



Government of Northwest Territories  
Gouvernement des Territoires du Nord-Ouest

Environment & Climate Change  
Forest Management Division

# Agency Briefing Manual 2024

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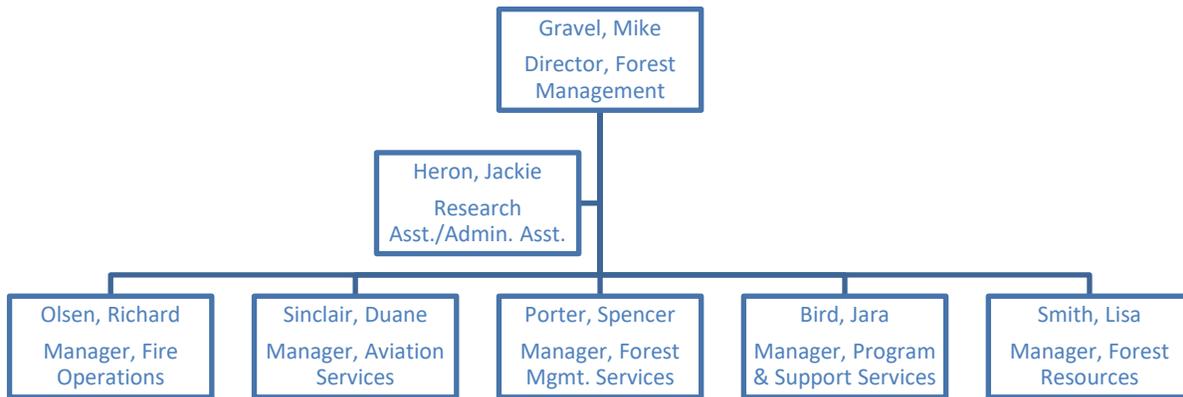
# 1. Introduction and Orientation

Welcome to the Northwest Territories. The Northwest Territories (NT) is a land of contrasts. It is 1.18 million square kilometers of mountains, forests and tundra threaded by wild, clean rivers feeding thousands of pristine lakes. Over 40,000 people live amid this rugged natural beauty.

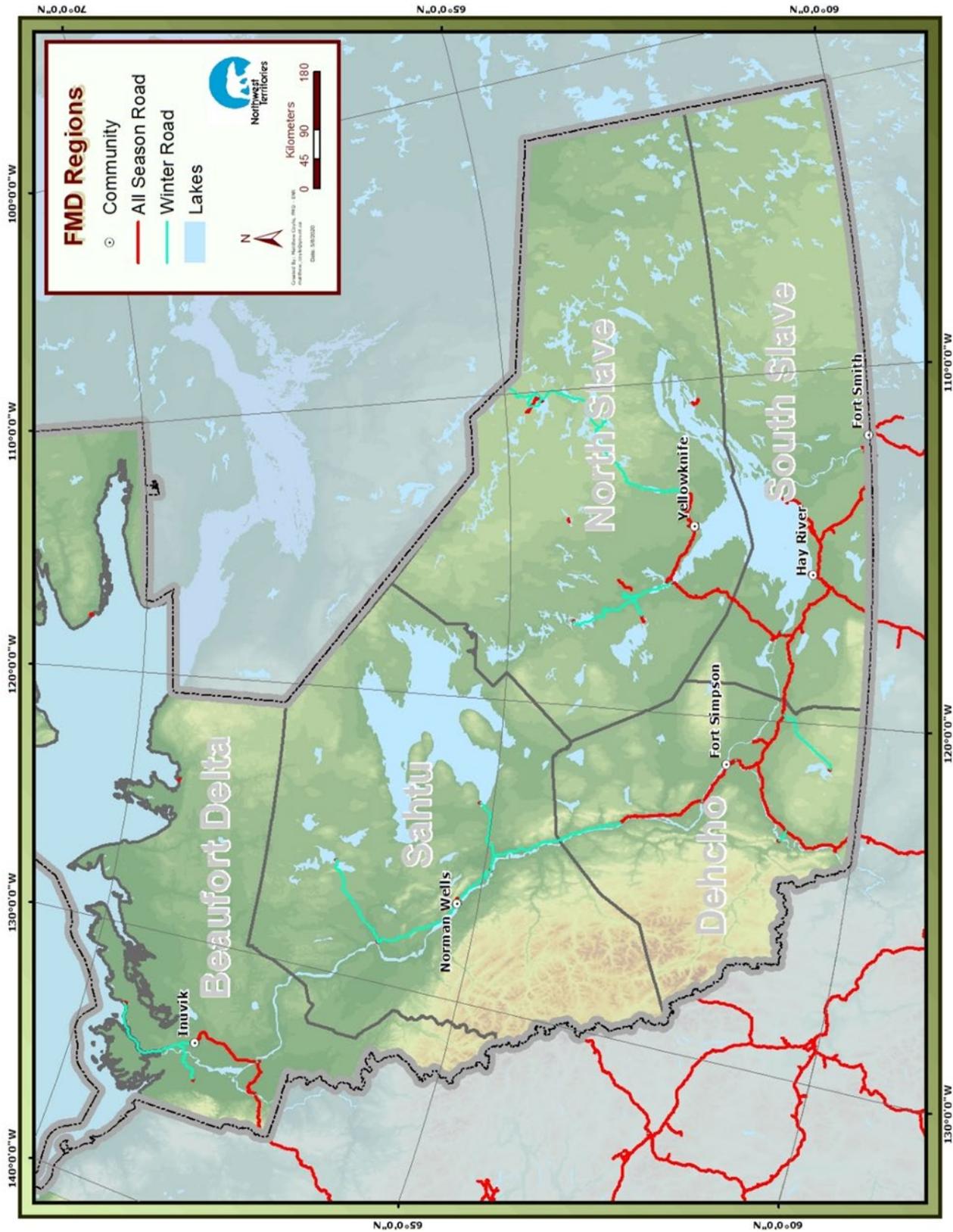
## 1.1 Mission, Mandate, and Responsibilities

The Department of Environment and Climate Change (ECC) is responsible for the management of forest and wildlife resources and environmental protection in the NT.

