

NORTH CAROLINA EMERGENCY OPERATIONS PLAN (NCEOP)  
**ANNEX A | APPENDIX 3 | TAB C**  
**FIREFIGHTING (ESF-4)**  
2024 (Pre-Helene)

**I. INTRODUCTION**

**A. PURPOSE**

To provide guidelines for those agencies directly or indirectly involved in providing firefighting support or fire resources in response to emergencies requiring state assistance.

**B. SCOPE**

The firefighting function involves managing and coordinating firefighting activities, including the detection and suppression of fires, providing personnel, equipment, and supplies in support of local agencies involved in rural and urban firefighting operations.

**II. SITUATION AND ASSUMPTIONS**

**A. SITUATION**

The management of a large firefighting operation is complex, often involving hundreds of people and several different agencies and jurisdictions. Fires resulting from catastrophic disasters will place extraordinary demands on available resources and logistics support systems. A major disaster may result in many urban, rural and wildland fires. Ignition sources of little concern under normal conditions could cause many fires during and after earthquakes, hurricanes, etc. These fires will have the potential to spread rapidly, cause extensive damage, and pose a serious threat to life and property. Fire departments not incapacitated by the disaster event will be totally committed to these fires. Firefighting resources normally may be difficult to obtain and use because of the disruption to communication, transportation, utility, and water systems.

**B. ASSUMPTIONS**

1. Many urban, rural, and wildland fires may result from or occur coincidentally with a major disaster. Large, damaging fires will be common.
2. At the time of a disaster, there may be major wildfires burning elsewhere in the state. These fires could draw upon the same resources (people, equipment, and supplies) that would be needed to support firefighting and other emergency operations. It must be assumed that some firefighting resources will become scarce, resulting in the disaster-related firefighting operations competing for resources.

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3. Landline communications may be interrupted. Radio communication will be relied upon heavily, necessitating the request for back-up communications.
4. Wheeled-vehicle access may be hampered by bridge failures, debris, etc., making conventional travel to the fire location extremely difficult or impossible. Aerial attack by air tankers, helicopters, and quick response teams, may be essential in these situations. Helicopters may be scarce and usable airports congested.
5. Many of the resources commonly available for use in fighting large fires may be scarce or unavailable.
6. Wildland firefighting techniques may have to be applied to rural and urban fire situations, particularly where water systems are inoperative. Aerial delivery of fire retardants or water for structural protection may be essential. In the case of mass fires, the clearing of fire breaks and use of burning-out and backfiring techniques will be used.
7. Efficient and effective mutual aid among the various federal, state, and local fire agencies requires the use of the Incident Command System (ICS) together with compatible firefighting equipment and communications.

**III. ORGANIZATION AND ASSIGNMENT OF RESPONSIBILITIES**

**A. LEAD STATE AGENCY**

**1. NC DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SAFETY (NCDPS)**

**NORTH CAROLINA EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT (NCEM)**

- a. Assist the OSFM and the NC Forest Service with fire suppression efforts through resource allocation and coordination.
- b. Ensure coordination among all the resource providers and the supporting agencies.
- c. Provide search and rescue resources as may be required by the particular fire suppression scenario.
- d. Provide all essential coordination for the dispatch, arrival, entry, and reporting of necessary personnel into the fire suppression area.

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- e. Upon recommendation of the NC Forest Service, prepare the Fire Management Assistance Grant (FMAG) request for the Governor's signature, specifying the facts supporting the request.

**B. LEAD TECHNICAL AGENCIES**

**1. OFFICE OF STATE FIRE MARSHAL (OSFM)**

OSFM has the authority of the Insurance Commissioner to use any available resources to fulfill its mission in support of fire suppression, to include assigning of volunteer fire resources to locations throughout the state.

- a. Exercise the statutory mandate assigned to DOI for structural fire suppression in the state.
- b. Exercise the primary support function for forest fire suppression in support of the NC Forest Service.
- c. Oversee statewide fire training, providing standards and qualification levels for individuals functioning in the rescue specialty.
- d. Exercise control during major fire suppression over the coordination required through the local fire marshal and emergency manager to temporarily reallocate resources, personnel, and equipment to other areas where they are needed. This includes staging, security, and refueling.
- e. Assume responsibility for loaned equipment and personnel including accountability, maintenance and repair, and a provision for the return of the equipment to the original jurisdiction when it is no longer needed.
- f. Provide engineers to assist with damage assessment.
- g. Implement the NC Association of Fire Chief's Emergency Response Plan (NCAFC ERP) as necessary through a predetermined process for resource rostering and deployment that coordinates efforts through OSFM, NCEM, NCAFC, the local fire chief, local fire marshal, and local emergency manager.

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**2. NC DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE AND CONSUMER SERVICES (NC DA&CS)**

**NORTH CAROLINA FOREST SERVICE (NCFS)**

NCFS, through NCDA&CS, is mandated by Article 75, GS 106-895 to take such action as it may deem necessary to provide for the prevention and control of forest fires in any and all parts of state.

