
Phone: 812.275.5987
Fax: 812.279.3423



811 Constitution Ave.
Bedford, IN 47421

News Contact:
Franklin Lewis 812.275.5987
Fax: 812.279.3423
flewis01@fs.fed.us

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

National Award Given to Interagency Fire Center

Bedford, IN – March 4, 2004. The Indiana Interagency Coordination Center (IICC) has been selected to receive the 2003 National Fire Plan Award for Excellence in Firefighter Preparedness, Safety, and Training.

The IICC is an interagency partnership including Forest Service, National Park Service, Fish and Wildlife Service and Indiana Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) personnel. The IICC serves as the contact point for mobilization of fire personnel and equipment for in-state assignments as well as emergency assignments of Indiana resources nationwide. The main purpose of the Center is for state and federal agencies to work together on a daily basis and streamline dispatch procedures so only one phone call is made to contact Indiana fire resources.

The concept of having one coordination center in Indiana was in Hoosier National Forest Fire Management Officer Chris Petersons' mind from the time he arrived on the Forest in 1999. Chris transferred from Louisiana where the statewide dispatch approach had been in place for several years and worked extremely well. "I knew we could make the

interagency fire management concept work in Indiana—it was just a matter of bringing the partners together and securing some funding,” stated Chris. IDNR State Fire Supervisor Steve Creech (retired) embraced the idea, but told Chris the state could not support the Center financially at that time. However, with the help of Hoosier National Forest Supervisor, Ken Day, funding was secured and a new facility, located at the Tell City Ranger District on the Hoosier National Forest, was built.

Chris, accompanied by David Nugent, National Park Service and Brian Winters, Fish and Wildlife Service, will be traveling to Reno, Nevada in March to receive the award on behalf of the IICC at the Second Annual National Fire Plan Awards Ceremony.

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