The responsibility of all activities related to forest and wildfire management is coordinated through the Director, Forest Management Division. The Division provides protection for communities and renewable resources through an effective forest management program, helps to prevent people-caused wildfire through public education, aids in reduction of fire hazard and enforcement and provides wildfire management services as requested to other departments. Division activities include wildfire detection, wildfire prevention, wildfire pre-suppression, wildfire suppression and prescribed burning.



1.2 Boundaries



### 1.3 Topography

The NT is a land of rugged diversity. The climate is generally considered to be semi-arid so there is not a lot of rainfall during the summer. The eastern half of the NT right up to and including parts of the tree line is characteristically Canadian Shield. Vegetation on this range includes Spruce-Lichen woodlands (C-1) and Jack pine (C-3), which occurs north into the Sahtu region. Soils are shallow and fine fuels are abundant in these areas. Fire behaviour in these areas is extremely weather dependent.

### 1.4 Climate and Weather

Temperatures can be extremely variable in the NT and can go from extremes of 35°C in the afternoon to 5° C by midnight in July. In some areas it can snow during any month of the year so bringing a lined jacket is recommended. Although the climate is semi-arid, heavy downpours occur frequently, so rain gear is also recommended. With cooler temperatures and the possibility of hypothermia, crews do not generally work on the line on rainy days.

### 1.5 Forest and Fuel Typing

The central portion of the NT, along the Mackenzie Valley and the western portions of the Great Slave Lake are the Taiga Plains. Here fuel types are typically diverse but mainly Boreal Spruce (C-2), Mixed-wood (M-1, M-2), Deciduous (D-1), Grasslands (0-1a, 01b) and lesser degrees of other species. Duff layers can be extremely deep in some areas with continuous and discontinuous permafrost prevalent throughout. Fire behaviour can be extremely variable and is both daily weather dependent and drought dependent. The western portion of the NT, the Mackenzie Mountain area, consists mainly of alpine species. Fires are generally monitored in this area and any kind of fire action is usually related to value-at-risk protection.

### 1.6 Statistics

- The landmass of the NT is approximately 1,183,085 square kilometres (km<sup>2</sup>) of which 80 million hectares are forested.
- As of January 1, 2020, there were 44,904\* people in the Northwest Territories. Approximately half the population is Aboriginal (Chipewyan, Slavey, Gwich'in, Inuvialuit, Tłı̨chǫ, Cree, or Métis).
- The Mackenzie River is Canada's longest river, which flows 4,241 kilometres through the Northwest Territories. Its drainage system covers one-fifth of Canada.
- The Great Bear Lake of the NT is the third largest lake in Canada at 31,153 km<sup>2</sup>. The fourth largest and deepest lake in Canada is the Great Slave Lake at 614 metres deep and 28,568 km<sup>2</sup> in size. They are also the eighth and tenth largest lakes in the world, respectively.
- There are 33 local governments in the NT (1 city, 4 towns, 1 village, 11 hamlets, 9

designated authorities, 2 charter communities and 5 self-government communities) of which 29 are within the forested area and 4 communities are outside of the forested area (Tuktoyaktuk, Paulatuk, Sachs Harbour and Holman). Yellowknife is the capital of the NT with a population of 21,183\*.

- The NT has 11 official languages: Cree, Chipewyan, Tłıchǫ, Gwich'in, North Slavey, South Slavey, Inuvialuktun, Inuinnaqtun, Inuktitut, English and French.
- The official bird of the NT is the gyrfalcon (*Falco rusticolus*), the official tree of the NT is the tamarack (*Larix laricina*), the official flower is the Mountain Aven (*Dryas octopetala*), the official fish of the NT is the Arctic Grayling (*Thymallus arcticus*), and the official gemstone is the diamond.

\* NT Bureau of Statistics – 2020

## 2. Fire Management System

### 2.1 Incident Command Personnel Briefing

The MARS, Canada/US or Northwest Compact agreements cover your assignment to the NT. A briefing of all personnel from out of Territory will be first carried out from a Forest Management Division (FMD) Liaison Officer or member of the Fire Operations staff. The personnel will then be assigned accordingly, and the reporting responsibility will be delegated to the Regional level.

### 2.2 Line of Authority

All Territorial forest fire activity is coordinated, controlled, and audited through the Director, Forest Management Division in Fort Smith. Presently, the NT consists of 5 administrative Regions: South Slave, Dehcho, North Slave, Sahtu and Beaufort Delta Regions. Although each region may have a field office in each community, all forest fire activity is coordinated within a Region through a Regional office and the Regional Duty Officer. The Regional office is Fort Smith in the South Slave, Fort Simpson in the Dehcho, Yellowknife in the North Slave, Norman Wells in the Sahtu and Inuvik in the Beaufort Delta region. In every region, all fire response is coordinated through a Regional Duty Officer.



### 2.3 Agreements

While in the NT all lending agency employee agreements will continue to cover your personnel. Environment and Climate Change (ECC) will honour all conditions of work and work within the requirements of the lending agency (e.g. the number of hours of work for firefighters from the NT will be limited to 12 hours per day except in emergency circumstances). The lending agency’s safety policies will also apply in the NT. If a given instruction contradicts your safety policies, please let us know. (Ex. NT firefighters are not to assist in the fueling of helicopters). Overall, the highest safety standard will apply.

