

INTENT:

The intent of this policy is to guide Unit personnel on the purpose and implementation of the SIFC lightning plan

POLICY:

The Lassen-Modoc-Plumas Unit, in conjunction with the USFS, BLM, USNPS and SIFC will develop and implement a Unit wide lightning plan including Lightning Coordination Areas (LCA) to facilitate the management of multiple lightning caused fires within the Unit, on the National Forest, within Resource Areas and within Park boundaries. The following procedures shall be followed when SIFC activates the plan.

Quick Reference Guide

1. Lightning Plan – The Lightning Plan has nothing to do with LCAs. When SIFC announces they are activating the Lightning Plan, it means they are using a modified dispatch plan, instead of normal wildland fire dispatches using response plans. Fewer than normal numbers of resources are sent to each fire due to multiple starts.
2. Lightning Coordination Area – LMU Battalions/BLM Field Offices/LNF Districts/LVNP set up lightning coordination areas, LCA's, as sub-units within their agency organizations for dispatching purposes. The HQs of these sub-units become Command & Control (dispatch) centers for their area (Ex: Alturas Station for the Alturas Battalion), with resources assigned directly to them from SIFC.
 - A. LCA activation is usually initiated by the supervisors of the affected areas (for LMU, the B.C.s with north/south coverage), but SIFC may request a Battalion go into LCA mode due to a heavy dispatch load developing within their IA area.
 - B. All new fires/smokes within an LCA are reported to SIFC, not the LCA. This includes reports from lookouts, recons, neighboring fire agencies, & law enforcement agencies.
 - C. The LCA's will receive reports of new fires within their areas from SIFC. The LCA's will prioritize new reports & dispatch the resources assigned to them as appropriate.
 - D. Resources dispatched by LCA's will communicate directly with the LCA command centers using pre-designated command frequencies.

Susanville: Command 1 – Tone 1, or tone 5 if the portable repeater on Landon is in use

Westwood: Command 10 – Tone 7 (Roop)

Bieber: Command 2 – Tone 5 (Widow)

Alturas: Command 1 – Tone 14 (Likely)

Tactical frequencies will be Tac 3 and Tac 10 at the discretion of the LCA coordinator. Additional tactical frequencies shall be coordinated through SIFC on an “as needed” basis.

E. Region controlled resources (agency aircraft & CAL FIRE crews) will not be “officially assigned” to a LCA, however, once these resources are dispatched by SIFC to a LCA’s incident, they are effectively under the LCA’s control. The resource will communicate directly with the LCA command center and can be moved by the LCA to various fires within their area, until:

1. The LCA no longer has a need for them & turns them back to SIFC, or
2. SIFC reassigns them to a higher priority mission, or
3. Region (NOPS) reassigns them to a higher priority mission.

F. LCAs will order all additional resources from SIFC. SIFC will issue the request numbers for those additional resources and order or hire them as appropriate.

G. LCA administration - LCA ICs will ensure that all fire, timekeeping, & daily cost estimate reports are completed. SIFC issues incident numbers and makes a CAD entry for each fire.

PROCEDURE:

SIFC Lightning Plan

I. INTRODUCTION

Lightning is the major source of fire activity processed through SIFC. With four agencies operating out of the same office, the impact of lightning caused fires is even more critical. This plan was developed to handle the multiple fires that normally occur within a very short time frame. The total number of lightning fires that may occur in any given year may vary greatly. There have been as many as 108 lightning caused fires in one day on a single agency. There have been situations where several major fires have been burning simultaneously. This plan has been developed to manage resources in a safe, efficient manner when the Central Dispatch System cannot handle the complexity of the situation.

II. PLAN DEVELOPMENT

This plan is developed to standardize the procedures used by the agencies within the SIFC area during Incidents. The lightning plans from the CAL FIRE Lassen-Modoc-Plumas Unit, Lassen National Forest, BLM Nor-Cal, and Lassen Volcanic National Park were combined into one plan.

The plan is designed to handle multiple incidents as a result of lightning. It does not include what is considered fire operational procedures. A lightning fire that develops beyond initial attack will be removed from the lightning plan procedures and treated as a separate incident.

III. ACTIVATION OF THE PLAN

Activation will occur when one or more of the following conditions exist, keeping in mind there could be outside influences or local conditions that will call for plan activation. SIFC will notify all field units by radio broadcast of activation of lightning plan.

1. Down strikes on SIFC direct protection areas.
2. Lightning eminent on SIFC DPA.

3. One (1) or more fires existing in SIFC direct protection areas resulting in resource shortages.

IV. MODIFIED DISPATCHING

Normal fire dispatching is done by agency response plans. When activation of the SIFC Lightning Plan occurs, SIFC will be in a modified dispatch situation, consisting of single resource response, one engine and/or air attack/helitack if available. This may be modified by the affected field Battalion Chief, SIFC, or responding unit based on fire weather conditions.

