

## Chapter 01

### Federal Wildland Fire Management Policy and Guidance Overview

#### A. Introduction

##### 1. Scope

These standards apply to all the signatories of this document. They are designed to ensure safe and efficient wildland fire, fuels, and fire aviation operations. This document is reviewed annually and updated as needed. Exceptions and/or supplemental direction to the *Interagency Standards for Fire and Fire Aviation Operations* are found in agency specific manuals and handbooks as referenced in individual chapters of this document.

##### 2. Purpose

This document provides a reference for current operational policies, procedures, and guidelines for managing wildland fire and fire aviation operations. Employees engaged in fire management activities will follow all safety standards and guidelines in their agency specific health and safety guides and handbooks. All employees engaged in fire suppression activities will adhere to standards and mitigate risks defined in the *Incident Response Pocket Guide (PMS #461, NFES #1077)*.

#### B. Federal Wildland Fire Management Policy

The 1995 Federal Wildland Fire Management Policy was reviewed and revised in 2001. The Federal Wildland Fire Management Policy directs federal agencies to achieve a balance between suppression to protect life, property, resources, and fire use to regulate fuels and maintain healthy ecosystems. The revised policy allows the appropriate response to all wildland fires regardless of the ignition source.

#### C. Elements of the Federal Wildland Fire Management Policy

##### 1. Safety

a. Firefighter and public safety is the first priority. All Fire Management Plans (FMPs) and activities must reflect this commitment.

##### 2. Training and Qualification

a. All fire personnel will meet specific agency training, experience, and qualification requirements for incident assignments. (*See NWCG 310-1, DOI Incident Qualification and Certification System, and FSH 5109-17.*)

- b. Follow all safety policies, standards, and guidelines identified within the *Interagency Incident Business Management Handbook (IIBMH)*, *Fireline Handbook*, *Interagency Helicopter Operations Guide (IHOG)*, *Interagency Standards for Fire and Fire Aviation Operations*, and *Incident Response Pocket Guide (IRPG)*.
  - c. **Code of Conduct for Fire Suppression**  
Firefighter safety comes first every fire every time. The Ten Standard Firefighting Orders are firm. We don't break them, we don't bend them. All 18 Watch Out Situations must be mitigated before engagement or re-engagement of wildland fire suppression activities. Every firefighter has the right to know that his or her assignments are safe. Every fireline supervisor, every fire manager, and every administrator has the responsibility to confirm that safe practices are known and observed.
3. **Fire Management and Ecosystem Sustainability**  
The full range of fire management activities will be used to help achieve ecosystem sustainability, including interrelated ecological, economic, and social components.
  4. **Response to Wildland Fire**  
Fire, as a critical natural process, will be integrated into land and resource management plans and activities on a landscape scale, and across agency boundaries. Response to wildland fire is based on ecological, social, and legal consequences of the fire. The circumstances under which a fire occurs, and the likely consequences for firefighter, public safety and welfare, natural and cultural resources, and values to be protected dictate the appropriate management response to the fire.
  5. **Use of Wildland Fire**  
Wildland fire will be used to protect, maintain, and enhance resources and, when possible, be allowed to function in its natural ecological role. Use of fire will be based on approved FMPs, and will follow specific prescriptions contained in operational plans.
  6. **Emergency Stabilization and Rehabilitation**  
Emergency Stabilization and Rehabilitation efforts will be undertaken to protect and sustain ecosystems, public health and safety, and to help communities protect infrastructure in the most cost-effective manner.

**7. Protection Priorities**

The protection of human life is the single, overriding priority. Setting priorities among protecting human communities and community infrastructure, other property and improvements, and natural and cultural resources will be based on the values to be protected, human health and safety, and the costs of protection. Once people have been assigned to an incident, these human resources become the highest value to be protected.