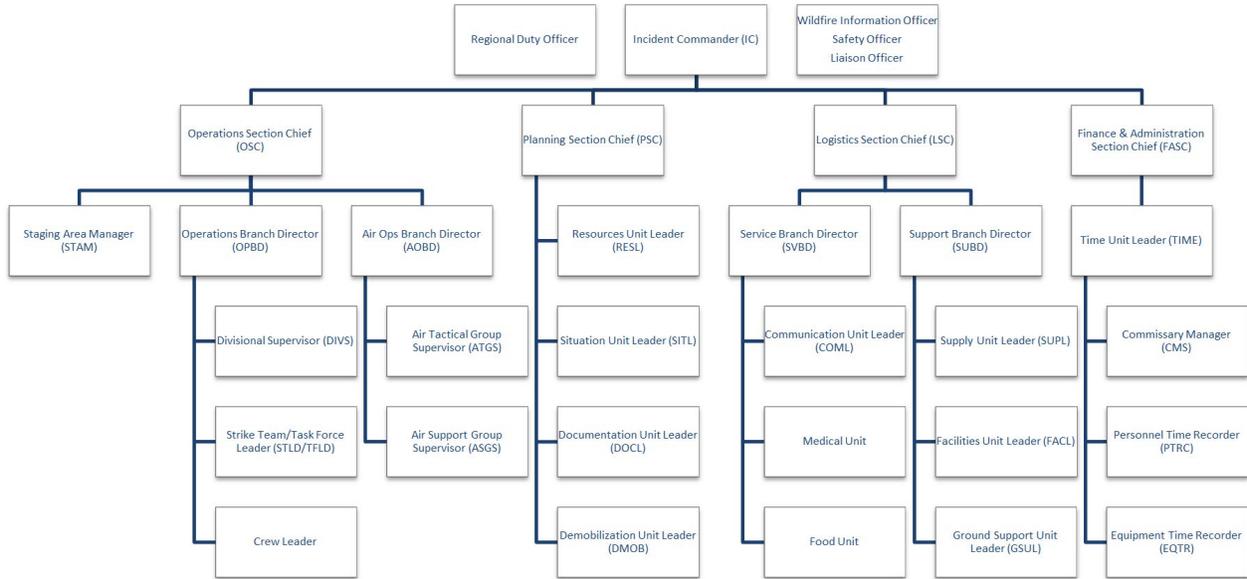
### 2.4 Tour of Duty

The tour of duty for out-of-province personnel is established according to CIFFC guidelines. Personnel can be mobilized for a 19-day duration, which includes a 14-day assignment duration. The first full day of the assignment duration is defined as the first full day in the NT. Assignment duration will not exceed 14 days without Lending Agency approval.

**Your safety and the safety of others is our number one priority!**

### 3. Resources

#### 3.1 The Incident Command System



There is a dynamic Incident Management Team (IMT) roster system in the NT to deal with more serious fire incidents or fire incidents that have exceeded the capacity of regional resources.

#### 3.2 Type I & Type II Firefighters

Each Initial Attack fire crew is trained to Type I or II Territorial standards. Under the supervision of the crew leader, the crew members must be fully capable in understanding and demonstrating basic fire behaviour knowledge, fire management tactics, fire line equipment, fire line organization, communications, air operations and orienteering. Crew members must be fully aware of occupational health & safety issues in fighting wildfires as well as meet basic physical fitness standards.

During periods of Low to Moderate Forest Fire hazards, fire crews are kept busy with several tasks including equipment refurbishing, fire base improvement, and project work (from construction to hazard abatement).

During periods of High to Extreme Forest Fire Hazards, fire fighters are expected to be ready for immediate dispatch. In situations like this, fire equipment is pre-loaded in aircraft or other vehicles. When fire crews are deployed to a fire, they are expected to be self-sufficient for a 24-hour period.

There are three general suppression functions carried out by fire crews:

**Initial Attack:** The action taken to halt the spread or potential spread of a fire by the first fire fighting forces to arrive at the fire.

- Sustained Attack: Action taken on a fire that has not been contained or controlled by the initial attack forces.
- Mop-up: The act of extinguishing a fire after it has been brought under control.

In the NT, crews are also trained at value-at-risk protection, which may encompass sprinkler deployment, handline construction and backburning or burnout tactics. In the NT, firefighters are between the ages of eighteen (18) and sixty (60). It is not uncommon to meet fire crews with members with twenty seasons experience or more. Firefighting, for many of the fire crews suits traditional lifestyles in the North and many personnel use this employment opportunity to pursue other winter activities.

To supplement required manpower for fire incidents, ECC utilizes Type III firefighters (Extra Fire Fighters). Each Region trains and certifies large numbers of Extra Fire Fighters (EFF's) annually. Certification for Type III firefighters lasts two years at which time re-training must be engaged. Type III firefighters are utilized in sustained action or mop-up roles. EFF's can also be hired for all positions within an IMT.

### 3.3 Fire Crews

The Department of Environment and Climate Change has fire crews in almost every community in the NT. ECC employs 34 Initial Attack fire crews, 21 of these crews are contracted through First Nations and or Métis Organizations, and 13 crews are departmental employees. Each fire crew is formed of 4 people: 1 crew leader and 3 crew members.

Region	# of Crews
South Slave	10
Dehcho	7
North Slave	10
Sahtu	4
Beaufort Delta	3

### 3.4 Contract Aircraft

#### 3.4.1 Tankers

The NT employs five (5) air tanker groups:

Group 1: (4) AT802A FireBoss and (1) King Air Birddog Aircraft (Fort Smith)

Group 2: (4) AT802A FireBoss and (1) King Air Birddog Aircraft (Yellowknife)

Group 3: (1) L-188 Electra and (1) Turbo Commander Birddog Aircraft (Hay River)

Group 4: (1) L-188 Electra and (1) Turbo Commander Birddog Aircraft (Hay River)

Group 5: (2) Canadair CL-215 and (1) King Air Birddog Aircraft (Yellowknife)

Air tankers are located strategically for Initial Attack or on-going operational support through the Territorial Duty Officer.

