



NEWSLETTER

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Northeast Forest Fire Supervisors relay what they need from ROSS.



Mac Gramley and Ruta Glinski are among participants sharing ROSS possibilities.

Internet-based status reporting for volunteer fire departments to report availability is but one benefit the Northeast Forest Fire Supervisors are looking forward to with ROSS. At the annual NFFS meeting in Dover, Delaware this past June, many of the supervisors said they were looking forward to a system like ROSS to accomplish much of their status and tracking needs. The NFFS are the state wildland fire managers responsible for their agency lands and resources within the Eastern Geographic Area. Andy Gray and Nancy DeLong of the ROSS Project Team briefed the attendees on the project's progress and capabilities.

Throughout the week, several perspectives as to what State managers need and what they feel ROSS will or will not do to meet these needs was expressed. Some Supervisors expressed an interest in the DMS instant mail function to improve communications. One supervisor saw internet-based status reporting as a way for volunteer fire

departments in his state to report their availability. Others saw value in being able to log on and view the status of their agency personnel committed to an incident on another unit, rather than generating several phone calls through the dispatch system to do this sort of "rumor control" as is currently done.

In a keynote speech, Andy explained that Supervisors now have a real opportunity to work with their ROSS Partners, Area Dispatch Committee and the Eastern Area Coordination Center staff to determine how best to meet their needs when ROSS is implemented in the Eastern Area. "ROSS is comprised of several components," said Gray, "based on the comments that Nancy and I heard this week, each Forest Fire Supervisor might see value in initially incorporating one or a combination of these components into their agency." Several questions were generated during the week and are found in the Questions and Answers on page 4.



Steve Creech (Indiana Forest Fire Supervisor) and Andy Gray discuss some finer points of ROSS.

Trouble shooting DMS. By Beth Grey Cloud, DMS Team Leader

As dispatch offices get busier during this fire season and use the Dispatch Messaging System more, they may experience some hidden operational problems. Much of this is because the DMS has only begun to be tested under strenuous use associated with intense fire seasons. Consequently, when users put a heavy workload on DMS, they often discover minor problems that cause major delays.

Problems like outdated settings, updates that have not been completed, outdated addresses and lack of DMS standard operating procedures for temporary dispatch personnel have been popping up across the country. In an attempt to help all offices to be fully operational on DMS, the help desk has devised some simple tests for users to ensure their DMS is operating successfully. (Test checklist on the last page of this newsletter). If each task is accomplished, it is a good indicator that all the DMS preferences and the address book are performing as designed.

If offices have not tested the system before they get busy, they may fall behind the .mob curve. We want to make sure your DMS is trouble free, so set it up and pre-test it before the onslaught begins. Please call the help desk with any questions or cries for help!

Partner's Corner This month's featured partner is Kathy Wiegard, Intelligence Coordinator, Western Great Basin Coordination Center and ROSS Partner

“I'm excited about ROSS!” “Most people who know me,” said Steve Edgar, “know that I don't get excited about much. But I'm excited about ROSS.” It was Steve Edgar, ROSS Partner from the Sierra Front Dispatch Center in Minden, NV, who said this during the ROSS briefing I gave at the WGB Spring Fire and Aviation Meeting. That's a pretty

strong testimonial to all the time, effort, and thought the ROSS Team have given to designing the system.

Working as I do at a GACC, I've been hearing things for several years now about ROSS. When it came time for the inaugural group of Partners to get together, I ended up being a last minute replacement. I was excited to have the opportunity to learn more about ROSS and looked forward to playing an active role as a Partner.

The Partner's first meeting in Kansas City this past March, gave us an opportunity to meet each other and the members of the ROSS team, as well as view the ROSS/DMS servers at NITC “live and in person”. We were bombarded with information ranging from budgeting to infrastructure, to what the system is and isn't designed to do. As representatives of our respective areas, we were asked to contribute our ideas on a variety of topics.