**8. Wildland Urban Interface**

The operational roles of federal agencies as partners in the wildland urban interface are wildland firefighting, hazardous fuels reduction, cooperative prevention and education, and technical assistance. Structural fire suppression is the responsibility of tribal, state, or local governments. Federal agencies may assist with exterior structural protection activities under formal interagency agreements that specify the mutual responsibilities of the partners, including funding.

**9. Planning**

Every area with burnable vegetation must have an approved FMP. FMP's are strategic plans that define a program to manage wildland and prescribed fires based on the area's approved land management plan. FMP's must: provide for firefighter and public safety; include fire management strategies, tactics, and alternatives; address values to be protected and public health issues; and be consistent with resource management objectives, activities of the area, and environmental laws and regulations.

**10. Science**

FMP's and programs will be based on a foundation of the best available science. Research will support ongoing efforts to increase our scientific knowledge of biological, physical, and sociological factors. Information needed to support fire management will be developed through an integrated interagency fire science program. Scientific results must be made available to managers in a timely manner and must be used in the development of land management plans, FMP's, and implementation plans.

**11. Preparedness**

Agencies will ensure their capability to provide safe, cost-effective fire management programs in support of land and resource management plans through appropriate planning, staffing, training, equipment, and management oversight.

- a. Preparedness planning must be accomplished annually at all organizational levels.

- b. When conditions exceed those of the normal fire year, severity planning must be developed to consider agency needs on a local, geographic, and national basis. These requests should be developed on an interagency basis where appropriate.
- c. Annual operating plans and unit operating procedures will be updated annually.
- d. Preparedness reviews will be conducted annually.

## 12. Suppression

Fires are suppressed at minimum cost, considering firefighter and public safety, benefits, and values to be protected.

- a. Fire management will use the full range of strategic and tactical options, appropriate management response (AMR), as described in an approved FMP. Without an approved FMP, suppression action must be taken.
- b. All agency units will utilize a decision making process that evaluates alternative management strategies against selected environmental, social, political, and economic criterion.

## 13. Prevention

Agencies will work together with their partners other affected groups and individuals to prevent unauthorized ignition of wildland fires.

## 14. Standardization

Agencies will use compatible planning processes, funding mechanisms, training and qualification requirements, operational procedures, values-to-be-protected methodologies, and public education programs for all fire management activities.

## 15. Interagency Coordination

Fire management planning, preparedness, prevention, suppression, fire use, restoration and rehabilitation, monitoring, research, and education will be conducted on an interagency basis with the involvement of cooperators and partners.

## 16. Communication and Education

Agencies will enhance knowledge and understanding of wildland fire management policies and practices through internal and external communication and education programs. These programs will be continuously improved through the timely and effective exchange of information among all affected agencies and organizations.

## 17. Agency Administrator and Employee Roles

Agency administrators will ensure that their employees are trained, certified, and made available to participate in the wildland fire program locally, regionally, and nationally as the situation demands.

Employees with a valid Red Card or other requested skills will support the wildland fire program as necessary. Agency administrators are responsible and accountable for making employees available.

**18. Evaluation**

Agencies will develop and implement a systematic method of evaluation to determine the effectiveness of projects through implementation of the 2001 Federal Wildland Fire Management Policy. The evaluation will ensure accountability, facilitate resolution of conflict, and identify resource shortages and priorities.

**19. Economic Efficiency**

Fire management programs and activities will be based on economic analyses that incorporate commodity, non-commodity, and social values.

**20. Fire Cause Determination and Cost Recovery**

Agency policy requires all wildland fires to be investigated to determine cause, origin, and responsibility. Agencies must pursue cost recovery, or document why cost recovery is not initiated for all human-caused fires on public and/or other lands under protection agreement.

**21. Employee Responsibility**

All employees, cooperators, contractors, and volunteers who participate in wildland fire operations have the duty to treat one another with respect and to maintain a work environment free of harassment.

Hazing is considered a form of harassment. Hazing is defined as any action taken, or situation created intentionally, to produce mental or physical discomfort, embarrassment, or ridicule.

