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Extinguishing Inefficiencies

Interagency Resource Ordering Capability for
National Wildfire Management

Tracking data including where a fire started, its size, and the personnel and equipment that are assigned to manage it is a complicated task that had become further complicated by an outdated and obsolete enterprise management system whose support was going to cost around half-a-million dollars a month.

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Covering the Spread of Wildfires

Though designed to assist wildfire fighting efforts, the Resource Ordering and Status System (ROSS) had become outdated. ROSS was unable to foster the necessary integration with other capabilities, which led to inconsistencies in fire reporting and to the duplication of effort. This was perhaps most keenly felt by dispatchers forced to enter GPS coordinates by hand into 26 different systems. A single transposed number or misplaced decimal (in a 30-character string) could accidentally send crews and resources to a different county or state. Additionally, not all systems used the same data format, further complicating the process of information sharing among fire managers.

In October 2017, a team from Cask began working with federal partners at the National Interagency Fire Center (NIFC), which includes representatives from US Forest Service, Department of the Interior (DOI), Bureau of Land Management (BLM), National Park Service (NPS), Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA), US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), State Forestry Agency representatives of all 50 states, and various municipal governments to replace ROSS. The team sought to develop a capability that could manage and tie together the federal agencies that are responsible for managing wildfires on public land; organizing people, tools, and training in one easy to use platform.

“...Cask really has the
21st century vision.

Working with the
government, sometimes
our applications don't
really have the technology
as would be available to a
private company, but I feel
like with IROC, we really
have this next generation
ordering system. I just
continue to see Cask
being an important player,
an important partner with
us.”

- Sean Peterson,

Assistant Center Manager, NIFC



The actual resources themselves are now integrated between the different applications and IROC gets to be a part of that, a major part ... it's really going to be moving us into the 21st century. IROC has a whole bunch of different things than ROSS did, including internal reporting functionality, better visibility, and a much more user-friendly environment to work in.

- Sean Peterson,
Assistant Center Manager, NIFC



Modern Tools for Modern Solutions

As the largest custom scoped application in the ServiceNow ecosphere, the Interagency Resource Ordering Capability (IROC), is a platform-agnostic, web-based system that provides a modern tool to support ordering, tracking and managing resources in response to wildland fires and all-hazard incidents in real-time. All aircraft, equipment, crews, overhead, and supplies are easily viewable and deployable in the system, greatly shortening response time to expedite firefighting efforts from the national to the state and local level.

By building the solution from the ground up, the team was able to provide a higher level of integration with other major applications, like the Integrated Reporting of Wildland Fire Information (IRWIN) system, which facilitates the exchange of data between many existing wildland fire applications. By integrating resource data with computer-aided dispatch (CAD) systems for interagency dispatch center operations across all 50 states, the IROC application helps manage the status of tactical tools and resources. This allows fire service managers to see resource commitment levels across agency and state boundaries, replacing what was previously a cumbersome and complicated process.

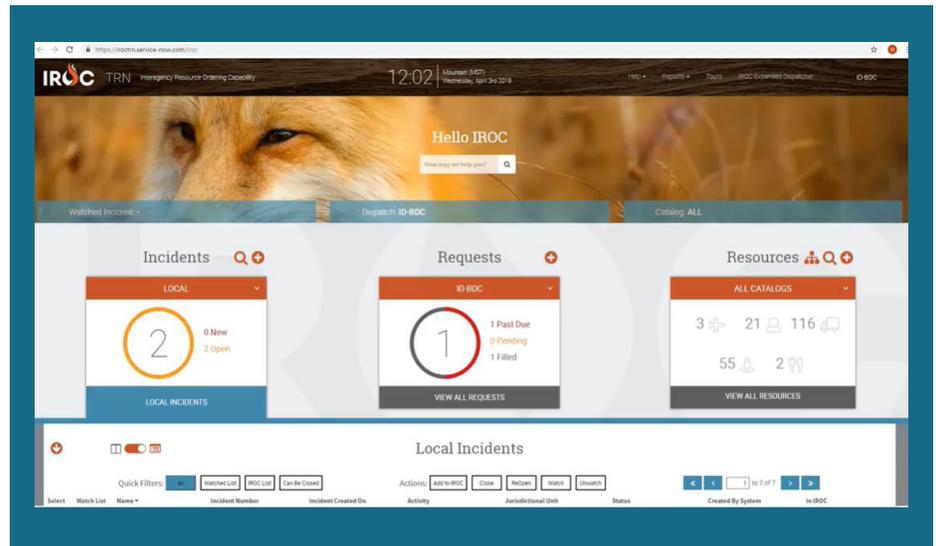


It's not only used for

wildland firefighting, we also use it for all risk incidents, including FEMA response. For example, right now, we've got in IROC, this morning, I think, 2,400 resource orders specifically for COVID-19 response across the country. It's also going to be utilized for all incidents, including hurricane response, major landslides, flooding events, earthquakes, hurricanes, and even terrorist attacks like we saw during 9/11."

-Sean Peterson

Assistant Center Manager, NIFC



In the peak of wildfire season, there may be more than 10,000 personnel from all levels of government and contractors deployed and managed by IROC. IROC features a real-time integration with both the Federal and States qualification systems that maintain firefighter certifications and experience. This ensures that the right people for a job are chosen when an incident occurs, and since the system manages their current assignments, agencies will not waste time requesting people that are unavailable to respond when they need them.

Some agencies, like the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE), which is responsible for fire protection of 31 million acres across the state, manage their personnel qualifications directly in IROC saving them significant costs to maintain and integrate a separate capability.



Interagency Collaboration

IROC provides an example of what can happen when government agencies work together on solutions.

“Through IROC we are facilitating people from federal and state agencies, at all levels of government, to work side by side in their mission to respond to wildfires and other all-hazard incidents.” Cask’s Michelle Headrick said.

As agencies across the country gear up for wildfire season, the Cask team is continuing to increase capabilities in the platform, adding functionalities that can make responses even better. This is something that in previous years could not happen due to concerns with legacy system stability. Via international agreements, resources can also now be allocated to firefighting efforts in Canada and Australia through IROC.