### **3.4.2 Helicopters**

The NT contracts 5 intermediate helicopters on a seasonal basis. These numbers are supplemented with casual or short-term hire for predicted multi-incident or fires that have escaped Initial Attack. There are two (2) contract helicopters in the South Slave, one (1) in the Dehcho, one (1) in the North Slave, and one (1) in the Sahtu.

## 4. Suppression

### 4.1 Fire Operations

#### 4.1.1 Fire Numbering System

Fires are numbered in the order that they occur in sequence and according to location.

North Slave Region.....ZF

Sahtu Region.....VQ

Beaufort Delta Region.....EV

Dehcho Region.....FS

South Slave Region.....SS

For example, ZF050 would be the 50th fire to occur in the current fire season in the North Slave Region (ZF).

#### 4.1.2 Incident Classification

The NT utilizes a Wildfire Situation Analysis (WSA) as a planning and decision-making tool on all responses that have gone beyond the 24-hour Initial Attack phase. The Wildfire Situation Analysis considers the following:

- Fire Chronicle
  - Fire Weather
  - Fire Behaviour
- Values at Risk
- Land and Resource Management Objectives
- Availability of Resources
- Recommended Strategy to deal with Fire
- Estimated Costs
- Consultation Plan

A Fire Response Plan (FRP) sets the strategy and tactics of suppressing a wildfire. It includes details of initial resources required and the time expectation of fire suppression activities. The Incident Action Plan (IAP) is created from the information included within the WSA and the FRP.

When describing the stage of control of a fire, the following descriptions are used in the NT: Out of Control (OC), Being Held (BH), Under Control (UC) and Declared Out (DO).

- OC Describes a wildfire not responding or only responding on a limited basis to suppression action such that perimeter spread is not being contained.
- BH Indicates that with currently committed resources, sufficient suppression action has been taken that the fire is not likely to spread beyond existent or predetermined boundaries under prevailing and forecasted conditions.
- UC The fire has received sufficient suppression action to ensure no further spread.
- DO The fire has been completely extinguished.

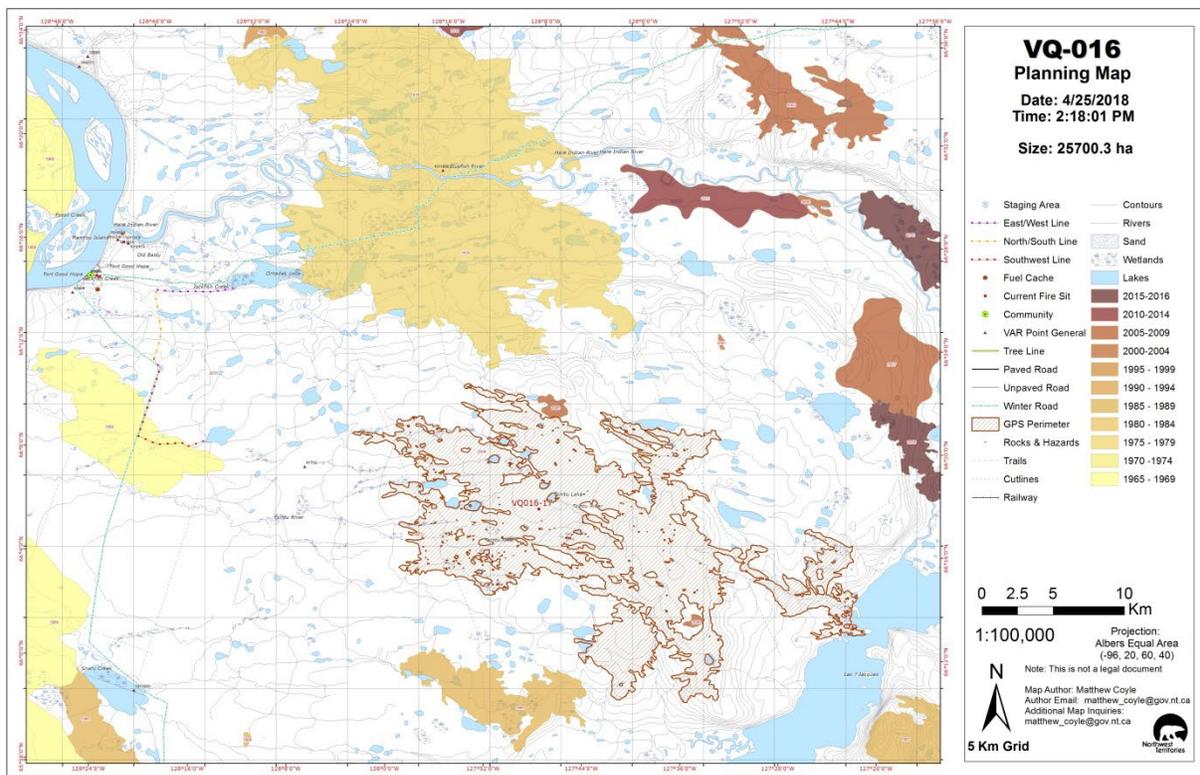
#### 4.1.3 Response

Initial attack is the action taken by the first firefighting resource to arrive at an incident to halt the potential spread of a fire.