V. OPERATING PROCEDURES

1. LIGHTNING COORDINATION-AREA (LCA)

SIFC is divided into LCAs to facilitate management of the fire situation. The intent is to maintain an effective span of control through adjustment in workload.

AREAS:

LASSEN-MODOC-PLUMAS UNIT: These Areas will conform to existing Battalion boundaries and will be numbered Area I, Area II, Area III, and Area IV to correspond with the respective Battalions.

LASSEN NATIONAL FOREST: These areas will conform to existing Ranger District Fire Protection boundaries and will be named Area "L" Almanor, Area "E" Eagle Lake, Area "H" Hat Creek, to correspond with the respective Ranger Districts.

BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT (BLM): These areas will conform to existing Field Office Fire Protection boundaries and will be named Area "R" Eagle Lake, Area "S" Surprise Valley, Area "W" Alturas, to correspond with the respective Field Offices.

LASSEN NATIONAL PARK (LNP): Lassen National Park will be one area and named Area "P".

2. LCA OPERATIONS

LCA activation must occur early during a thunder storm through communication with the affected agency (s), LCA (s) and SIFC. The decision to activate individual LCA Lightning Plans will be made with a definite time established to go into LCA dispatching so that the affected LCA has time to take over the operation and put their LCA lightning plan into effect.

3. DETECTION

A. Lookouts will report all smokes to SIFC in degrees, miles out, landmarks, and legal location if it can be determined. If lookouts spot a smoke outside of SIFC Protection Area, they will report the smoke to the responsible Unit ECC if known by the lookout. If the smoke is close to the SIFC protection area, they will report to both Units' EECs.

B. Aerial recon will be activated and will be used in conjunction with fixed detection, suppression, and air tanker operations.

(1). Aerial recon will locate and report all fires to SIFC.

(2). SIFC will advise aircraft of areas to recon after checking with districts/area or lookouts for areas hit by lightning.

(3). SIFC will order additional recon aircraft for expanded areas of lightning concentration as needed.

(4). When AA06 is used for recon, this aircraft could be reassigned immediately for air tanker coordination.

C. Fires reported directly to LCAs will be processed through SIFC and assigned area numbers.

4. SIFC AREA LIGHTNING FIRE NUMBERING SYSTEM BY AGENCY

CAL FIRE

Batt. I,	SUSANVILLE	I-1,	I-2 ETC.
Batt. II,	WESTWOOD	II-1,	II-2 ETC.
Batt. III,	BIEBER	III-1,	III-2 ETC.
Batt. IV,	ALTURAS	IV-1,	IV-2 ETC.

USFS

ALMANOR DISTRICT	L-1, L-2, ETC.
EAGLE LAKE DISTRICT	E-1, E-2, ETC.
HAT CREEK DISTRICT	H-1, H-2, ETC.

BLM

EAGLE LAKE FIELD OFFICE	R-1, R-2, ETC.
ALTURAS FIELD OFFICE	W-1, W-2, ETC.
SURPRISE FIELD OFFICE	S-1, S-2, ETC.

LVNP

LASSEN VOLCANIC NATIONAL PARK	P-1, P-2, ETC.
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The dispatch of personnel and equipment will be by the area number, the legal description and a landmark. From that time on, a fire should be referred to by the Area Number such as "three dash one". These Area Numbers will be assigned regular incident numbers and fire names at a time when conditions have stabilized.

5. COMMUNICATIONS

Initial attack units should use normal agency frequencies for fire assignments. Tactical/Command frequencies are available for LCAs and SIFC will be responsible for assigning communications frequencies as needed. Recon/Air Attack aircraft will use Air to Ground frequencies to keep the agency frequency available for normal use.

6. LCA DISPATCHING

LCA Coordinators will be responsible for all emergency incidents and resources in their area. They must maintain records on each fire and resource assignment; maintain current personnel, equipment and fire status. Plans and resource needs must be coordinated with SIFC. Contact between the LCA and SIFC must occur daily to reconcile incident information. This normally occurs in the evening when activity moderates

All fire suppression crews while assigned to an LCA will maintain communications through that LCA, i.e. "Bieber command, E2280 at scene fire three dash three". Resource needs, reports on conditions and any other pertinent information will be communicated to the LCA. LCA organizations should keep in mind the closest forces concept for Initial Attack with districts and other agencies next to their area and request these forces through SIFC when appropriate. As personnel and equipment become excess to an LCA they will be released to SIFC for reassignment.

