Forest Service and Division of Emergency Management in its statutory responsibilities in responding to, controlling and suppressing wildfires is derived from Chapter 252.38(1)(a) of the Florida Statutes.

This Annex further serves as the fundamental governing policy as prescribed for the Forest Service under Chapter 590 of the Florida Statutes.

The Federal Emergency Management Agency policy on requesting Fire Suppression Assistance is contained within 44 CFR Part 206, Subpart L.

The Federal Emergency Management Agency's Interim Policy on Fire Suppression Assistance, April 1999.

Statewide Mutual Aid Agreement between the City and State, and the State Emergency Response Plan with the Florida Fire Chief's Association.

VII. ACRONYMS

EOC	Emergency Operations Center
FDEM	Florida Division of Emergency Management
FEMA	Federal Emergency Management Agency
FFCA	Florida Fire Chiefs' Association
FFS	Florida Forest Service
IMT	Incident Management Team
ICS	Incident Command System
KBDI	Keetch-Byram Drought Index
MAC	Multi-Agency Coordination
NIMS	National Incident Management System
PIO	Public Information Officer
SCO	State Coordinating Officer
SEOC	State Emergency Operations Center
SERP	State Emergency Response Plan
USDA	United States Department of Agriculture