

Chapter – 5 Wildland Fire Prevention

A. Introduction

The implementation of Wildfire Prevention programs saves lives, reduces suppression costs, property loss and the disruption of daily life in Indian Country. There are numerous prevention strategies and actions available to Tribes and Agencies that can be used to effectively reduce unwanted person caused fires. Wildland fire ignitions, damage to natural resources by unwanted wildfires, and the threat to firefighter and public safety can be reduced by using these strategies, and integrating prevention actions into existing preparedness programs.

Person caused wildfire is the highest ignition source of wildland fires in Indian Country. When coupled with the extensive nature of wildfire regimes that have been altered from historic levels, person caused fires pose a greater threat to life, property, and our natural and cultural resources than do natural ignitions.

B. Wildland Fire Prevention Program Guidance

The Bureau released a Wildland Fire Prevention Handbook in 2009 (NWPH). This handbook, designated as Indian Affairs Manual (IAM), Part 90, Chapter 1.4 C, 6 (H), provides detailed policy and guidance for all aspects of the wildland fire prevention program. The information presented in this chapter is operational policy and guidance and is not intended to replace the NWPH. The Regional Wildland Urban Interface (WUI)/Prevention Specialists or the BIA-NIFC, Deputy Fire Use Specialist should be consulted for guidance outside the scope of this chapter or the NWPH.

1. Current Program

The BIA Wildfire Prevention program has six WUI/Wildfire Prevention Specialist (WPS) positions placed strategically throughout the nation to serve all of Indian Country. The employees, Regions they serve, and phone numbers are identified in Appendix 5-1.

2. Prevention Planning

Wildfire Prevention Plans (WFPP) are required to secure long-term prevention program funds. Chapter 3 of NWPH describes the requirements and process for developing a WFPP and obtaining funding for its implementation. Refer to the NWPH or communicate directly with the WUI Prevention Specialist assigned to the region for further prevention planning assistance.

3. Funding Opportunities for Prevention Activities

a. Wildland Fire Management (WFM) Accounts

Tribes and Agencies may use preparedness, emergency operations, and/or hazardous fuels funds to support prevention efforts.

The following programs may be used independently or together to meet prevention program needs:

1) WFPP Implementation:

An approved WFPP is required to be eligible for prevention program funds. Funding to implement a prevention plan must be requested annually. A Tribe or Agency must demonstrate a commitment to the implementation of the WFPP to be considered for recurring program funds for the life of the plan. The WFPP will require periodic updates to assess and mitigate new prevention issues and to support continued program funding.

- For a position to be eligible for full funding from the wildland fire prevention program funds, 80% or more of the duties must be directly related to prevention activities. This includes wildland fire investigation.
- Annual Accomplishment Reports (see NWPH Resource CD) will be provided by prevention staff at BIA/tribal programs. Third party activity/event documentation will be provided upon request.
- Prevention personnel are funded from preparedness FFS Fund Code 92200 and therefore do not accrue a savings in program dollars when assigned to fire suppression for their base-eight.

2) Low Complexity:

Funding may be requested to meet the basic needs of Tribes and Agencies when a prevention plan would be of little benefit. These funds are limited to availability each year and may be used to procure prevention training, technology, equipment and supplies. Prevention tasks would be performed as collateral duties. These funds may be recurring if sufficient funding is available. However, a written request must be provided to the Regional Office for approval and be concurred with the WPS staff, before being sent to NIFC.

3) Severity:

The identification of prevention actions is critical to the development of a severity request; see Chapter 4, Section J of this guide for severity request criteria and procedures. Severity requests are routinely prepared by Agencies/Tribes experiencing or expecting to experience severe fire danger. Severity funds may be used to fund prevention teams, augment patrols, develop and implement local prevention campaigns, i.e., community risk assessment and mitigation plans, community outreach and education, and addressing a local arson problem. Agencies and Tribes are encouraged to include prevention activities in severity requests. The funding request for prevention activities must be submitted with the Agency Severity request to the Regional Office. These are not recurring funds.

4) Supplemental funding:

The purpose of Prevention Supplemental (PS) funding is to provide a mechanism to request funding for special projects or needs that exceed an Agency/Tribe regular budgeted prevention funding. Funds used in this program are non-recurring and based on availability. The Regional Office will be informed by the WPS when supplemental funding is available. These accounts may be created and funded at the Regional and/or National level. PS funding associated with these accounts has very specific and limited use. Requests must be submitted on the Supplemental Request form to the Regional Office. The PS Request form can be obtained from the WPS.

Appropriate uses:

- Travel for training specific to wildfire prevention, education, mitigation and investigation for those positions currently not receiving prevention funding. This is limited to current BIA and/or Tribal employees.
- Prevention material development
- Prevention Team activities during non-emergency periods and when all other funding sources are unavailable. Support from supplemental funding for prevention teams will be limited by the availability of funding.
- Prevention/investigation specific training materials which benefits multiple tribes and agencies.
- Purchase of support items such as fire investigation kits, prevention materials, educational materials, for those positions currently not receiving prevention funding.
- Purchase of specialized prevention and/or education program support items.
- The development and printing of educational materials such as brochures, flyers and banners to be used for special events where large numbers of visitors are expected.
- Additional Fire Danger Rating Signs.
- Initial non-recurring one time expenditures for "Startup" items

Prohibited Uses:

- Base pay of preparedness funded positions, this includes prevention programs.
- Indirect Costs
- Suppression Equipment (unless justified and approved in a specific proposal with a demonstrated wildfire prevention benefit).
- Medical Claims.