#### 4.1.4 Mapping

The primary geographic coordinate system used in the NT is Latitude and Longitude in the Decimal Minute format (ex. 60<sup>0</sup> 45.35, -112<sup>0</sup> 01.40). Ensure your GPS units are set to use Map Spheroid WGS 84, Map Datum WGS 84 and position format hddd<sup>0</sup>mm.mmm'. Provide GPS data to a mapper as either a projected .shp file or as a .gpx file.

Fire maps will be produced on an as needed basis and their production will be coordinated through the Regional Duty Officer (RDO). The procedure to follow is for the Incident Commander or Planning Section Chief to contact the RDO to request that maps be made. The RDO will request that the TDO engage the Geomatics Analyst for maps during regular work hours or the on-call mapper during off hours. Operational requirements of the IMT may require a shift in reporting procedures to facilitate ease of operations. In this case, a mapper may be assigned to an incident. Please see the following image for an example of the fire maps produce.



#### 4.1.5 Communication, Frequencies, and Procedures

The Department of Environment and Climate Change communication system consists of a series of towers and repeater through which communications are relayed to Regional offices and local bases. You will be issued with one ECC handheld radio (Kenwood FM radios) and an operational briefing at the beginning of your assignment. In those cases where communications on some fires may not be adequate because of terrain or remoteness, a Satellite phone may be provided for safety purposes or at minimum - a daily schedule for communication. A Communications Directory will be assigned when you receive your initial briefing.

Pilots on an Environment and Climate Change flight/note plan will continuously monitor designated radio frequencies and **must** report their position every thirty (30) minutes while in-flight.

**It is the responsibility of the pilot to establish and maintain a proper flight with the dispatch center to which the aircraft has been assigned.**

When helicopters are assigned to a Region, assigned to, or working on a fire, the Regional radio will remain open and have a competent operator on duty until the aircraft have landed and ceased operation for the day. The exception to this rule is through prior mutual agreement with the Regional office and the pilot. Then, flight following may be transferred from one station to another:

- Region to Region
- Region to Fire (if aircraft terminates day at fire)

➤ Region to Transport Canada Flight Services Station

The transferring station will ensure that the new flight watch transfer is established before closing operations, and, that the pilot is aware of the transfer and in agreement.

It is the Department's policy that loss of radio communications in any contracted or chartered aircraft constitutes an unserviceable aircraft and is to be removed from services until the situation is rectified. (Radio communications means an air-to-air capability, VHF-AM, and VHF-FM air-to-ground capability).

#### 4.1.6 Air Traffic Control over Fires

The area over and surrounding a fire is a restricted air space, under Canadian Aviation Regulation 601.15. This airspace restriction is defined as "over a forest fire area, or over any area that is located within five nautical miles of a forest fire area, at an altitude of less than 3,000 feet above ground level (AGL)." All flights between points within restricted airspace must be coordinated in such a manner as to entirely remove any possibility of collision.

When air tankers are deployed on fires, the birddog pilot is charged with the responsibility for control of air traffic over and in the immediate vicinity of the fire. In the absence of a birddog aircraft, this responsibility will be assumed by the Incident Commander or his/her designate.

On dispatch, the Air Attack Officer will contact the regional office on the assigned FM frequency, and will remain so for the duration of the mission. All aircraft enroute to a fire will monitor VHF-AM frequency of 126.7 MHz after clearing the airport control zone. Once an aircraft is five minutes back of the fire, contact must be made with the birddog pilot for clearance into the area. In the absence of a birddog aircraft, all aircraft, including incoming birddog aircraft on the dedicated bombing VHF-AM frequency (122.65 – primary/ 122.25 MHz – secondary / Additional bombing frequencies are 122.435 / 122.4 / 122.625 / 122.9 / 129.95 / 131.85 MHz). All other aircraft will maintain communication on the VHF-AM air-to-air frequency (122.05 MHz). In the event the Incident Commander is on the ground, the assigned VHF-FM frequency is to be utilized.

While on the fire, air tankers will use the bombing frequency for communication with the Air Attack Officer. The birddog pilot must be advised of and clear all other intended aircraft movement in the zone (take offs, landings, altitude, direction, etc.) on 122.05 MHz. On aircraft other than air tankers, only the Pilot-In-Command (PIC) will communicate with the birddog aircraft regarding air traffic control.

The VHF-AM radios are only to be used by the aircraft pilots and their Air Attack Officer. Passengers will use the VHF-FM radio (if available) for communications, as not always available on chartered fixed-wing aircraft. Passengers will announce their own call sign in conjunction with the aircraft identification when using the radio (i.e. FT12 / F-ABC). Crew names or fire numbers will be used for these individuals.

The only exception to this policy occurs when working a fire within controlled airspace of a local airport. Aircraft operations carried out within these areas will be conducted in

conjunction with the local airport air traffic controller. Fire operations remain the same as areas outside of controlled airspace.

Helicopter:	100-500 ft. (30-150m) AGL
AGL Birdog aircraft:	100-1,000 ft. (30-305m) AGL
AGL orbiting air tankers:	1,500-3,000 ft. (457-914m) AGL
Air Tactical Group Supervisor:	4000-5000 ft. (1220 – 1524 m) AGL
Others:	Over 5,000 ft. (1524 m) AGL until cleared to another altitude by the airspace controller

#### 4.1.7 Flight Priorities

Flight priorities will be adjusted at the discretion of the airspace controller to suit existing conditions. Normally, the flight priorities are assigned according to fire behavior and necessity (i.e., multi-lightning starts). The following guidelines are used to assign the aircraft flight priorities as listed in order below:

- 1) Human emergencies
- 2) Air tankers
- 3) Helicopters (bucketing)
- 4) Service

#### 4.1.8 Personal Packs and Commissary

The lending agency is responsible for providing personal packs complete with personal protective equipment, tents, sleeping bags, and rain gear. Personnel will be responsible for providing their own clothing, toiletries, and preferred choice of approved safety footwear, in good condition. Personal cargo is restricted to 65 lbs. which includes a personal pack of 45 lbs. and a line pack of 20 lbs.