- a. Exercise the statutory mandate assigned to NCDA&CS for forest fire prevention and control in the state.
- b. Direct all operational and tactical activities.
- c. Exercise the primary support function for structural fire suppression in support of the OSFM.
- d. Conduct a forest fire public awareness program to prevent forest fires.
- e. Control outdoor burning permits and prohibit outdoor burning as authorized under Article 78 § 106-944.

**C. SUPPORTING STATE AGENCIES**

**1. NC DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SAFETY (NCDPS)**

**STATE HIGHWAY PATROL (SHP)**

- a. Provide traffic control activities and be available to assist local law enforcement.
- b. Reroute traffic around the affected area as required by circumstances and as requested by the local jurisdiction.
- c. Coordinate traffic control for ordered evacuations, establish roadblocks as the situation may dictate, and assist pedestrian traffic where critical.
- d. Provide any service or logistical support in support of fire suppression which may be directed by the Governor, the Secretary of DPS, the State Emergency Response Team (SERT), or as may be determined necessary by the Patrol Commander, appropriate Zone Director, or Troop Commander.

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- e. Coordinate all law enforcement activity required for the protection of life and property.
- f. In coordination with the local jurisdiction, prevent all unauthorized reentry into a fire suppression area which has been evacuated.

**NORTH CAROLINA NATIONAL GUARD (NCNG)**

- a. Assist the fire suppression effort as the situation may warrant.
- b. Provide heavy vehicles for logistical and transportation requirements.
- c. Supply field generators as required by the Incident Commander and SERT support coordination.
- d. Provide helicopter support for short notice fly-overs of the fire suppression area and for tactical observations.
- e. Provide wreckers for moving incapacitated firefighting engines and trucks as the situation may require.
- f. Provide helicopter support for moving equipment and personnel as needed. Provide water-bucket qualified aircrews for fire suppression.

**2. NC DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES (NCDHHS)**

**DIVISION OF HEALTH SERVICE REGULATION (DHSR)**  
**OFFICE OF EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES (OEMS)**

- a. Work with the OSFM in the SERT to provide joint response in areas of mutual concern.
- b. Coordinate the medical response aspect inherent in the OSFM function to include extrication and other emergency medical technical concerns.
- c. Coordinate the deployment of emergency medical equipment and personnel in response to fire suppression.
- d. Coordinate ambulance services to include air ambulance services accessible through the Helicopter Consortium.

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**DIVISION OF PUBLIC HEALTH (DPH)**

- a. Provide North Carolina State Laboratory of Public Health (NCSLPH) support to conduct testing or to facilitate reference testing services.
- b. Provide occupational and environmental epidemiology support in cases of chemical exposure, carbon monoxide poisoning, pesticide exposures, wildfire smoke exposures, etc.
- c. The Office of the Chief Medical Examiner will provide support as required.

**DIVISION OF SOCIAL SERVICES (DSS)**

- a. Support mass care activities as required.

**DIVISION OF MENTAL HEALTH, DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES, AND SUBSTANCE USE SERVICES (MHDDSAS)**

- a. Provide immediate and long-range counseling as necessary.

**3. NC DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION (NCDOT)**

- a. Support fire suppression activities.
- b. Provide road-clearing work in support of fire suppression and/or rescue operations to facilitate access, assist initial response, or provide debris removal off right-of-way during a recovery phase.
- c. Provide maintenance, repair and/or fuel to fire suppression or rescue vehicles and equipment.
- d. Assist with road closings, detours, and other traffic control measures by furnishing and installing necessary signs, barricades, and other required devices.
- e. Assist in the reporting of forest fires.

**4. NC DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL AND CULTURAL RESOURCES (NCDNCR)**

**DIVISION OF PARKS AND RECREATION (NC STATE PARKS)**

- a. Assist in detection and reporting of forest fires.

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- b. Provide equipment and personnel to assist in fire control in, adjacent to, or threatening a state park and other areas.

**5. NC WILDLIFE RESOURCES COMMISSION (NCWRC)**

- a. Assist in the detection of forest fires and in the patrolling of fire areas.
- b. Provide assistance in controlling forest fires through the use of commission aircraft, vehicles, and radios.

**6. NC DEPARTMENT OF ADULT CORRECTION (NCDAC)**

- a. Serve as a support agency in fire suppression and rescue activities as requested by the SERT. Since each situation will differ, the requirements will also vary in requests for personnel, supplies, and equipment.
- b. Provide food to the committed forces in the affected area.

**D. SUPPORTING VOLUNTEER AGENCIES**

**1. NORTH CAROLINA VOLUNTEER ORGANIZATIONS ACTIVE IN DISASTER MEMBER AGENCIES**

**AMERICAN RED CROSS**

- a. Obtain damage assessment surveys of affected areas and determine the kinds of services that must be provided.
- b. Manage Red Cross Mass Care (feeding and sheltering) including 24-hour Disaster Health Services (physical and mental) for evacuees and to support personnel if their (support personnel) current plans are insufficient or need augmentation.
- c. Provide food at fixed and mobile feeding stations.
- d. Provide emergency information concerning welfare to evacuees.
- e. Assist government agencies in disseminating official warnings.
- f. Maintain a current inventory of ARC owned equipment and supplies and of available sources for additional supplies and equipment.
- g. Maintain or establish agreements with organizations which have shelter facilities to be used for disaster mass care operations.

