



## Nevada Site Office News

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**For Immediate Release:**

June 5, 2006

### **Agencies Poised and Prepared to Tackle Fire Season at the Nevada Test Site (NTS)**

Key agencies affiliated with the NTS have given themselves a “head start” as they anticipate the upcoming fire season, which is predicted to be even more severe than last year.

If fire breaks out at the NTS or the surrounding environs as spring turns into summer, these agencies have collaborated on and signed formal agreements to ensure that responders are trained and prepared in advance and working cohesively to tackle any event that occurs.

The U.S. Department of Energy, National Nuclear Security Administration Nevada Site Office (NNSA/NSO) has entered into Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs) with the Department of Interior, Bureau of Land Management (BLM), as well as Creech Air Force Base (CAFB) Fire Department, which is located in Indian Springs, Nevada. This allows the NTS Fire & Rescue (F&R), operated by Bechtel Nevada, to work collaboratively with these agencies to address fires on and adjacent to the NTS.

“These MOUs are a collaborative, first-of-a-kind effort where the NNSA/NSO, U.S. Air Force, and BLM are working in a coordinated fashion for fire suppression,” says **Steven Lawrence**, NNSA’s Assistant Manager for Site Operations. “A mechanism now exists that will allow us to respond quickly and efficiently to wildland fires.”

In addition, the MOU that was reached with CAFB is historic, as the NTS has never had a comprehensive agreement with our closest neighbor that not only includes wildland fire suppression, but hazardous materials response, rescue operations, emergency medical services, structural and aircraft firefighting, and mutual training opportunities.

The MOUs clearly delineate responsibilities among the agencies in the following areas:

- For cooperation to prevent, detect, and suppress wildland fires within the protected areas of all the involved agencies
- For protection of the resources of the NTS and the Nevada Test and Training Range, which include structures, systems, and other components
- For fiscal year guidelines and information necessary to properly execute the MOUs, which include protection area maps, dispatching procedures, etc.

**NSO-06-15**

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The NTS F&R is primarily responsible for prevention, protection, and suppression of structure and vehicle fires, medical emergencies, wildland fires, and other events within the NTS. These structures and lands protected by the NTS are adjacent to lands protected by the BLM, which is the primary response organization to address wildland fires on lands adjacent to the NTS.

“That’s why it is mutually advantageous, and in the public interest, for the agencies involved to coordinate their efforts to prevent, detect, and suppress wildfires in and adjacent to their areas of responsibility,” says NTS F&R Chief **Chuck Fauerbach**.

In fact, there are provisions within the agreements that allow the NTS F&R to, under certain circumstances, leave the NTS boundary to take initial attack actions on wildland fires adjoining the NTS. “That may prevent escalation of fire conditions through rapid action by NTS F&R,” explains Fauerbach.

The NTS is located approximately 65 miles northwest of Las Vegas. In 2005, fire crews attacked 31 fires on or adjacent to the test site; most were sparked by lightning.

Since the 2005 fire season, NTS F&R has made significant improvements in both equipment and training in readiness for the 2006 fire season. This includes purchasing upgraded personal protective equipment, communications, tools, and equipment that will provide a safer operating environment for firefighters to conduct operations.