There is zero tolerance of misconduct, whether it is harassment, hazing, or any other inappropriate behavior. We must all take responsibility for creating and ensuring a healthy and safe work environment.

Every individual has a responsibility to report harassment, inappropriate behavior, and take positive action to mitigate its effects.

**D. Fire Management Objectives**

1. The objectives of the wildland fire management program are to:
  - a. Protect human life and property and natural/cultural resources both within and adjacent to agency administered lands.
  - b. Minimize damages and maximize overall benefits of wildland fire within the framework of land use objectives and resource management plans.
  - c. Manage the wildland fire program in accordance with congressional intent as expressed in the annual appropriations act and enabling legislation, and comply with applicable departmental manual and agency policies and procedures.
  - d. Promote an interagency approach to managing fires on an ecosystem basis.
  - e. Employ strategies to manage wildland fires that provide for firefighter and public safety, minimize cost and resource damage, and are consistent with values to be protected and management objectives.
  - f. Restore and rehabilitate resources and improvements lost in or damaged by fire or suppression activities.
  - g. Minimize, and where necessary mitigate, human-induced impacts to resources, natural processes, or improvements attributable to wildland fire activities.
  - h. Promote public understanding of fire management programs and objectives.
  - i. Organize a fire staff that can apply the highest standards of professional and technical expertise.
  - j. Encourage research to advance understanding of fire behavior, effects, ecology, and management.
  - k. Integrate fire management through all levels of the planning process.
  - l. Prevent and investigate all unplanned human-caused fires.

**E. Department of the Interior Wildland Fire Management Policy (1998)**

The Department's Wildland Fire Management Policy is cited in the "*Department of the Interior, Departmental Manual Part 620: Chapter 1*".

**1. Authorities**

- a. *Protection Act of September 20, 1922 (42 Stat. 857; 16 U.S.C. 594)*
- b. *McSweeney-McNary Act of 1928 (45 Stat. 221; 16 U.S.C. 487)*
- c. *Economy Act of June 30, 1932 (47 Stat. 31 U.S.C. 1535)*
- d. *Taylor Grazing Act of June 28, 1934 (48 Stat. 1269; 43 U.S.C. 315)*

- e. *O. And C. Act of August 28, 1937 (50 Stat. 875; 43 U.S.C.1181e)*
- f. *National Park Service Acts as amended (67 Stat. 495; 16 U.S.C. 1b)*
- g. *Federal Property and Administrative Service Act of 1949 (40 U.S.C. 471; et seq.)*
- h. *Reciprocal Fire Protection Act of May 27, 1955 (69 Stat. 66; 42 U.S.C. 1856a)*
- i. *National Wildlife Refuge System Administration Act of 1966 as amended (80 Stat. 927; 16 U.S.C. 668dd through 668ee)*
- j. *Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act of December 18, 1971 (85 Stat. 688; 42 U.S.C. 1601)*
- k. *Disaster Relief Act of May 22, 1974 (88 Stat. 1413; 42 U.S.C. 5121)*
- l. *Federal Fire Prevention and Control Act of October 29, 1974 (88 Stat. 1535; 15 U.S.C. 2201)*
- m. *Federal Grant and Cooperative Agreement Act of 1977 (P.L. 950224), as amended by P.L. 97-258, September 13, 1982 (96 Stat. 1003; 31 U.S.C. 6301 through 6308)*
- n. *Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act of December 2, 1980 (94 Stat. 2371)*
- o. *Supplemental Appropriation Act of September 10, 1982 (96 Stat. 837)*
- p. *Wildfire Suppression Assistance Act of 1989 (P.L. 100-428, as amended by P.L. 101-11, April 7, 1989)*
- q. *Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act (P.L. 93-638) as amended*
- r. *National Indian Forest Resources Management Act (P.L. 101-630 November 28, 1990)*
- s. *Tribal Self-Governance Act of 1994 (P.L. 103-413)*
- t. *Department of the Interior and Related Agencies Appropriation Act (P.L. 103-32)*