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- h. Recruit and train disaster personnel and maintain rosters of available paid and volunteer staff.

**THE SALVATION ARMY**

- a. Initiate TSA Mass Care Services, including but not limited to, mass feeding with mobile and/or fixed sites as coordinated through the SERT.
- b. In accordance with TSA Memorandum of Understanding, provide additional support, within available resources and capabilities, in consultation within the SERT.
- c. Contingent upon available resources, implement a program for distribution of items, needed by survivors, that may include but not be limited to, food & commodities, clothing, furniture, bedding and household items.

**IV. CONCEPT OF OPERATIONS**

**A. GENERAL**

The lead and supporting agencies named will manage and coordinate the state firefighting activities. Mobilizing resources in support of local wildland, rural and urban firefighting activities will accomplish this. Established firefighting organizations, processes, and procedures will be used. Responsibility for situation assessment and determination of resource needs lies with the local Incident Commander. Requests for firefighting assistance and resources will be handled in accordance with mutual aid agreements and/or from the local Emergency Management Agency to the State EOC. Requests can be filled by a statewide mutual agreement. The State EOC will coordinate requests for federal non-wildland fire resources as necessary.

Actual firefighting operations will be managed under the ICS situation and damage assessment information will be transmitted to the State EOC in accordance with established procedures.

Priority will be given to saving lives and protecting property, in that order. Mutual aid agreements exist through G.S. 58-83-1 and the North Carolina Association of Rescue and EMS.



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**B. NOTIFICATION**

The initial notification is passed from NCEM to the appropriate SERT agencies. The OSFM, who are on call 24 hours per day, will respond as called and assigned. Notification of other OSFM personnel will follow their standard operating procedures for recall.

**C. RESPONSE ACTIONS**

**INITIAL**

- a. Once the SERT is activated for response to a requirement for fire suppression missions, the OSFM SERT representative will assume control, respond to fire operational needs as required, evaluate information being reported, and initiate field staff assignments.
- b. Once the SERT is activated for response to a requirement for forest fire suppression, NCDA&CS and NCFS will assume their responsibility for the lead role in forest fire suppression activities.
- c. Communication links between SERT and essential attack and support elements will be established.
- d. An initial situation and damage assessment will be obtained through established procedures.
- e. Non-wildland fire resource requests will be submitted through SERT where the OSFM will evaluate, allocate, and account for committed personnel and equipment.
- f. The NC Forest Service will maintain situational awareness of wildland fire incidents and coordinate resource requests in conjunction with NCEM to satisfy the tactical requirements for each incident.
- g. The OSFM SERT representative will dispatch a team to the site when deemed necessary in order to provide for accountability in the acceptance and assignment of firefighting units from other parts of the state, in coordination with the Incident Commander.
- h. Staging areas will be set up and maintained in safe and accessible areas.
- i. Housing and feeding of responding personnel will be arranged.

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**CONTINUING**

- a. Determine and resolve issues regarding resource shortages, interagency conflicts, and policy matters.
- b. Maintain a complete log of actions taken, resource orders, records, and reports.
- c. Coordinate federal firefighting resources.
- d. Withdraw or re-deploy resources as needed, provide for the return of equipment to the parent jurisdiction when it is no longer needed and de-obligate personnel and equipment.
- e. Compile reports of costs incurred during response and submit to the SERT.

**V. DIRECTION, CONTROL AND COORDINATION**

**A. LOCAL**

In most North Carolina counties, the County Fire Marshal serves as the "leader" of the fire service. Fire departments are generally made up of organized and trained units using paid and volunteer personnel and serve a specific geographical area, providing service to local governments. The primary concern of these departments is fires within their jurisdictions, although some fire departments include rescue and EMS personnel. Through mutual aid agreements, local fire departments support the NC Forest Service in the control and prevention of forest fires.

**B. STATE**

In the event of a SERT activation, OSFM has been given the authority by the Insurance Commissioner / State Fire Marshal to use any resource available to fulfill its mission in support of fire suppression. The OSFM is responsible for implementing plans, controlling resources, verifying needs, and collecting and transmitting credible information to the State EOC.

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The NCDA&CS, through NCFS, is the lead agency in forest fire suppression in the state, as mandated by Article 75, GS 106-895. As such, it directs all operational and tactical activities during such emergencies. Statewide forestry resources are divided into three regions: the Coastal Plain, Piedmont, and Mountains. Each region is comprised of a number of districts with a total of 13 districts in the state. Each county has one to fifteen permanently assigned state forestry personnel.

### **C. FEDERAL**

The primary agency for the federal ESF-4 is the U.S. Department of Agriculture, U.S. Forest Service. Coordination with and support of state and local fire suppression organizations will be accomplished through the State Forester, in cooperation with the State Fire Marshal and NCEM.

North Carolina can apply for financial assistance through the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). Funds are applied for under the Fire Management Grant Assistance Program (FMAG), for the mitigation, management, and control of fires on publicly or privately owned forests or grasslands that may constitute a “threat of major disaster.”