



United States
Department of
Agriculture

Forest
Service

Washington Office

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Route To:

Subject: Clarification of Policy for Ordering Non-Local Contractors on Incidents

To: Regional Foresters, Station Directors, Area Director, IITF Director, Job Corps, and
WO Staff

The Chief's Incident Accountability Team found inconsistencies in the enforcement of the policy surrounding use of contractors arriving at incidents without being properly ordered. The contractors work outside the established resource ordering system and have an unfair advantage over contractors who properly follow the system.

Allegations included the use of such contractors without proper procedures being followed or all other reasonable options are exhausted. Parameters exist and are set forth in Forest Service Handbook 5109.34, Chapter 20, Section 24.3, Ordering Equipment, regarding the use of Fire Chasing Contractors.

To elaborate, the existing policy allows use of the Contractors, but as an exception, and only after a bona fide need is determined. Determination includes the conclusion that local resources are not available or are insufficient to meet needs, and ordering through proper channels is not possible. If Fire Chasers are used, the policy requires replacement of such non-local resources with local resources as quickly as possible. Additionally, rates negotiated with non-local contractors tend to be significantly higher than those in the local area, resulting in increased costs.

Diligent enforcement of this policy falls on the Incident Management Teams and Procurement Unit Leaders. Adherence to the policy is imperative for the Forest Service to ensure proper business practices and accountability in Incident Management. The issue is becoming an ever-increasing problem and must be curtailed before integrity of the ordering system is jeopardized. Future allegations regarding the enforcement of this policy could result in changes to policy parameters, with further restrictions surrounding the use of such resources.

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cc: Dale J Fabian, MaryAnne Ward, Virginia Heerwagen, Alice R Forbes