When I returned from the meeting, I was determined to let my constituents know that ROSS is no longer some vague idea floating beyond the horizon, but a fast moving ship that should be registering on everyone's radar as it approaches. I resolved to educate and inform people about ROSS at every opportunity, and to encourage them to do everything possible to make sure they are ready. To begin with, I wrote up a couple of pages of notes summarizing most of what we had covered, which I distributed within our geographic area and posted on our GACC website.

So far, I've presented an overview of ROSS (goals, vision, scope, accomplishments, current status, etc.) at three of our Dispatch Centers while conducting Intelligence refresher training. It was a good forum for answering questions, debunking myths, and hearing their concerns. I gave the same presentation at our Spring Fire and Aviation Meeting where all of the various agency managers (Forest Supervisor, FMOs, Associate State BLM Director, Park Superintendent, Assistant State Forester, etc.) were in attendance. Only tremendous fire activity cancelled additional workshops.

These presentations tied in well with my “real job” at the Coordination Center, since one of the services we provide our customers is to keep them informed about things that will affect them. I also make sure that the GACC Center Manager and staff receive any ROSS related e-mail messages, such as the newsletter and executive summary.

When I think about our role as Partners, the main thing that comes to mind is that we should all be excited about ROSS, and convey that enthusiasm to others. In the presentations I give, I generally ask how many people have heard about ROSS, and there is usually at least one person who hasn't. This gives me an opportunity to be that person's “first contact” with ROSS and I'm glad to have the chance to make their view of ROSS a positive one.

Sample ROSS Incident Status Summary Screen

OR-WIF-125

Menu Go to User: John Doe

Code: OR-WIF - 125 Start Date and Time: 7/8/2000 10:00
 Name: Brown Estimated End Date and Time: 7/22/2000 10:00
 Type: Wildland Fire

Location
 Lat/Long T/R/S UTM
 Latitude: Longitude: Match
 Name: Brown Creek

Radio Frequency

Type	Frequency	Contact	Owner
Air to Air TX	137.47	Brown AA	OR-WF
Air to Air RX	137.47		OR-WF
Air to Ground TX	85.63 Tone 23	Brown IC	OR-EIC
Air to Ground RX	85.63 Tone 55		OR-WF

Aircraft **Overhead** **Crew** **Equipment** **Supplies** **Groups and Teams**

Hazards
 Lat/Long T/R/S UTM

Hazard Type	Hazard	Latitude	Longitude
Aircraft	Aircraft in the area	69.21	75.20
Powerlines	Power lines	52.30	85.41

VOR Information

VOR	Bearing	Distance	VOR Name	City	State
ABC	123	2	Alpha Airport	Bailey	CO
XYZ	23	B	Xena	Yuma	AZ

Go to request number: A - Go

Pending Placed Selected Filled Pending Release
 Released Complete Cancelled

Show Requests: A - through A - Filter Clear

Request Number	Order Status	Resource Requested	Resource Assigned

New Edit Cancel Close

Incident Status Summary Screen still under development and NOT final

Frequently asked Questions...and Answers!

Editor's Note: These questions were generated from a recent meeting of the Northeast Forest Fire Supervisors.

Question: If additional local resources were needed to fill a request placed with a dispatch office, which unit would generate the request to order or document this? For example, if a Type II crew is ordered from a dispatch office, will that office have the authority to put a bus for transportation of the crew on an equipment resource order charged to the receiving unit's financial code?

Answer: Any organization that has an association (either as requester, filled-by, GACC-for, etc) to a request will be able to add a **"Support Request"** to the original request. Example: A request from a Unit (CA-SHF) through the GACC (CA-ONC) to NICC (ID-NIC) to another GACC (NM-SWC) and to another Unit (AZ-TNF), all of which either show a PLACED or PENDING status for that request. **Any level will be able to add a Support Request, including the Unit filling the request.**

Question: Will ROSS (version 1) simply handle State Compacts by allowing us to flag compact resources on any State resource order when a compact is activated? Or will ROSS have the capability to identify unique Compact resource orders, to which only Compact resources can respond (which is current business practice)?

