

**Best Practices for Data File Management in FlamMap6
and Using Files from WFDSS and IFTDSS
October 2026**



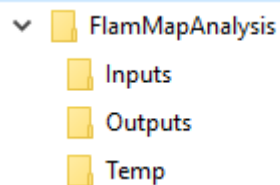
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FlamMap Data File Management

While this may seem remedial, it is an important topic. When you complete multiple runs in FlamMap you can generate a lot of outputs. Depending on your landscape size and data spatial resolution this can add up to many, many megabytes to GB in size! File management and organization are important.

Best Practices include:

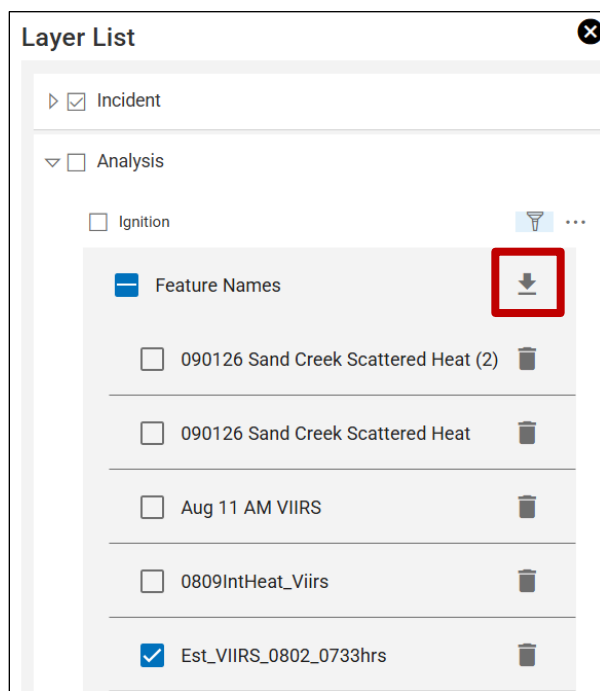
1. **DO NOT** create your project folders on your **Desktop**. Yes, it is the Easy Button! But it will create a long pathname to your folder often including special characters like % signs that you do not see.
2. **DO NOT** create your project folder in **My Documents**. This creates similar issues as using your Desktop.
3. **DO NOT** use, access, or acquire data across a network. Back up your data onto a network or other reliable storage area as normal, but the program is not designed specifically to operate accessing data across a network.
4. Always keep the program and data installed locally on your computer.
5. **Keep pathnames and filenames as short as possible with the following suggestions and considerations.**
 - a. Follow old style DOS naming conventions
 - b. Don't use spaces, use underscores (MTT_ArrivalTime_20260817)
 - c. Don't include special characters such as @, #, \$, %, &, *, /, \
 - d. An example workspace might be: C:\WorkSpace\FlamMapAnalysis with several subfolders underneath it. For example:



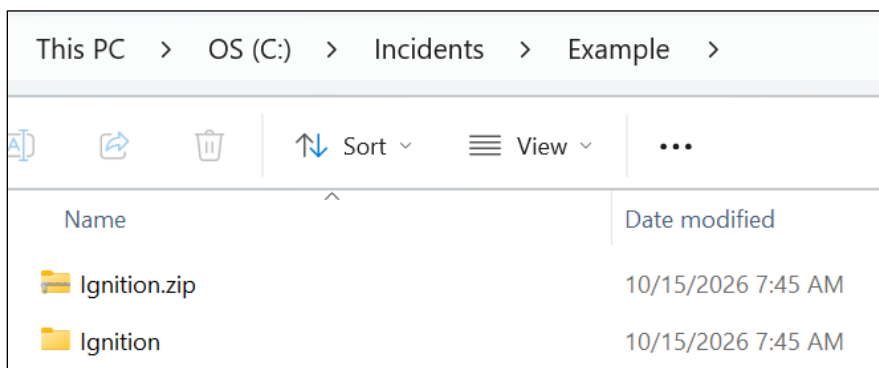
Using WFDSS Files in FlamMap

If you import data from WFDSS (landscape files, ignition and barrier shapefiles) you may need to rename the files prior to using them in FlamMap.