Commissary charges will be the responsibility of the lending agency for any personnel. ECC will work with the Agency Representative to ensure commissary demands are met. The Agency Representative will be the primary contact to ensure you function within your agency limitations.

## 4.2 Alert Levels / Standby Times

### 4.2.1 Firefighting Crews

Initial Attack objectives, standby times, and alerts are set daily by the Regional Duty Officer. This information will be given to the crews at the morning briefing session.

**RED ALERT:** (very high or extreme fire hazard)

- Crews must depart from their staging area immediately or less than 15 minutes upon a fire call.

**YELLOW ALERT:** (moderate or high fire hazard)

- Crews must depart from their staging area within 30 minutes.

**BLUE ALERT:** (low or moderate hazard)

- Crews must depart from their staging area within 60 minutes.

**GREEN ALERT:** (low hazard)

- Crews are on project status.

### 4.2.2 Air Tankers

Air tanker alerts are set by the Territorial Duty Officer and given to the aircrews before stand-down on the previous day.

**RED ALERT:**

- Designated personnel, aircraft requirement ready for immediate dispatch (wheels roll).

**YELLOW ALERT:**

- Designates personnel, aircraft, and equipment ready for dispatch (wheels roll) as soon as possible or less than thirty (30) minutes of a dispatch call.

**BLUE ALERT:**

- Designated personnel, aircraft, and equipment ready for dispatch (wheels roll) within a predetermined time less than sixty (60) minutes.
- If the group was advised of a Blue alert status at least twelve (12) hours in advance of the start of the alert and the air tanker group does not fly, or the alert is not increased, the day is considered a “Day free from Duty”.

**GREEN ALERT:**

- Designated personnel, aircraft and equipment are stood down for a predetermined period.

## 4.3 Incident Management Team

### 4.3.1 Roles

**The Incident Commander** is responsible for evaluating the fire situation or complex, assessing future development or growth, developing a fire strategy, and executing this strategy in the efficient and effective manner possible. If a fire increases in size and complexity, a more qualified and experienced Commander may be deployed.

**The Planning Section Chief** is responsible for collecting, evaluating, and providing information pertinent to the fire, developing a detailed action plan for final approval by the Incident Commander, and documenting the suppression effort. The Planning Section may further be broken down into four (4) major units: the Resource Unit, Situation Unit, Documentation Unit, and Technical Specialists. In the NT, most Incident Planning Sections may be limited to a Planning Section Chief and Technical Specialists (i.e. a Fire Behavior Analyst, GIS specialist, and Infra-red scanning personnel).

**The Operations Section Chief** is responsible for all direct firefighting operations. The Operations Section implements, executes, and directs the incident action plan as directed by the Incident Commander. Duties include:

- Fireline construction
- Backfiring and burning out
- Control of spot fires
- Application of water or retardants from the air and ground
- Management of all aircraft, heavy equipment, and fire equipment
- Supervision of all fire line personnel
- Mop-up, patrol, and final fire line inspection

In more complex organizations, two additional levels of organization may be utilized, Divisions and Branches. A Division may be further divided into sectors. Branches may be established if the number of Divisions exceeds the span of control. Air Operations may also be established at the Branch Level in larger or complex incidents.

**The Finance and Administration Section Chief** is responsible for maintaining accurate and complete records of all expenditures associated with the incident and monitoring costs, billing and procurement. The Finance and Administration Section Chief will work in conjunction with the Regional Fire Clerk.

All other incident Command team positions (i.e.: Air Operations Branch Director (AOBD)) are staffed as required. In the NT, the numbers of personnel deployed to incidents are generally between 25 to 150 personnel.

**The Logistics Section Chief** is responsible for providing support and services for the incident, obtaining, and maintaining essential personnel, facilities and, equipment and supplies. The Logistics Section is divided into two branches and six units: the Support Branch (Supply Unit, Facilities Unit, and Ground Support Unit) and the Service Branch (Food Unit, Medical Unit, and Communications Unit).

#### **4.3.2 Reporting Procedures**

The Regional Duty Officer will establish a formal reporting protocol for the Incident Command Team. Daily costing: regular time and overtime for crews and overhead personnel, aircraft hours, and heavy equipment use, will be reported daily at a time scheduled by the Regional Fire Clerk.

## **5. Safety**

### **5.1 First Aid**

There should be a minimum of one person on each crew that is qualified with first aid training. Any crews that do not meet this requirement should inform the supervisor of your fire assignment.

### **5.2 Incident / Hazard Reporting**

All incidents and hazards which have or had the potential for injury to employees or which resulted in injury to employees shall be reported to the Safety Officer on an incident or the Regional Duty Officer.

All injuries must be reported to the Regional Duty Officer and the Worker's Safety & Compensation Commission. You may wish to inform your jurisdictional safety and compensation commission for reported injuries.

