



# ROSS Newsletter

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## **ROSS 2001/2002 Preliminary Calendar**

### **March**

- Production platform available

### **April**

- Test SADA Training Course
- Transition support becomes operational

### **May**

- Train SADA Instructors
- SADA field testing at NWC and NR
- ROSS Version 1.0 final (SADA)

### **June**

- Begin nationwide SADA Training

### **July**

- Begin Dispatch and Travel (D&T) Training Development Course
- Test D&T Training Course
- Begin D&T field testing at RMA and NIC

### **August**

- Train D&T Instructors

### **September**

- Finalize D&T Training Course
- Begin nationwide D&T Training
- ROSS Version 2.0 Final (whole package)

### **January 2002**

- Earliest forecasted start date for D&T

### **June 2002**

- Latest forecasted start date for D&T

## **Since We Last Spoke...A ROSS Update**

The first ROSS "orientation" (not to be confused with a formal training session) was completed last week and both 'orientators' and students emerged intact and produced lots of lessons learned. "We learned a tremendous amount from the folks in the Rocky Mountain area," said Jon Skeels, Project Team Leader, "not the least of which is that the dispatchers here are keen test subjects, they fully grasp the intricacies of this new system and they're helping the project team to create a successful end product!"

Some of the lessons learned include verifying the necessity of a fully operational support desk to coincide with training efforts and better service users. According to Nancy DeLong, Implementation Team Leader, until then, user help will be slow because all calls must be forwarded to a subject matter expert on call. The good news is that the contract help desk should be fully operational by mid-summer.

Another lesson learned is the absolute need for establishing data standards. "This past week," said DeLong, "we found that the organization hierarchies are not yet totally up to our standards, so we'll do things a little differently for the Northwest Area than we did here in the Rocky Mountain Area." One of the first items of business will be to get a small group and establish all the NW Dispatch Centers in the system before the formal training begins. "We learn so much from each interaction with our users," she said, "so we anticipate every subsequent step of the process will be increasingly more customer service oriented for our users."

## **Interim ROSS User Helpdesk Available**

Until the contracted ROSS User Helpdesk is activated, likely by mid summer 2001, help will be provided by an interim helpdesk.

So far, the field test sites (Rocky Mountain Geographic Area and the National Interagency Coordination Center) found the ROSS system so user friendly that the helpdesk was minimally impacted. That's a real good sign that ROSS is holding it's own", said Beth GreyCloud, a member of the Implementation Team.

The first step in any help process is to try to resolve the problem using the On-Line Help function. Most of those who participated in the field tests found that ROSS includes a very reliable on line user help feature.

After checking the on-line "self-help" and neighbors, call the interim helpdesk at 1-208-373-4099 to request assistance. The help desk will answer the question or contact a Subject Matter Expert (SME) to provide the answer.

All calls will be entered into a data base and the resolution tracked. This process is standard for many software developers so they can track the type of problems which arise and the ways in which they are resolved. This information is then used to adjust the on-line help function and helps streamline the training process.

Users will only be dealing with data entry and resource status for the first few months, so most of the issues should already be resolved.

## Eastern Area Coordinators Workshop Hosts ROSS Talk

On February 14, the Eastern Area Coordinators hosted over 85 dispatchers, fire and IRM staff in a ROSS/DMS discussion at the 2001 Dispatchers Workshop; *New Partnerships in the Eastern Area*. Laura McIntyre-Kelly, one of the EA ROSS Partners presented the implementation overview which included the rollout schedule and training opportunities.

The EA GACC has identified five potential training sites for ROSS training; Laconia, NH, Newton Square, PA, Milwaukee, WI, Grand Rapids, MN and Rolla, MO.

"We're hoping to use the training sessions to get familiar with ROSS

and update all of our information and data," said McIntyre-Kelly.

Jerry Szymaniak, another EA ROSS Partner provided a view from the IRM side of what is needed from



Just some of the crowd who attended the Eastern Area Coordinators Workshop in Minneapolis, MN in mid-February.

units in terms of hardware planning, emergency contingency plans for downtime, and the value of a web-based application when it comes to updates for help functions.

Szymaniak relayed some of the differences between MIRPS and ROSS.

"ROSS uses a lot of the functionality of MIRPS" he said, "but MIRPS is more client-based and ROSS is web-based, making updates to screens and help functions so much easier."

A lively Q&A session addressed numerous issues, including "how to know where crews have rotated to," and "how ROSS will deal with overhead multiple qualifications".

ROSS Partners are a valuable asset in making this new application a success. It was evident from the session, the EA ROSS Partners are key to passing along information, answering questions, providing assistance and encouraging involvement. All ROSS Partners are listed on the ROSS website which is [www.nwcg.gov/ross](http://www.nwcg.gov/ross).

## Lockheed Martin Publishes News Release About ROSS

On March 1, Lockheed Martin published a news release on the world wide web about their Information Support Services business unit delivering the ROSS Application software, a new web-based application that will help federal, state and local fire-fighting organizations in the National Wildfire Coordination Group locate and call up people, equipment and materials needed to combat major wildfires in the United States.

Lockheed Martin was awarded a GSA task order in September 1999 from the U.S. Forest Service to tackle the problem of integrating data from all sources of the NWCG. Using Java, Lockheed Martin's development team in Denver created a web application that allows these organizations to quickly react and enable managers to find out the current status of firefighting resources and place orders for those resources.

