

1 **Chapter 05**  
2 **USDA Forest Service Wildland Fire and Aviation Program**  
3 **Organization and Responsibilities**

4  
5 **Introduction**

6  
7 This document is intended to be a program reference guide that documents the  
8 standards for operational procedures and practices for the USDA Forest Service  
9 Fire and Aviation Management program. The standards provided in this  
10 handbook are based on current agency and interagency wildland fire  
11 management policy, and is intended to provide fire and aviation program  
12 guidance and to ensure safe, consistent, efficient, and effective fire and aviation  
13 operations. This document will be reviewed and updated annually.

14  
15 **Foundational Doctrine**

16  
17 The following collection of principles and beliefs form the foundational doctrine  
18 for fire suppression in the U.S. Forest Service. These principles and beliefs  
19 operate at multiple organizational levels, including:

- 20 • Forest Service Wide (i.e., apply to all employees and activities)
- 21 • Fire and Aviation Management (i.e., are specific to the fire and aviation  
22 management program)
- 23 • Fire Suppression (i.e., are specific to fire fighting activities).

24  
25 **The Operational Environment**

- 26 • *Fire Suppression*
  - 27 1. No resource or facility is worth the loss of human life, however the
  - 28 wildland fire suppression environment is complex and possesses inherent
  - 29 hazards that can, even with reasonable mitigation, result in harm to fire
  - 30 fighters engaged in fire suppression operations. In recognition of this fact,
  - 31 we are committed to the aggressive management of risk.

32  
33 **Mission**

- 34 • *Forest Service Wide*
  - 35 2. The Forest Service is prepared and organized to support national and
  - 36 international emergencies with trained personnel and other assets when
  - 37 requested.
  - 38 3. Agency employees respond when they come across situations where
  - 39 human life is immediately at risk or there is a clear emergency, and they are
  - 40 capable of assisting without undue risk to themselves or others.
  - 41 4. In responding to emergencies, we will bring the same professionalism
  - 42 and passion for safety as we do to non-emergency situations.
  - 43 5. Support for local fire emergencies takes priority over accomplishment of
  - 44 local resource targets. Support of non-local fire emergencies will be at the
  - 45 discretion of the local line officer, as bounded by agency agreements and
  - 46 Regional or National direction.

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- 1 6. A cooperative relationship between the Forest Service and other agencies  
2 is essential. The Forest Service is committed to honor its part of the joint  
3 responsibility to develop and maintain effective working relationships with  
4 its intergovernmental cooperators.
- 5 • *Fire & Aviation Management*  
6 7. Fire management is central to meeting the Forest Service mission –  
7 conserving natural resources, restoring ecological health, and protecting  
8 communities.
  - 9 • *Fire Suppression*  
10 8. Successful fire suppression is essential to support the Forest Service  
11 mission.  
12 9. The intent of wildfire suppression is to protect human life, property, and  
13 at risk lands and resources.

14  
15 **Leadership and Accountability**

- 16 • *Forest Service Wide*  
17 10. The hallmarks of Forest Service leadership are action, attitude, and  
18 accountability.  
19 11. Leaders express clear and concise intent to ensure assignments are  
20 managed safely, effectively, and efficiently.  
21 12. Leaders regularly monitor operations for effectiveness, and take action  
22 when there is recognition of exceptional or problematic employee  
23 performance.  
24 13. Both positive reinforcement and discipline will be based on individual  
25 behavior as measured by adherence to the rules; appropriate application of  
26 doctrine, principles, and guidelines; execution of responsibilities  
27 commensurate with role; and appropriate use of available information.
- 28 • *Fire Suppression*  
29 14. Demonstrated fitness for command is a requirement for leadership  
30 positions associated with fire fighting.

31  
32 **Roles and Relationships**

- 33 • *Forest Service Wide*  
34 15. Commitment to duty, respect for others, and personal integrity are  
35 expected. Every employee fosters a work environment that is enjoyable,  
36 rewarding, recognizes the value of diversity, and is free of harassment.
- 37 • *Fire & Aviation Management*  
38 16. Line officers with fire management responsibilities will have knowledge  
39 and understanding of fire program management.  
40 17. Contracted resources will meet identified standards for qualifications,  
41 training, productivity, and efficiency necessary to meet emergency response  
42 needs.  
43 18. It is the Forest Service responsibility to initiate and participate in public  
44 education efforts to promote support for necessary fire management  
45 activities.