### **5.3 Incident Planning Forms**

The Incident Commander and team will be expected to complete and utilize the following ICS Forms:

- ICS 201 Incident Briefing Form
- ICS 202 Incident Action Plan & Incident Objectives
- ICS 203 Organization assignment list
- ICS 204 Assignment List
- ICS 205 Incident Radio Communications Plan
- ICS 206 Medical Plan
- ICS 209 Incident Status Summary
- ICS 214 Unit Log
- ICS 220 Air Operations Summary
- ICS 224 Crew Performance ratings
- ICS 226 Individual Performance Rating

The following forms may be utilized as required:

- ICS 207 Incident Organization chart
- ICS 210 Status Change Card

- ICS 211 Check-in List
- ICS 215 Incident Action Planning Worksheet
- ICS 217 Radio Frequency Assignment Worksheet
- ICS 218 Support Vehicle Inventory
- ICS 221 Demobilization Checkout

## 5.4 Safety in Bear Country

### Encountering a Bear

A bear's reaction to you will be influenced by many factors and is therefore never entirely predictable. Given the opportunity, bears usually avoid people. Some bears are more dangerous or aggressive than others. Old or wounded bears may be in pain or starving. They may aggressively seek food from people if they are unable to obtain enough on their own. Any bear that has become accustomed to people and shows no fear of them is dangerous.

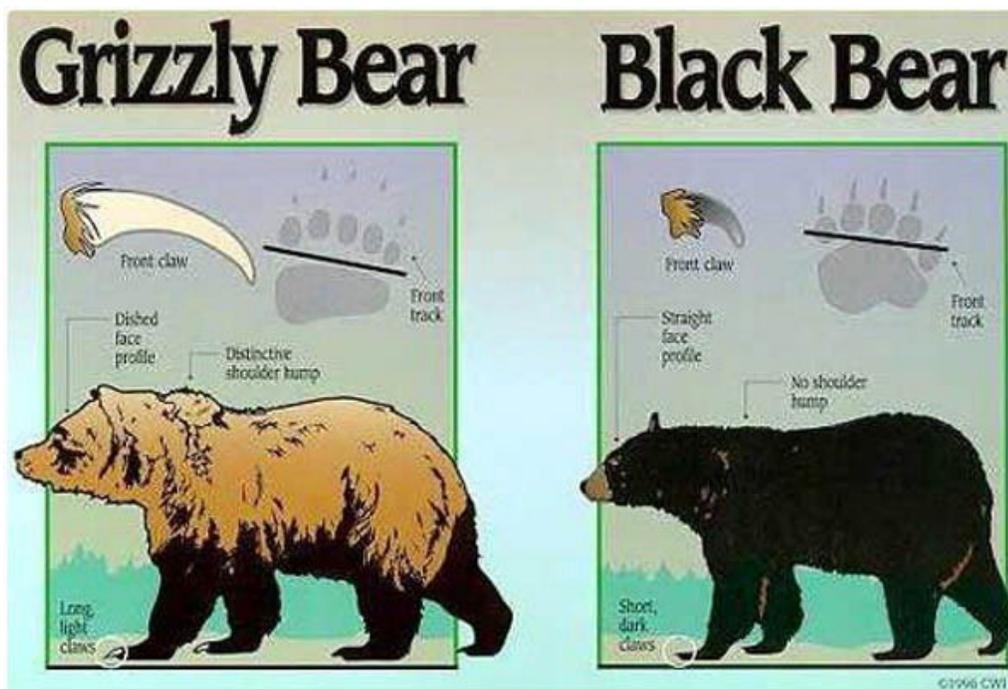
Every bear defends a critical space. The size of the space varies with each bear and each situation: it may be a few metres or a hundred metres. Intrusion into this space is considered a threat and may provoke an attack. All female bears aggressively defend their cubs. If a female with cubs is surprised at close range or separated from her cubs, she is likely to charge.

Bears also aggressively defend their food and are often reluctant to leave it until it is all eaten. In some cases, a bear that is threatened may engage in displays intended to scare away an opponent. These may include huffing, panting, hissing or growling, looking directly at you, sometimes with lowered head or ears laid back; slapping one or both feet on the ground; jaw popping; or charging to within several metres, then stopping suddenly or veering to the side. Threat displays may be followed by an attack but may end with the bear walking or running away.

A bear standing on its hind legs is probably trying to pick up your scent and figure out what you are. It may sniff the air or swing its head from side to side. Bears do not charge on their hind legs. Most grizzlies avoid contact with humans if possible. However, there is good reason for their reputation for ferocity. If cornered, threatened, or surprised, the grizzly can be very aggressive, and will usually stand its ground or charge.

Black bears are often less aggressive and flee from danger. However, because they are more curious and adaptable than grizzlies, they quickly become accustomed to human activity, and may develop aggressive food-seeking habits which make them dangerous. Therefore, treat all black bears with caution. In a very few cases, a bear has stalked a person that it apparently considered potential prey. Although such incidents are rare, you should know the difference between the behaviour of a hunting bear, and the behaviour of a threatened bear.

A hunting bear does not bother with displays and shows no signs of annoyance or fear. It may approach you directly at a fast walk or turn, follow you, or circle carefully, making cautious approaches.



### Problem Bears

Problems can occur whenever bears and people occupy the same area. You can encounter a bear by chance, or because the bear is attracted to your activity. Bears are curious, and often investigate a strange object, smell, or noise. They also have a tremendous and constant drive to find as much nutritious food as they can during their time out of the den. These two traits, coupled with a bear's remarkable sense of smell, often lead bears to areas of human activity. The outcome of a bear's visit to a camp or community will influence its future behaviour. If it does not find food, it may not return once its curiosity has been satisfied. If it successfully obtains food from a human source - such as a garbage dump, backpack, or unclean camp - it begins to associate food with anything human, and investigate areas used by humans whether or not food is actually detected. A bear will gradually lose its tendency to avoid people as it learns to associate them with food. It may become bold and aggressive.

Once started, the habits of problem bears are difficult to break. It is your responsibility as a visitor in bear country to ensure that your actions do not encourage those habits. It is unfortunate, but a problem bear is often destroyed.