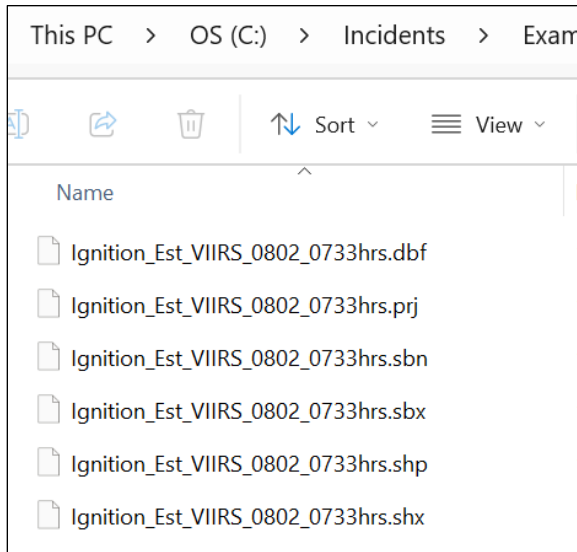
For example, if you would like to export an ignition file from WFDSS, navigate to the file in the Layer List. Make sure the desired file is checked and click the **Download** button (shown in red below).



In the **Download Selected Ignition** box that opens, select “Shapefile” for the output format. The zipped file will be named “Ignition”.



Once you unzip the folder, the shapefile will have the same name as it did in WFDSS with the type of file added to the beginning of each file as shown with the ignition shapefile below. The file name already included underscores in WFDSS, so this file is compatible with FlamMap. **If the file included spaces or special characters (refer to point 5 on page 2) you will need to edit the file name.**



To download your landscape file from WFDSS, navigate to the **Analysis** tab and select the run from the list in **Existing Analysis** tab. Navigate to the **Landscape** tab, and select “**Download Landscape**” under Landscape Details.



Using IFTDSS Files in FlamMap

The IFTDSS Help Center has specific examples on how to download, import and use IFTDSS generated landscapes and analysis in FlamMap.

In all cases the landscape file used in the respective analysis will need to be downloaded separately.

Relevant IFTDSS Help content:

[Importing Landscape Burn Probability \(LBP\)](#)

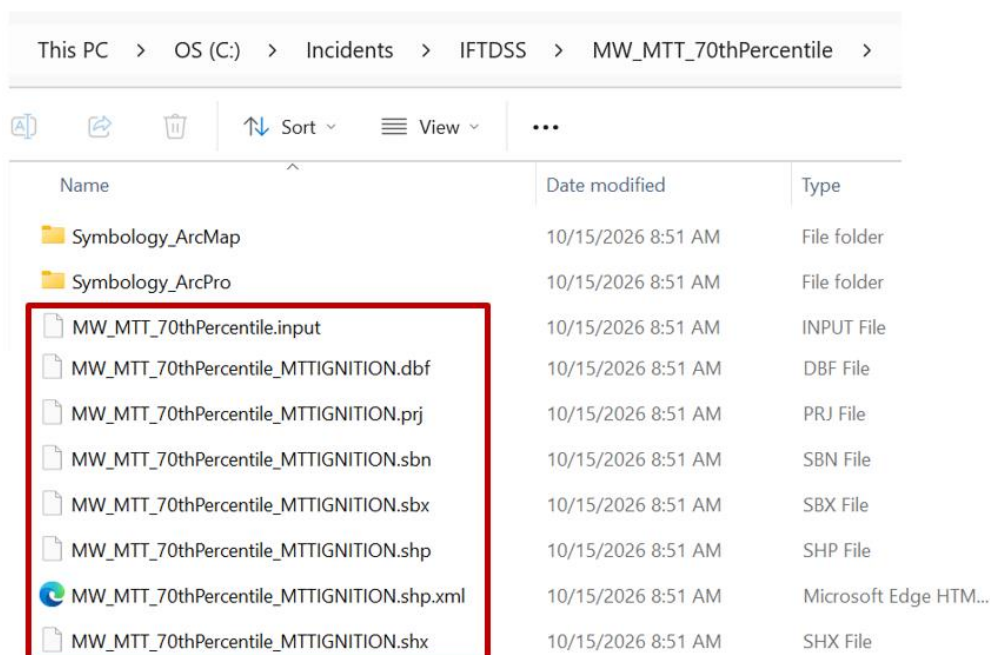
[Importing Landscape Fire Behavior \(LFB\)](#)