## 2. Responsibilities

- a. **Secretary of the Interior** – through the Directors of the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS), National Park Service (NPS), and the Deputy Commissioner of Indian Affairs (BIA) is responsible for wildland fire management activities of the Department (including such activities when contracted for, in whole or in part, with other agencies or tribes) under the statues cited in 620 DM 1.1.
- b. **Assistant Secretary – Policy, Management and Budget (PMB)** – is responsible for coordination of strategic level inter-bureau, interagency and inter-functional wildland fire policy development and oversight. Principle responsibility for these functions within PMB lies with the Office of Managing Risk

and Public Safety (MRPS). Advice and recommendations on wildland fire policy and program issues are provided to the Secretary and other policy officials.

- c. **Assistant Secretaries of Land and Minerals Management, Fish and Wildlife Parks, and Indian Affairs** – are responsible for wildland fire policy, development and oversight within their respective bureaus, and for coordination of inter-bureau and inter-agency policy development with the Assistant Secretary – Policy, Management and Budget.

### 3. Policy

- a. Firefighter and public safety is always the first priority. All FMP's and activities must reflect this commitment.
- b. Every area with burnable vegetation must have an approved FMP. FMP's must be consistent with firefighter and public safety, values to be protected, land, natural, and cultural resource management plans, and must address public health issues. FMP's must also address all potential wildland fire occurrences and include the full range of wildland fire management actions. Bureau FMP's must be coordinated, reviewed, and approved by responsible agency administrators to ensure consistency with approved land management plans.
- c. Fire, as a critical natural process, will be integrated into land, natural and cultural management plans, and activities on a landscape scale, across bureau boundaries, and will be based upon best available science. All use of fire for natural and cultural resource management requires an approved plan which contains a formal prescription.
- d. Wildland fire will be used to protect, maintain, and enhance natural, and cultural resources, and as nearly as possible, be allowed to function in its natural ecological role.
- e. Bureaus will ensure their capability to provide safe, cost-effective fire management programs in support of land, natural, and cultural resource management plans through appropriate planning, staffing, training, and equipment.
- f. Management actions taken on wildland fires must be cost effective, consider firefighter and public safety, benefits, values to be protected, and consistent with natural and cultural resource objectives.
- g. Bureaus will work together with other affected groups and individuals to prevent unauthorized ignition of wildland fires.
- h. Protection priorities are (1) human Life and (2) property and natural/cultural resources. If it becomes necessary to prioritize between property and natural/cultural resources, this is done based on relative values to be protected, commensurate with fire management costs. Once people have been committed to an



incident, these human resources become the highest value to be protected.

- i. Fire management planning, preparedness, wildland fire and prescribed fire operations, monitoring, and research will be conducted on an interagency basis with the involvement of all parties.
- j. Bureaus will use compatible planning processes, funding mechanisms, training and qualifications requirements, operational procedures, values-to-be-protected methodologies, and public education programs for all fire management activities.
- k. Fire management programs and activities will be based on economic analyses that incorporate commodity, non-commodity, and social values.
- l. The operational role of the bureaus as a partner in the wildland/urban interface is wildland firefighting, hazard fuels reduction, cooperative prevention and education, and technical assistance. Structural fire protection is the responsibility of tribal, state, and local governments. Federal agencies may assist with exterior structural protection activities under formal Fire Protection Agreements that specify the mutual responsibilities of the partners, including funding. (Some federal agencies have full structural protection authority for their facilities on lands they administer and may also enter into formal agreement to assist tribes, state, and local government with full structural protection.)
- a. Employees who are trained and certified will participate in the wildland fire program as the situation demands; non-certified employees with operational, administrative, or other skills will support the wildland fire program as needed. Agency Administrators will be responsible, and will be held accountable, to make employees available to participate in the wildland fire program.