

## **USDA NEWS RELEASE**

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USDA: Alisa Harrison (202) 720-4623

Heidi Valetkevitch (202) 205-1134

FDNY: Mike Loughran (718) 999-2056

### **USDA FOREST SERVICE TO TRAIN FDNY IN INCIDENT COMMAND MANAGEMENT TO BOLSTER HOMELAND SECURITY EFFORTS**

*Agreement supports President Bush's Homeland Security Plan by readying response organizations to respond to U.S. homeland security threats and natural disasters using the same command system.*

NEW YORK CITY, Jan. 15, 2003-- The Fire Department of New York and U.S. Department of Agriculture's Forest Service today established a training program in incident command management for New York City firefighters to better respond to terrorist incidents and natural disasters. Agriculture Secretary Ann M. Veneman and Fire Department of New York Commissioner Nicholas Scoppetta signed the agreement at FDNY headquarters in Brooklyn.

"For years, the Forest Service has been regarded as one of the world's best in managing large-scale fires, emergency incidents and natural disasters," said Veneman. "Following the tragedies of September 11, we worked together with the FDNY to provide assistance. This training we are announcing today will enhance FDNY's capability, as part of America's first responder community, to better respond to threats to our homeland as well as other catastrophic events."

Incident command management is a highly effective structure to manage large-scale incidents and natural disasters. The Forest Service and other federal agencies use incident management teams for human-caused or natural occurrences requiring emergency action to prevent or reduce the loss of life, property or natural resources. In the last three fire seasons, the Forest Service used dozens of incident management teams to effectively fight historic-setting blazes that burned more than 7 million acres.

Following the events of Sept. 11, FEMA dispatched the several Forest Service incident management teams to New York City and Washington, D.C., and provided support to local and state authorities using the incident command system.

Through this agreement, personnel from FDNY will be trained to use the incident command team structure to respond to complex and long duration incidents within the City of New York. At their discretion, the City of New York may make FDNY firefighters trained in incident command techniques available for mobilization to combat wildfires and other incidents nationwide.

FDNY training will begin next month and continue to early April to form a 60-plus person incident management team ready for mobilization.

For more information about the Forest Service incident command system, visit <http://www.fs.fed.us/fire/operations/niims.shtml>. For more information on USDA's homeland security efforts, visit <http://www.usda.gov/homelandsecurity/homeland.html>.

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