Answer: **ROSS will be able to uniquely identify Compact Orders as we do today.** If a particular request cannot be filled with a Compact Resource and the decision is to fill with "ANY" agency resource, then it will have to be defined on that request, with a valid financial code (i.e. P-Code). **The Request Line has two designations; 1) Request Financial Information**, in which the desire for "Compact Resources Only"

can be designated by identifying the Compact Name, and 2) **Assignment Financial Information** in which the actual financial code or Compact Name is entered. By entering the Compact Name in the Request Financial Information, the request is **"Flagged" as a Compact request and a report can be generated that shows all Compact Orders.** Even if a request was initially designated as "Compact Resources Only", it can be filled with non-Compact resources without changing any of the initial request information. The system, however, will require a Federal financial code in the Assignment Section if a Federal resource is assigned.

Question: Will the completed EERA (Emergency Equipment Rental Agreement) be able to be attached to a ROSS resource order?

Answer: No, **ROSS only has four forms (Infrared Aircraft Scanner Request, Food Service Request, Pre-Suppression/Detail Request and Temporary Flight Restriction)** so all other forms will have to be sent separate from ROSS, via fax or e-mail. Perhaps they could be filed and sent together, but not from ROSS.

Question: What will the flight form/format look like in ROSS? Will the "BLM Flight Request/Schedule" now used by nearly everyone be incorporated into ROSS or will an aircraft flight plan look completely different?

Answer: The ROSS Charter specifically states that **flight following is out of scope.** Several items on the Flight Plan (such as actual departure/arrival information, flight tracking, aircraft configuration, and billing data) are not in the ROSS requirements at this time. All information needed to complete a Flight Plan is in ROSS now, except for three or four items. **ROSS will have a Travel Itinerary or Travel Plan that includes passenger/cargo information and estimated arrival/departure.** Because ROSS includes a Travel Itinerary, dispatchers can enter the travel information and it will be viewable by all interested parties.

Check List for Trouble Shooting DMS

1. Address and send a message.
2. Receive a message.
3. Print a message.
4. Delete a message then retrieve it from the trash.
5. Use the DMS Address Book to:
 - a. Send a message to another DMS address using the DMS address directory.
 - b. Send a message to several offices at the same time using your Unit's personal directory.
 - c. Send a message to a mail group.
6. Send a message with an attachment to an outside address other than on DMS.
7. Save an attachment.

Some other things to consider:

8. Check the version of Netscape Messenger on your computer. If it is 4.6 or newer, and you are operating Windows95, you may need to install a Microsoft Windows "fix" called "**winsock92**". The symptoms that require a fix are **blue error screens** when you are working in Netscape Messenger. The link to this Microsoft fix is on the ROSS web page in the DMS section. *It will help to read the entire page before doing the install!!*
9. Check that the computer you are using has adequate RAM (Random Access Memory). **Screens are freezing up** in many offices because their machines have only 32 mg of RAM. The best fix for this is **more RAM in the computer**, but it may not be very feasible due to time and money. If this is your problem, try accessing your DMS in-boxes through the DMS web connection at **http:\\dms.nwcg.gov**.
10. Make sure you have the .mob SOP available for new users. **In the back of the DMS instructions are basic Netscape Messenger instructions such as how to send, receive and forward messages.**
11. There have been ten technical notes distributed about DMS. Check to be sure you have completed any requirements in the tech notes. If you don't have each issue or possibly deleted any of them, contact the help desk and request them to be resent.

We want to make sure your DMS is trouble free, so please call the ROSS help desk with any questions or requests for assistance. The number is 208.373.4099.

Involvement and support of both the IRM and CACHE communities is essential to the success of the ROSS Project. The editors encourage articles from these groups in upcoming issues of this newsletter. Please call Lynn Pisano-Pedigo (303.275.5164) with any ideas, comments and/or recommendations for articles.

To learn more about ROSS, the Dispatch Messaging System, or to become involved, check out the ROSS web page at <http://nwcg.gov.ross> or call (208.373.4099).

