

Chapter 05
USFS Wildland Fire and Aviation Program
Organization and Responsibilities

A. Introduction

This handbook is intended to be a program reference guide that documents the standards for operational procedures and practices of Fire and Aviation Management. Following the Thirtymile Fire Tragedy on July 10, 2001, the Thirtymile Accident Prevention Plan was developed and approved. This plan included 38 specific actions designed to improve fire management leadership and enhance firefighter safety. Action A-18 of this plan states: "The Forest Service Director of Fire and Aviation Management and the Director of Human Resources will work with the Forest Service Line Officer Team to develop core fire management competencies into the position descriptions and in selection criteria for agency administrators".

This development work has been completed and the following Evaluation Criterion, Training and Core Competencies, and Performance Standards are to be added to all Line Officer positions having fire program management responsibilities.

B. Evaluation Criterion

Knowledge of fire program management including ability to integrate fire and fuels management across all program areas and functions; ability to implement fire management strategies and integrate natural resource concerns into collaborative community protection and ecosystem restoration strategies; knowledge to oversee a fire management program including budget, preparedness, prevention, suppression, and hazardous fuels reduction; ability to serve as an Agency Administrator during an incident on an assigned unit; and ability to provide a fully staffed, highly qualified, and diversified firefighting workforce that exists in a "safety first" and "readiness" environment.

C. Training and Core Competencies

1. Attend a regional or national "Fire Management for Agency Administrators" training session.
2. Require a shadow assignment with a fully qualified agency administrator.
3. Receive training or experience in the Wildfire Situation Analysis (WFSA) and Wildland Fire Implementation Plan (WFIP).

4. Provide a Delegation of Authority to Incident Commanders.

D. Performance Standards

Add the following standards to the existing performance standards for Forest Supervisors and District Rangers under Performance Standard #4, Leadership, Coaching, and Supervising:

1. Integrate fire and fuels management across all functional areas.
2. Implement fire management strategies and integrate natural resource concerns into collaborative community protection and ecosystem restoration strategies on the unit.
3. Manage a budget that includes fire preparedness, prevention, suppression, and hazardous fuels in an annual program of work for the unit.
4. Perform duties of Agency Administrator and maintain those qualifications.
5. Provide a fully staffed, highly qualified, and diverse workforce in a "safety first" environment.

These standards are based on current policy and provide program guidance to ensure safe, consistent, efficient, and effective Fire and Aviation Operations. This document will be reviewed and updated annually.

E. Recommended Specific Agency Administrator Performance for Fire and Aviation at the Field Level

1. **Preparedness**
 - a. Take all necessary and prudent actions to ensure firefighter and public safety.
 - b. Ensure sufficient qualified fire and non-fire personnel are available to support fire operations at a level commensurate with the local and national fire situations.
 - c. Ensure accurate position descriptions are developed and reflect the complexity of the unit and Individual Development Plan's promote and enhance FMO currency and development.
 - d. Provide a written delegation of Authority to FMOs that provides an adequate level of operational authority at the unit level. Include Multi-Agency Coordinating (MAC) Group authority, as appropriate.

- e. Identify resource management objectives to maintain a current Fire Management Plan (FMP) that identifies an accurate level of funding for personnel and equipment.
 - f. Develop preparedness and fire use standards that are in compliance with agency fire policies.
 - g. Management teams meet once a year to review fire and aviation policies, roles, responsibilities, and delegations of authority. Specifically address oversight and management controls, critical safety issues, and high-risk situations such as team transfers of command, periods of multiple fire activity, and Red Flag Warnings.
 - h. Ensure fire and aviation preparedness reviews are conducted each year.
 - i. Meet annually with major cooperators and review interagency agreements to ensure their continued effectiveness and efficiency.
 - j. Convene and participate in annual conferences and fire reviews.
- 2. Suppression**
- a. Ensure use of fire funds is in compliance with Agency policies.
 - b. Wildland Fire Situation Analysis (WFSA) is completed and approved on all fires that escape initial attack. Certification by line officer is required for each operational period to validate the selected alternative.
 - c. WFSA's that are expected to exceed \$5,000,000.00 in suppression costs are forwarded to the Regional Office for review and approval.
 - d. After action reviews are conducted on all fires that require a WFSA. Personally attend reviews on Type 1 and Type 2 fires.
 - e. Provide incident management objectives, written delegations of authority, and a complete Agency Administrator Briefing to Incident Management Teams (see page 05-07).
 - f. Evaluate the need for resource advisors for all fires, and assign as appropriate.
 - g. For all unplanned human-caused fires where liability can be determined, ensure cost recovery actions are initiated to recover cost of suppression activities, land rehabilitation, and damages to the resource and improvements.
- 3. Safety**
- a. Review safety policies, procedures, and concerns with field fire and aviation personnel.
 - b. Ensure timely follow-up actions to program reviews, fire preparedness reviews, fire and aviation safety reviews, and after action reviews.

