

“Doctrine Dialogue”
U.S. Forest Service
Fire & Aviation Management
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“Fire Suppression Doctrine Moving Closer To Implementation”

Since the “Pulaski Conference” (June 2005) and the Chief’s letter (January 26, 2006) accepting the principles “forming the foundational doctrine for fire suppression in the Forest Service,” many in the fire community have been asking: “Hey! What’s the status of the fire suppression doctrine?” Here’s the latest:

- During May 2007, FAM completed several instrumental workshops focused on re-drafting key Chapters of the Forest Service Manual related to fire suppression, specifically Chapter 5100 – Fire Management and 5130 – Wildland Fire Suppression. The purposes for analyzing, reviewing and editing these chapters were to form and incorporate the foundational doctrine principles for implementing Fire Suppression Doctrine which included validating the existing manual for currency with policy, direction, and overall change. <http://www.fs.fed.us/fire/doctrine>
- The present projected timeline for wildland Fire Suppression Doctrine implementation at the field level is January 01, 2008 - the “traditional” start of both the annual and national fire season.
- Concurrently, additional sub-chapters of the entire FSM - 5100 Fire Management are being revised in order to incorporate foundational doctrine principles into the other FAM program areas. These include: Chapter 5150 - Fuels Management and Chapter 5140 - Wildland Fire Use.
- Additionally, FSM 5700 – Aviation Management is also undergoing review with the same projected timeline for inclusion into Direction and implementation.
- FAM will be seeking authority for implementation initially through the issuance of an “Interim Directive” or ID.
- The target date for the draft ID issuance is October 15, 2007.
- Interim Directives, upon signature, become official direction for a period of 18 months. The ID will allow for time necessary to align handbooks, standards, and other agency and interagency documents.
- Remaining work includes finalizing manual language, incorporating the rest of the FSM 5100 chapter adaptations, and small task group assignments to insure FS suppression doctrine mixes and blends cohesively with established standards, interagency guides and common suppression related materials.
- The target date for the final Forest Service 5100 rewrite is expected later this summer.
- The fire suppression doctrine and the overall programmatic FAM foundational doctrine efforts are being well received with participatory involvement from Department of the Interior and FS Partnership Council representatives.

In general, the overall success with implementing fire suppression doctrine is continuing via active collaboration with inter-departmental representation from partners and cooperators. The agency is also ensuring key oversight groups are being kept well informed and educated, with a focus on long- term fire and aviation organization and cultural growth. Maintaining the understanding and support of the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA), the USDA Office of General Council (OGC) and the USDA Office of Inspector General (OIG) remain a key focus area.

“What others are saying about Fire Suppression Doctrine....”

The following comments are shared from Fire Management Workshop Participants:

- “Doctrinal thinking” unlocks the human mind to help better manage challenge. Over time, Doctrine and foundational principles will serve to strengthen our profession.”
- Doctrine allows us to operate as a “thinking culture” – a culture whose actions reflect knowledge, experience, awareness, and the essential use of judgment.”
- “Suppression doctrine must allow for the mindful application of fireline knowledge and experience to intermix with skill, current information and the understanding of leader’s intent to do the right thing: protect firefighter lives and reduce overall exposure to risk.”
- “Implementing Doctrine is an anchor point for change. Its time has come.”
- “We already have the tools to implement doctrine, what we need to do now is build upon our organizational capacity to operate under sound risk management principles.”
- Operating in today’s unpredictable wildland fire environment is no longer a reason for “business as usual” – maintaining situational awareness during critical moments and accurate size-up of fire line dynamics must never be constrained by overburdening checklists and fear of reprisal for thinking fast and making appropriate decisions.”
- “Having doctrinal principles to support us can only help to strengthen our profession and raise the overall collective consciousness of who we are and what we do.”

“Getting a ‘GRIP’ on Doctrine?”

Although some people visualize “doctrine” as a material item that can be physically touched and held, felt among others, or just another item that can be shelved on a desk or credenza, **it certainly is not!** Doctrine and its foundational principles are a mindset, a way of focus and understanding. Doctrine is a precursor to action; it includes analysis, judgment, awareness and principles. It can be taught, but only to the degree one can understand it via its foundational principles and upon acting from experiences gained from past decisions, trigger points from prior learning, and thru the passing of portals where one sees reality as it is as least expected.

The concept of fire suppression doctrine is an enabler of “how” to think under variable conditions; and more importantly, how to do so under change. The concepts of wildland firefighting, even as we recognize them today - are constantly changing. What doctrinal thinking brings to the fire environment is the empowerment of the professional wildland firefighter to think, make decisions, and increase personal awareness, responsibility and accountability.

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Lastly, as we continue upon this journey, we anticipate that our partners will join us in this venture. What we are seeking is empowering the ability to think independently, make appropriate decisions, and ultimately - strengthening our profession. As Fire Suppression Doctrine and Fire Management foundational principles continue to evolve, look for future issues of “Doctrine Dialogue” for information and insight.

Questions or Comments?
www.fs.fed.us/fire/doctrine

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