Like IFTDSS LBP or LFB analyses, IFTDSS Minimum Travel Time Fire Spread (MTT) outputs and an analysis landscape file for a completed analysis can also be downloaded and used in FlamMap.

See here to [Download IFTDSS MTT Outputs](#)

The downloaded zip file will include:

- MTT input file (“filename”.input) that can be imported into FlamMap to initialize simulation inputs and settings, fuel moistures, weather streams, and conditioning periods (example shown below).
- The ignition file and any barrier file used in the simulation (example shown below).
- In FlamMap, you will need to load the ignition and barrier files as well as selecting outputs.



How to Share and Archive FlamMap Projects

NEVER copy and paste your FlamMap Project file (.FMP) within Windows File Explorer from one location to another. ALL FlamMap project files are drive and path specific (e.g., C:\Workspace\FlamMapAnalysis). Changing your FlamMap Project file from one location to another will break those paths.

The **Best Practice** is to use FlamMap's **Archive** function to archive, backup and share your FlamMap projects. **IT IS the ONLY** method to ensure that all your settings, input data, and analysis run outputs will be stored and can be shared with the project. This feature is very useful for sending a project to someone else, transferring your work between computers, backing up your work, or archiving a completed project.

Archiving your project will create a file with an **.FZA** file name extension. This file can be moved and easily shared with others. See the FlamMap Help for topics on FlamMap Projects and archive file sections in the Help located under **Using the Tree Pane > FlamMap Project** and **Reference Stuff > Archive File**.

An important exception:

- **Landscape Edit Rules** are currently not saved with the FlamMap Archive file. The landscape edit rules can be saved as a separate file with an .XML extension. Including "landscape_edits" or "LandscapeEdits" in the file name will help you keep track of this file as FlamMap produces multiple .XML files.

Can I use an External Drive?

Yes, you can. However, it comes with some considerations

It is always safest to create a workspace on the largest drive on your computer and do all your work there. Make sure you have read/write access to these areas. Make sure your workspace is not located in “Desktop” and “My Documents” as previously mentioned.

- a. A word of caution if you can use an external hard drive as your workspace/work area. If you use multiple external drives on the same computer and attach them in a different order the hard drive letter designations may change. **THIS will impact your ability to open previously saved FlamMap projects as these ARE ALWAYS Drive and Path Specific.**
- b. The **Windows Disk Management Utility** can be used to assign a persistent drive letter to your external drive. This requires an appropriate level of expertise and knowledge to do. **YOU SHOULD** work with your local IT specialist if you are unfamiliar, uncomfortable or **DO NOT** have the proper permissions.
- c. When assigning a Drive letter to an external drive consider using a drive letter between M and Z. This is because earlier drive letters may still get assigned to drives that don’t always show up in File Explorer—like optical and removable card drives. **M through Z are almost never used on most Windows systems. However, be sure to verify this with an agency IT specialist.** For example, the drive letter “T” is already in use on US Forest Service computers. It is critical **NOT TO ASSIGN** a drive letter that is already reserved or in use on your computer.