- 1 • *Fire Suppression*  
2 19. Every Forest Service employee has a responsibility to support fire  
3 suppression emergencies in a manner that meets identified needs, and is  
4 within their qualifications and capabilities.  
5
- 6 **Operations**
- 7 • *Forest Service Wide*  
8 20. Employees are expected and empowered to be creative and decisive, to  
9 exercise initiative and accept responsibility, and to use their training,  
10 experience, and judgment in decision-making to carry out their leader's  
11 intent.  
12 21. Employees are expected and empowered to make reasonable and  
13 prudent decisions to accomplish the agency mission while minimizing  
14 exposure to hazards.  
15 22. Clear, uncomplicated plans and concise orders maximize effectiveness  
16 and minimize confusion.
- 17 • *Fire Suppression*  
18 23. When it is time to fight fire, we do so in a manner that maximizes  
19 effectiveness of effort, has highest regard for firefighter and public safety,  
20 and controls costs.  
21 24. Every fire suppression operation is directed toward clearly-defined,  
22 decisive, and obtainable objectives.  
23 25. Command and control must be decentralized to cope with the  
24 unpredictable nature of fire. To achieve their leader's intent and accomplish  
25 operational objectives, subordinate commanders are required to make  
26 decisions on their own initiative, and to coordinate their efforts.  
27 26. Unity of effort is maintained and suppression actions are coordinated at  
28 all times.  
29 27. Using principles requires judgment in application, while adherence to  
30 rules does not. In combination, principles and rules guide our fundamental  
31 wildland fire suppression practices and behaviors, and are mutually  
32 understood at every level of command.  
33 28. Rapid deployment and concentration of fire suppression resources at the  
34 decisive time and place is essential to successful fire suppression actions.  
35 29. Maintaining high capability for initial attack is essential to public and  
36 fire fighter safety, accomplishment of management objectives, and cost  
37 containment.  
38
- 39 **Risk Management**
- 40 • *Fire Suppression*  
41 30. We practice risk management to minimize the exposure and affects of  
42 the inherent hazards in fire suppression while maximizing the opportunities  
43 to achieve leader intent.  
44  
45  
46

**1 Agency Administrator Positions**

2

3 The Forest Service has developed core fire management competencies. They  
4 are presented here for reference:

- 5 ● Knowledge of fire program management including ability to integrate fire  
6 and fuels management across all program areas and functions;
- 7 ● Ability to implement fire management strategies and integrate natural  
8 resource concerns into collaborative community protection and ecosystem  
9 restoration strategies;
- 10 ● Knowledge to oversee a fire management program including budget,  
11 preparedness, prevention, suppression, and hazardous fuels reduction;
- 12 ● Ability to serve as an agency administrator during an incident on an  
13 assigned unit; and
- 14 ● Ability to provide a fully staffed, highly qualified, and diversified  
15 firefighting workforce that exists in a "safety first" and "readiness"  
16 environment.

17

**18 Training and Core Competencies**

- 19 ● Attend a regional or national Fire Management Leadership for Agency  
20 Administrators training session;
- 21 ● Require a shadow assignment with a fully qualified agency administrator;
- 22 ● Receive training or experience with the Wildland Fire Decision Support  
23 System (WFDSS); and
- 24 ● Ability to provide a Delegation of Authority to incident commanders.

25

**26 Line Officer Certification Program**

27 The following principles will guide certification of agency administrators in fire  
28 management:

- 29 ● Regional Foresters are accountable for certification of line officers;
- 30 ● Line officer evaluation includes standards for training, background and  
31 experience, and demonstrated ability, which will result in a qualitative  
32 evaluation of readiness by the Regional Forester;
- 33 ● When the complexity level of a fire exceeds a line officer's certification, a  
34 coach will be assigned to advise (but not replace);
- 35 ● This certification program will be periodically evaluated and updated as  
36 needed;
- 37 ● Assistance with decision documentation and analysis can be requested  
38 through the Wildland Fire Management RD&A- National Fire Decision  
39 Support Center (NFDSC); and
- 40 ● The Coaching/Shadowing program, to be administered by each region, is an  
41 integral part of this certification program.