7. SUPPORT

LCA's will have a lightning plan for their area in the format shown in Exhibit 1, consisting of, but not limited to, Operations, LCA Dispatching, Finance, Logistics, etc. Additional resources will be coordinated through SIFC. SIFC will expand as needed to support LCAs and fire activity.

8. SIFC will provide the coordination to insure positive control in the detection, reporting, and dispatching of resources. All requests for additional resources will be placed with SIFC, and priorities will be set for these and other shared resources. When the emergency work has increased, an expanded dispatch organization will be put in place to handle the activity and resource ordering. These positions will be filled or released as the need dictates.

- A. SIFC will maintain close communications with Redding and Reno Fire Weather offices and adjoining fire protection agencies.
- B. SIFC will review the status of personnel and equipment to ensure maximum utilization of resources.
- C. SIFC will notify industry coordinators when LAL's of five (5) or six (6) are forecast.
- D. SIFC will check for availability of additional recon aircraft.
- E. SIFC will ensure on going coordination of LCA activation and deactivation.
- F. SIFC will notify each LCA of any new fires reported within their area along with its appropriate consecutive area number.
- G. SIFC is responsible for all dispatching outside the lightning plan area.
- H. SIFC will keep North Ops and adjacent agencies advised of the situation and of possible needs. SIFC will generate an ICS 209 twice daily.
- I. SIFC will dispatch air attack or helitack forces as requested. First priority use of helicopters will be for initial attack and to ferry personnel to going fires: Recon and logistical use by helicopters will be held to a minimum.
- J. SIFC will maintain the area wide map of fire locations and record of overall situations.
- K. SIFC will fill LCA requests for additional personnel, equipment, and special services.
- L. SIFC will dispatch all Inter-LCA movement of resources.
- M. SIFC will set priorities for aircraft with consideration to LCA needs and SIFC needs.

VI. ESCAPED FIRE

If one or more fires develop beyond initial attack capabilities they will be removed from the lightning plan with concurrence of SIFC and the LCA Coordinator. A separate fire organization will be established under ICS guidelines and operated through SIFC under normal dispatch procedures.

VII. DEACTIVATION OF THE LCA

To return to SIFC from LCA Dispatching the following guidelines should be met:

- A. All fires under LCA Dispatching will have been staffed, controlled, and be in mop-up status.
- B. Sufficient IA resources will be in place or available for SIFC dispatch.
- C. All information pertaining to any incident still in a mop-up stage will be given to SIFC Dispatch, i.e.: personnel, equipment, and expected needs.
- D. A joint decision will be made between LCA Coordinator and SIFC as to when to return to normal SIFC operations.
- E. Any out of area resources should be considered for release first and must go through SIFC for approval before being released.

EXHIBIT I

LCA LIGHTNING PLAN GUIDE

I. OBJECTIVE

The purpose of this document is to provide a standardized FORMAT for the LCA Lightning Plan.

The purpose of this Plan is to organize Battalion/District/Area personnel to facilitate dispatching at the LCA level for suppressing lightning fires on the

_____ Ranger District/Resource Area/Battalion

Organize to insure placement of resources and equipment to:

- A. Have Initial Attack capabilities to confine all fires to one burning period after discovery.
- B. Provide necessary follow-up forces to control all fires.
- C. To recognize and designate personnel, to fill support positions upon predicted lightning activity.
- D. Keep SIFC current on LCA activities and resources.

II. ORGANIZATION

The LCAs will operate in accordance with the Incident Command System.

- A. LCA staffing/organization.

1. RECOMMENDED LCA RESPONSIBILITIES

- A. Incident Dispatching
- B. Resource Status Keeping
- C. Logistical Support

2. LCA's may meet the minimum responsibilities to the level of organization required meeting the needs of the LCA. Local station personnel may meet all LCA needs.

3. Insert an organizational chart.

B. LCA Incident Base/Staging area operations.

C. LCA Supply operation.

D. Fire Reports – Describe procedure for collecting & recording information needed to complete the fire reports.

III. MISCELLANEOUS

A. MAPS: LCAs will have prepared map packets to equip personnel going to lightning fires. Quantity of packets will be determined from experienced staffing of lightning fires at any one time for the past 10 years. These packets should consist of the type of maps, which would be most desirable for use during a lightning series. These maps generally cover only the respective LCA and portions of adjoining LCAs. The LCAs should also develop acetate overlay administrative maps with boundaries for use in plotting fires.

B. SPECIALIZED POSITIONS

1. GUIDES: The LCA coordinator and individual incident commanders should utilize locals (farmers, ranchers, retired personnel and timber industry personnel) for guiding crews to fires. Several timberland owners carry chainsaws and are readily available for tree falling and road clearing.

2. Fallers

3. Environmental Specialist/Resource Advisor

4. Staffing Lookouts