"We are excited about achieving this milestone," said Linda Gooden, president of Information Support Services, "for a program that one day will have a positive effect on saving the lives, homes and businesses of millions of Americans in potential wildfire areas."

The release may be viewed in its entirety by accessing <http://biz.yahoo.com/prnews/010301/phth016.html>.

## Preventative Maintenance is a Good Thing

Once a year, whether it's needed or not, the National Information Technology Center (in Kansas City) performs an annual power check throughout their entire facility to work out bugs before they happen.

On Sunday, February 4, NITC performed this check which resulted in about 12 hours of downtime for the Dispatch Messaging System.

*"This type of outage is a really good thing in the long run, particularly if it saves us unplanned downtime."*

NITC goes through the entire computer room (which hosts not only ROSS, but the FAA's ICEMAN system and many other critical

applications), and replaces weak switches, breakers, etc.

"This is the only planned outage that is done on a routine annual basis," said Steve Simon, the ROSS Infrastructure Team Leader. "It's a whole lot better than having a switch fail and computers crash," he said.

Reaction from the field was negligible, as this is normally a relatively quiet time of the year.

## More Images of the Eastern Area Dispatch Workshop



Ruta Glinski (EACC), Chris Accentturo (Missouri ICC) and Allen Moyer (Acadia NP) discuss the Eastern Area's response to the ROSS Survey to help plan for training.



Kathy Miles (Mark Twain NF) and Beth Funderburg (Hiawatha NF) graciously took notes for the work-



Jim Flores (Upper Mi Dispatch Center) and Ken Terrill (WI DNR) discuss the advantages of "hot swappableness".

## 2001 Round of Dispatch Workshops Kicked Off by Southern Area

By Sue Roussopoulos, Southern Area Partner

Kentucky's Interagency Coordination Center hosted the 2001 Southern Area Interagency Coordinators and Cooperators Workshop in Lexington the week of January 22<sup>nd</sup>.

The 80 attendees included full-time dispatchers from SACC and the SA State Centers as well as expanded dispatchers from around the area. Guests and presenters represented NICC, SW, RM, and Forest Service Regions 1 and 6.

Partners Pat Boucher and Sue Roussopoulos led the session with the help of team members Steve Tarver and Andy Gray. A presentation based on the implementation slide show from the Phoenix Partners meeting formed the basis of the presentation. The Lexington slide show may be viewed on SACC's website at [www.r8web.com/sacc/ROSS\\_files/frame.htm](http://www.r8web.com/sacc/ROSS_files/frame.htm).

Attendees were eager to learn about ROSS features and the planned training and implementation schedule. Like dispatchers everywhere, they asked lots of questions, voiced opinions and offered suggestions for future enhancements. Much of the interest revolved around availability and qualification system issues, such as:

- Assigning availability priorities by position based on currency or training assignment needs, or framed a little differently...
- Ability to turn off or hide availability for all positions except those that meet a critical training or currency need, until that need is met, and
- Ability to manage status by position and area of availability, for example:

Position	Status	Area
FFT2	Available	Local only
EDSP	Available	Local, GACC and national

The concern was that, in reality, individuals are not always available for every qualification they hold. Assuming that they are, only increases the margin of error in reporting status.

The group also began to wrestle with how ROSS may facilitate changes in the way we do business. To follow up, a review of the SA Mobilization Guide will clarify current neighborhood agreements and could lead to new ordering channels based on the ability to manage selection areas in ROSS.

In summary, while SA dispatchers suffer no illusions that ROSS will "fix everything" they are looking forward to a tool that can automate dispatch tasks and provide consistent information through out the dispatch community.

## Michigan Contingent Optimistic About ROSS

At the Eastern Area Dispatch Workshop, the spirit of the theme, *New Partnerships in the Eastern Area* resulted in a series of interviews with a few of the attendees from Michigan.

Art Sutton, Unit Leader in the Resource Protection and Services Section of the Michigan Department of Natural Resources joined Paul Forrest and Bert Starr, Zone Managers of the Huron Manistee National Forest in a candid discussion on ROSS. What follows are some of their comments.

**Paul:** Automating the dispatch function was a good idea 12 to 15 years ago when the Forest Service instituted an automated dispatch system and it's still a good idea. I firmly believe ROSS will succeed because ROSS is web-based making it available for all agencies and it does not rely on any one type of hardware. I'm looking forward

to using it—even for expanded dispatch.

**Bert:** I have some experience with MIRPS but mostly for status. I can't wait to use ROSS for ordering and to streamline all the reports we have to do.

**Art:** I think it's [ROSS] going to work; it will be bumpy till the bugs are worked out through testing, but once we start

using it, it will work well, even though I don't see Michigan dispatching with ROSS for state fires in the foreseeable future.

**Paul:** ROSS will take a lot of the work out of dispatching. Because it's automated, information is interchangeable at the click of a button.

Bert and I are separated by two hours but with ROSS—no one would know that. That's part of the beauty of the application. We can cover for one another and not rely on so much paper, faxes and calling around. I hope it will include draw down levels.



From left to right, Art Sutton, MI DNR, Paul Forrest and Bert Starr, Huron-Manistee National Forest, and Lynn Pisano-Pedigo of the ROSS Team.



It's Coming...It's Coming...  
ROSS Will Be Here Before You Know It.

