



USDA Forest Service Fire and Aviation Management Briefing Paper



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Topic: Thirtymile Hazard Abatement and Accident Prevention Plan Status

Background: On July 10, 2001, four firefighters lost their lives on the Thirtymile fire on the Okanogan National Forest in Washington. In addition to the Forest Service investigation, the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) conducted a separate investigation. OSHA cited the Forest Service with two willful, and three serious violations. OSHA delivered the citations to the Pacific Northwest Regional Forester on February 8, 2002. A Hazard Abatement Plan was submitted to OSHA on March 26, 2002, and was accepted. In addition, an Accident Prevention Plan was developed containing 38 specific actions (28 that are interagency in nature) to enhance firefighter safety and training. These actions have resulted in significant changes within the Forest Service and Department of Interior. To date, the Forest Service has completed 33 of the actions. Implementation efforts will continue and are posted on the Internet at <http://www.fs.fed.us/fire/>.

Key Points:

- The Hazard Abatement Plan was fully implemented during the spring of 2002. Implementation actions will be ongoing in 2003 and subsequent fire seasons.
- Forest Service Fire & Aviation management and OSHA are in the process of developing a formal Alliance at the National Level. The agreement to establish this alliance has been routed to agency executives for approval. The purpose of this Alliance is to:
 - Provide employees from both OSHA and the FS to gain cross-agency experience and knowledge.
 - Jointly review and adapt OSHA training and education programs to enhance safety as a “core value” in FS wildland fire management personnel.
 - Jointly develop and disseminate information to raise employee and public awareness of the Alliance commitment the safety and performance of firefighters.
 - Jointly identify, perform, and publicize case studies germane to the purpose of the Alliance.
 - Jointly promote and facilitate the development of Regional Alliances to enhance firefighter safety at the field level.
- The Forest Service has implemented 33 of the actions in the Accident Prevention Plan. Open actions and their status are as follows:

- A-1 Initiate changes to the Federal Wildland Fire Management Policy. The National Wildfire Coordinating Group (NWCG) created an interagency task group to develop interagency implementation direction for the Federal Wildland Fire Policy. This direction was approved by the Wildland Fire Leadership Council on June 20, 2003. Federal agencies will incorporate this standardized implementation direction into agency specific manuals and handbooks by the 2004 wildfire season, which will bring closure to this action item.
- A-3c Identify the thresholds at which large fires typically occur. NWCG has established an interagency Risk Threshold Project group to develop predictive tools. Pilot testing will occur on a few selected field Units during the 2003 fire season. Full implementation is expected in fire season 2004.
- A-4 Review and revise the Federal Wildland Fire Management Policy to include indicators regarding transitions. Status is the same as for A-1.
- A-25 Develop a Leadership Curriculum to improve the leadership skills of fire managers. The NWCG Training Working Team has identified a course structure of five modules of training. Two of the modules are complete, two are in pilot testing, and one is still under development.
- A-26 Develop and implement a comprehensive safety and health program within the FS. A comprehensive program has been developed and is included in the “Safety & Health Action Plan for 2003”. The final revision of FSM 6700, scheduled for 2003, will institutionalize this program for the agency.

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