### General Conduct

Safety is paramount and is everyone's responsibility - it is not a job that can be delegated to someone else and then forgotten about. The actions of each individual

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affect the safety of everyone else. Remember these simple rules:

- Be alert at all times.
- Respect all bears - they can be dangerous.
- Never approach a bear for any reason.
- Never feed bears or other wildlife.
- Have a plan of action for dealing with bears and be sure everyone understands it.
- If you are approaching your work area from the air, check for bears from the aircraft before landing.
- Work in pairs and stay alert. Alternate responsibilities so one person is watching for bears. If both partners are busy working, a bear may approach unnoticed.
- Make sure someone knows where you are going and when you plan to return. If possible, carry a portable hand-held radio for communication with the aircraft or base camp.

### Bear-Proofing a Camp While You Are Away

If you must be away from your camp for any length of time, take precautions to reduce the chance of a bear entering tents or buildings in your absence:

- Remove all attractants. If you are leaving for an extended period, remove all food and garbage. If leaving for the day, store food in a location inaccessible to bears. This is especially important for tents, which cannot be physically bear-proofed.
- Bears are often attracted to synthetic materials and have been known to eat or chew on inflatable boats, gas cans, sleeping bags, tents, motor oil and seats. If possible, remove such equipment or store it in a location that is inaccessible to bears.

### Your Behaviour

The thought of facing a bear can be frightening. However, bears rarely attack a person on sight, and only a very small percentage of charges result in serious injury or death. You are more likely to be injured in a car accident than by a bear. There is always a possibility you may surprise a bear at close range or encounter a problem bear which is not afraid of people. There is no guaranteed formula for reacting to a bear encounter because every encounter is unique. There are, however, guidelines which may help. Most are based on good judgment, common sense, and familiarity with bear behaviour.

- Stop, stand still, and stay calm.
- If the bear is aware of you, help it identify you as a person. It may leave. Staying upwind will help it to smell you. Talk in low tones and slowly wave your arms.
- Do not run from a bear unless you are sure you can reach a safe place before the bear catches up. Running may cause the bear to chase you, and a bear is faster than you are.
- Always leave a bear an open avenue of escape.
- If you see a bear at a distance, alert the bear to your presence. Quietly walk back the way you came or make a wide detour around the bear. Do not come between a bear and its cubs.
- If time, distance and circumstances permit, try to scare the bear away by firing warning shots, flare cartridges or noisemakers.
- In a close encounter, stand still and assess the situation. Do not shout or make sudden movements which might provoke the bear and avoid direct eye contact. At 50 metres, even if the bear is displaying threat behaviour, there is probably still time for you to avoid an encounter.
- Back away slowly. Only leave behind an article of clothing or gear if the bear is still trying to identify you. This will not work if the bear is following you. Leave food or an article of clothing only as a last resort.
- Climb a tree if one is available. You will have to climb higher than four metres - grizzlies can reach that high. Remember that black bears can also climb trees.

If the bear is very close (30 metres), it is usually best to stand your ground. Be prepared to shoot if you are carrying a firearm.

**All bear encounters should be reported to the local Environment and Climate Change Office. A Renewable Resource Officer will respond to your concerns.**

## 5.5 Water Supply

It is important to have a good supply of clean, uncontaminated drinking water to replace body fluids to prevent dehydration. Although many of our lakes and rivers are not directly contaminated by pollution or sewage outflows, it is not wise to drink directly from any of these unless the water is treated (Giardia or other harmful bacteria may be present). Drinking water will be provided by ECC in the form of water coolers or bottled water.

## 5.6 Precautions

It is important to maintain proper toilet facilities away from the campsite, cooking facilities and supply areas. Good hygiene practices prevent contamination and illness. It is expected that all personnel will wash their hands after using the washroom.

Be aware of the midnight sun and sleep patterns. Between June and July, areas of the Northwest Territories receiving 24 hours of daylight are an everyday occurrence. The midnight sun, for some newcomers can be a nuisance to sleep patterns. Most tents don't offer relief from brightness. Simply keeping your eyes covered to mimic the dark may be useful.

## **6. Miscellaneous**

### **6.1 Workplace Hazardous Materials Information System (WHMIS)**

The Workplace Hazardous Materials Information System (WHMIS) provides a system to retrieve information about potentially hazardous materials, how to handle them properly and treat for first aid. We expect all firefighters to have WHMIS training.

### **6.2 Harassment Free and Respectful Workplace Policy**

The Government of the NT is committed to maintaining a workplace, free from discrimination, harassment, interference, restriction or coercion with respect to race, creed, colour, sex, marital status, nationality, ancestry, place of origin, disability, age, family, or pardoned convictions. The Government endeavors to have a workplace free from personal harassment, sexual harassment, and the abuse of authority. Harassment includes any improper conduct, comment or display directed at another employee and that a reasonable person would know as unwelcome. It comprises objectionable conduct, comment or display made on either a one-time or continuous basis that demeans, belittles, or causes personal humiliation or embarrassment to an employee.

Violence in the workplace is a conduct of violence, threats, harassment, intimidation, and other disruptive behaviour in the workplace. Such behaviour can include oral or written statements, gestures, or expressions that communicate a direct or indirect threat of physical harm.

Workplace discrimination, harassment or violence will not be tolerated in this government. Failure to comply with these policies will lead to disciplinary action.

**7. Environment & Climate Change Contact Numbers**

Location	Main Telephone	Fax
FMD	(867) 872-7700	(867) 872-2077
North Slave Region	(867) 767-9238	(867) 873-0403
South Slave Region	(867) 872-6400	(867) 872-4250
Dehcho Region	(867) 695-7450	(867) 695-2442
Beaufort Delta Region	(867) 777-4002	(867) 678-6659
Sahtu Region	(867) 587-3506	(867) 587-3535
Spill Report Line	(867) 920-8130	

**Report a Forest Fire – 1-877-NWT FIRE (698-3473)**