- Travel for regular government employees attending a non - prevention, education, mitigation, or fire investigation training.
- Any item and or service which is identified in the approved and funded prevention program.

Contact your Regional WUI/Prevention Specialist for additional information on how to request this funding and its funding limitations.

5) Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) Funds:

Some prevention activities may also be funded through the Community Assistance activity area of the Hazardous Fuels WUI Program. Prevention needs must be entered in the Community Assistance (CA) portal of the National Fire Plan Operating Reporting System (NFORS) annually by May 1 of each year. Community Wildfire Protections Plan (CWPP) or equivalent (WFPP) development, risk assessments, mitigation plans and FIREWISE workshops are examples of activities appropriate for this funding source. These and other regional and national initiatives should be coordinated through the WPS.

Agencies/tribes receiving CA grants will be required to provide:

- annual project summary reports,
- supporting financial documents (receipts for items purchased),
- photos of finished projects.

6) Fire Codes

Fire Codes (apart from Severity) may be used to fund prevention activities and materials on a limited basis. They may be used to fund fire investigations (including travel, supplies and support directly related to the investigation). They may also be used to fund wildfire prevention/education teams in specific circumstances where increased fire prevention activity is essential to reduce further occurrence or increased competition for suppression resources.

7) AD Hiring Authority

The Department of the Interior (DOI) Administratively Determined (AD) Pay Plan for Emergency Workers is a hiring authority, NOT a funding program.

The DOI AD Pay Plan allows for the performance of prevention duties when regular employees are not available and when fire danger is very high or extreme. Patrols, homeowner risk assessments, and signing are examples of prevention actions that may be conducted under the AD Pay Plan.

The AD hiring authority applies to the federal government only and cannot be used by tribes. If a tribe wishes to use the AD Hiring Authority for prevention team activation, corresponding funds must be held by the sponsoring BIA agency to cover associated payroll costs.

Prevention workers hired using the AD Pay Plan must have a Fire Code to charge their time to. Regular Prevention program funds may not be used to pay for AD hires.

No position currently exists in the AD Pay Plan to hire a worker to wear the Smokey Bear Costume.

Please refer to the most current version of the DOI AD Pay Plan for additional guidance.

4. Prevention Program Monitoring and Review

Monitoring and review is the responsibility of the Regional Office, Agency, and Tribe. WFPPs should be revised as often as necessary to make program adjustments and apply new prevention strategies that address current prevention issues. Documentation of prevention activities and results is not only necessary, but vital to demonstrate program success. Annual prevention program reviews are to be conducted as part of the preparedness program reviews and should include the Regional WUI/Prevention Specialist to insure funding intent is met. The BIA National Wildfire Prevention Handbook 2009 provides guidance, direction and review templates to accomplish this task. Also see Chapter 4, Section C, page 4-10-12 for additional information.

5. Wildland Fire Investigation

a. Policy

[This section will be superseded upon approval of the BIA Wildland Fire Investigation Handbook.]

It is Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) policy is to investigate all wildfires occurring on lands held in trust or restricted status for Indian Tribes to determine the specific cause and origin (90 IAM Part 90, Chapter 1). It is imperative that the wildland fire office work closely with the Office of Justice Services (OJS) on all suspicious wildfire cause determinations.

- A memorandum of understanding (MOU) has been signed which defines the roles and responsibilities of OJS and BIA Branch of Wildfire Management at the national level regarding wildland fire investigations. This document also assigns a Special Agent to BIA NIFC to coordinate the case management of those wildfire crimes. The most recent version of this MOU can be obtained from the WPS.
- The Special Agent is available to assist the regions and field level units with wildfire crime case development and management. The local unit must have completed a Wildfire Investigation Report and meet at least one of the following criteria before the Special Agent will respond:
 - A determination has been made of criminal activity, CFR violations, federal misdemeanor, and other crimes associated with the fire.
 - Suspects have been identified.
 - Witnesses were identified but local unit is unable to contact.
 - Damage to natural resources or structures exists.
 - Evidence identified and/or recovered which indicates criminal activity.
 - Serious injury/accident or fatality occurred on fire.
 - Multiple ignition points were found –evidence of serial arson exists.
 - An Arson Task Force is formed for serial arson.

b. National Fire Investigation Teams

A Tribe, Agency or Region may request, a wildland fire investigation team (INVF Team) to assist if local resources are unavailable and additional investigative resources are needed. For information on how to request or participate on a BIA Arson Investigation Team, contact the WPS.

6. National WeTIP Program

WeTip is a national anonymous tip hotline dealing with sensitive crimes including wildland fire. BIA-NIFC maintains an annual agreement to provide an anonymous tip hotline for Indian Country regarding Arson. The tip hotline number is 1-800-472-7766 (1-800-47-ARSON). For more information regarding the WeTip program contact your Regional WUI/Prevention Specialist.

**APPENDIX 5-1
BIA Regional Wildland Fire Prevention Specialists**

Eastern Oklahoma and Southern Plains: Pat McDowell, (405) 609-8872

Navajo, and Southwest: Val Christianson, (505) 563-3375

Rocky Mountain and Great Plains: David Peters, (406) 247-7906

Alaska and Northwest: Len Diaz, (503) 231-6806

Midwest and Eastern: Jeremy Bennett, (612) 725-4526

Pacific and Western: Jim Nanamkin, (916) 978-6148

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