

Notice of Implementation – Dynamic Automated Resource Tracking (DART) System

1. Purpose

This notice announces the USDA Forest Service’s implementation of the Dingell Act of 2019. The Dynamic Automated Resource Tracking (DART), in accordance with 43 U.S.C. § 1748b–1(d) requires agencies to operate a system capable of remotely tracking the position of wildland fire resources. Deployment is scheduled to begin in calendar year 2025.

2. Background and Safety Considerations

The Dingell Act underscores the importance for last-known resource location tracking to enhance situational awareness, support effective dispatch, and reduce risks associated with high-tempo wildfire operations. Past incidents have demonstrated how immediate location data enables faster response to unforeseen events (e.g., burnovers, injuries) and significantly improves firefighter safety.

3. Program Overview

Under DART, authorized devices and software will capture and relay positional information for participating resources to common-operating pictures (COPs). This information will help reduce the time needed to locate and assist firefighters in emergency scenarios, ultimately promoting a safer and more informed operating environment.

4. Data Governance

4.1. Scope of Tracking Data

Tracking data governed by this program includes device-based positional reports, call sign, and timestamps. This applies to all wildland firefighter resources during official duties on or off incident.

4.2. Archival Data

DART data is primarily for last-known resource locations. Access to archived positional reporting is limited to authorized safety personnel, investigators, and management officials conducting legitimate safety analyses or approved investigations.

4.2.1 Federal Data Retention

Management will retain Federal resource location data in accordance with USDA Departmental Regulation 3080-001: Records Management and all other government-wide laws and regulations addressing records management.

4.2.2 Interagency Partner Data Retention

Management will retain interagency partner resource location data in accordance with agreed upon requirements identified in MOUs and Agreements. Interagency partners will retain Federal resource location data in line with agreed upon MOUs and Agreement requirements.

4.3. Non-Punitive Intent

DART data will not be used for punitive or disciplinary purposes except in those rare instances where formal investigations require relevant data, as determined by appropriate authorities and in accordance with law and policy.

4.4. Data Access and De-Identification

All tracking data is considered sensitive, and Personal Identifiable Information (PII) will not be shared. Access to last-known resource location data is restricted to authorized Federal and interagency wildland firefighting personnel. Interagency agreements will identify resource location sharing parameters and be restricted to authorized personnel from the receptive agencies.

4.5. Federal Policy and Regulatory Alignment

Data governance under this program adheres to the Federal Information Security Modernization Act (44 U.S.C. § 3551 et seq.), National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) guidelines, and USDA Departmental Regulations DR 3510-001 and DR 3515-002 on information security and privacy. These measures ensure rigorous protection of data integrity, confidentiality, and availability.

4.6. Private Sector and External Data Requests

Unless lawfully required or governed by a formal data-sharing agreement, real-time or near-real-time tracking information will not be provided to private-sector entities. If last-known resource location data is to be shared, it will be scrubbed to remove identifiable resource identification information.

5.0. Statutory Requirements and Management Rights

Implementation of DART is required by statute and involves the exercise of management rights to assign work and determine internal security practices under 5 U.S.C. § 7106(a). The Forest Service will uphold all obligations under the Master Agreement and other applicable labor agreements.