- c. Monitor the fire situation and provide oversight during periods of critical fire activity/situations of high risk.
- d. Ensure there is adequate direction in fire management plans to monitor fire danger awareness.
- e. Take appropriate actions with escalating fire potential.
- f. Ensure appropriate investigations are conducted for incidents, entrapments, and serious accidents.

4. Fire Use

- a. Ensure an approved burn plan is followed for each prescribed fire project, including follow-up monitoring and documentation to ensure management objectives are met.
- b. Ensure that a Wildland Fire Implementation Plan (WFIP) is completed and implemented for all fires managed for resource benefits.
- c. Provide management oversight by personally visiting wildland and prescribed fire activities each year.
- d. Ensure compliance with National and Regional Office policy and direction for prescribed fire activities and ensure that periodic reviews and inspections of the prescribed fire program are completed.
- e. Approve Prescribed Fire Plans. Authority may be delegated to the agency administrators as provided under specific directions.
- f. Review Prescribed Fire Plans and recommend or approve the plans depending upon the delegated authority. Ensure that the Prescribed Fire Plan has been reviewed and recommended by a qualified technical reviewer who was not involved in the plan preparation.

F. Fire Management Positions

The following lists show the minimum operational experience recommended for fire management positions. *The Interagency Fire Program Management Qualifications Standards* may be used as general guidelines, in conjunction with specific agency requirements when filling vacant fire program positions, and as an aid in developing Individual Development Plans (IDPs) for employees.

G. Recommended Specific Fire Management Staff Performance for Fire Operations at the Field Level

1. Preparedness

- a. Maintain safety first as the foundation for all aspects of fire and aviation management.
- b. Ensure that only trained and qualified personnel are assigned to fire and aviation duties.

- c. Develop, implement, evaluate, and document fire and aviation training program to meet current and anticipated needs.
- d. Establish an effective process to gather, evaluate, and communicate information to managers, supervisors, and employees. Ensure clear concise communications are maintained at all levels.
- e. Ensure that the fire and aviation management staff understands their roles, responsibilities, authority, and accountability.
- f. Develop and maintain an open line of communication with public and cooperators.
- g. Regardless of funding level, provide a safe, effective, and efficient fire preparedness and fire use program.
- h. Organize, train, equip, and direct a qualified work force. An Individual Development Plan (IDP) must be provided for incumbents who do not meet new standards. Establish qualification review process.
- i. Take appropriate action when performance is exceptional or deficient.
- j. Ensure fire and aviation policies are understood, followed, and coordinated with other agencies as appropriate.
- k. Ensure that adequate resources are available to implement fire management operations.
- l. Provide fire personnel with adequate guidance, training and decision-making authority to ensure timely decisions.
- m. Develop and maintain agreements, annual operating plans, and contracts on an interagency basis to increase effectiveness and efficiencies.
- n. Develop, maintain, and annually evaluate the FMP to ensure accuracy and validity.
- o. Ensure budget requests and allocations reflect preparedness requirements in the FMP.
- p. Develop and maintain current operational plans, (e.g., dispatch, pre-attack, prevention).
- q. Ensure that reports and records are properly completed and maintained.
- r. Ensure fiscal responsibility and accountability in planning and expenditures.
- s. Assess, identify, and implement program actions that effectively reduce unwanted wildland fire ignitions and mitigate risks to life, property, and resources.
- t. Work with cooperators to identify processes and procedures for providing fire safe communities within the wildland urban interface.

2. Suppression

- a. Ensure completion of a job hazard analysis (JHA) for fire and fire aviation activities so mitigation measures are taken to reduce risk.
- b. Provide for and personally participate in periodic site visits to individual incidents and projects.
- c. Utilize the incident complexity analysis to ensure the proper level of management is assigned to all incidents.
- d. Ensure incoming personnel and crews are briefed prior to fire and aviation assignments.
- e. Coordinate the development of the Wildland Fire Situation Analysis (WFSA) with local unit staff specialists for all fires that escape initial attack.
- f. Ensure effective transfer of command of incident management occurs and safety is considered in all functional areas.
- g. Monitor fire activity to recognize when complexity levels exceed program capabilities. Increase managerial and operational resources to meet need.
- h. Complete cost recovery actions when unplanned human-caused fires occur.

3. Safety

- a. Ensure work/rest and R&R guidelines are followed during all fire and aviation activities. Deviations are approved and documented.
- b. Initiate, conduct, and/or participate in fire management related reviews and investigations.
- c. Monitor fire season severity predictions, fire behavior, and fire activity levels. Take appropriate actions to ensure safe, efficient, and effective operations.

4. Fire Use

- a. Ensure a written, approved burn plan exists for each prescribed fire project.
- b. Ensure all escaped prescribed fires receive a review at the proper level.
- c. Provide the expertise and skills to fully integrate fire and aviation management into interdisciplinary planning efforts.
- d. Effectively communicate the “natural role” of wildland fire to internal and external agency audiences.
- e. Ensure compliance with National and Regional Office policy and direction for prescribed fire activities and ensure that periodic reviews and inspections of the prescribed fire program are completed.

