



## **Department of the Interior Ready Reserves Program (formerly Rural Fire Assistance)**

- Rural and community fire departments are an integral and important component of the nation's wildland fire community. Their first-response capabilities are crucial to the success of land management agencies in protecting lives and values at risk. Their services result in tremendous cost savings to taxpayers.
- Although the Rural Fire Assistance program was successful in assisting departments with equipment and more, DOI is now focusing efforts on the Ready Reserves program. This program provides wildland fire training to rural fire departments (RFDs) to enhance safety, effectiveness and local response capability in initial attack of wildland fires in or near their communities. Training represents a long-term investment to increase operational safety, boost cooperator preparedness and capability, and to manage suppression costs.
- The Ready Reserve program is available to departments previously eligible for the Rural Fire Assistance program. Ready Reserve training activities will provide critical training scheduled to meet the time and scheduling needs of fire department personnel. Activities eligible for Ready Reserves program funding include traditional NWCG classes, simulation exercises, multi-agency response drills and workshops, local engine academies, and other training demonstrated to address identified RFD wildland fire operations needs.
- The goal of the Ready Reserve program is to enhance the safety and effectiveness of rural fire departments responding to wildland fire incidents. Over time, enhanced training and improved local coordination capabilities will facilitate the development of local response organizations in many areas. These organizations will be skilled and prepared sufficiently to safely manage low complexity wildfire incidents within their jurisdictions.
- \$1.8 million was allocated to the Ready Reserve program in 2006. Funds were allocated subsequent to the annual training window; consequently about \$1.2 million in carryover funds will be used for training rural fire department personnel in the spring of 2007.
- In FY06, approximately \$500,000 was used to begin development of web-based applications of specific NWCG courses, with an additional \$200,000 provided by the National Association of State Foresters and the U.S. Forest Service. Course analysis by an NWCG group determines which course segments are appropriate for web-based study, and those that are more appropriately presented in a classroom setting. This approach reduces required classroom time, and allows for flexibility in scheduling to meet local departments' needs. NWCG S-130 and S-190 have been developed to date; they will be ready for use in July 2007.
- An additional \$1.8 million was targeted for the program in 2007, and will fund training projects as described, as well as additional web-based course development of several other NWCG courses or course segments as they are identified.
- In FY2006, Ready Reserve training funds were allocated through DOI to Bureaus based on the location of the training selected for funding. BLM administered funds to programs within the

11 western states, FWS managed the southeast, BIA the northeast, and NPS mostly covered the Midwest. Most of the funds were used in the 11 western states.

- Bureau, state, or regional program leads are coordinating with the State Forester and other interagency partners and stakeholders to determine what training is needed in a state or region and then solicit proposals. These groups collect and prioritize selections and forward them to NIFC. The DOI leads, in partnership with the State Forester representative, make final selections and funds are apportioned between the bureaus accordingly.