42

**43 Line Officers will be evaluated in three basic areas:**

- 44 ● Training;
- 45 ● Background and experience; and

- 1 • Demonstrated understanding of concepts and principles.

2

3 This certification program is a multi-level process where line officers  
4 demonstrate competence in one of three levels of managing fires. Those levels  
5 would be Working, Journey, and Advanced.

6

#### 7 **Guidelines**

8 In consideration of the appropriate level (Working, Journey, and Advanced) to  
9 assign a line officer, the Regional Forester should consider the following  
10 guidelines:

- 11 • For individuals that do not meet at least the Working Level, a coach will be  
12 assigned to support that line officer in managing Type 3 or higher wildfire  
13 incidents.

14

15 **Working Level** - The line officer could manage a low to moderate complexity  
16 fire. The line officer should meet the following:

- 17 • **Training:** Fire Management Leadership or National Fire Management for  
18 Line Officers, and attain WFDSS Certification as described per  
19 authorization level in FSM 5120.
- 20 • **Background and Experience:**
- 21 ○ Successful management of a minimum of one Type 3 or higher fire, or
  - 22 one successful higher complexity fire (Type 2 or higher) quality
  - 23 shadow assignment (consider complexity and size of the fires).
  - 24 ○ Management oversight of a low-complexity fire program and/or
  - 25 experience as an agency administrator or representative.
  - 26 ○ Applicable experience in all hazard or other incident oversight may be
  - 27 considered in lieu of this experience.
  - 28 ○ Consider career fire experience.
- 29 • **Demonstrated Ability:** Successful evaluation by a coach (including  
30 feedback from ICs or ACs) that the candidate has demonstrated  
31 understanding and application of the responsibilities of an agency  
32 administrator on smaller low-complexity fires with a basic understanding of  
33 the elements of the core competencies.

34

35 **Journey Level** - The line officer could manage a moderate to high complexity  
36 fire. The line officer needs to be certified at the Working Level and should meet  
37 the following:

- 38 • **Training:** Fire Management Leadership or National Fire Management for  
39 Line Officers, and attain WFDSS Certification as described per  
40 authorization level in FSM 5120.
- 41 • **Background and Experience:**
- 42 ○ Successful management of a minimum of one Type 2 or higher fire, or
  - 43 one successful higher complexity fire (Type I) quality shadow
  - 44 assignment, depending on fire experience (complexity and size of the
  - 45 fires should be considered).

- 1 ○ Management oversight of a moderate-complexity fire program, or
- 2 experience as an agency administrator or representative on Type 2 or
- 3 higher fires.
- 4 ○ Applicable experience in all-hazard or other incident oversight may
- 5 also be considered in lieu of other guidelines.
- 6 ● **Demonstrated Ability:** Successful evaluation by a coach (including
- 7 feedback from ICs or ACs) that the candidate has demonstrated
- 8 understanding and application of the responsibilities of an agency
- 9 administrator on moderate to large complex fires in the core competencies,
- 10 and other elements that may be relevant.

11

12 **Advanced Level** - The line officer could manage a high complexity fire. The

13 line officer needs to be certified at the Journey Level, and should meet the

14 following:

- 15 ● **Training:** Fire Management Leadership or National Fire Management for
- 16 Line Officers, and attain WFDSS Certification as described per
- 17 authorization level in FSM 5120.
- 18 ● **Background and Experience:**
- 19 ○ Successful management of a minimum of five Type 1 or 2 fires (at least
- 20 one of which is a Type 1 fire), depending on fire experience
- 21 (complexity and size of the fires should be considered).
- 22 ○ Management oversight of a moderate to high-complexity fire program.
- 23 ○ Applicable experience in all hazard or other incident oversight may
- 24 also be considered in lieu of other guidelines.
- 25 ● **Demonstrated Ability:** Successful evaluation by a coach (including
- 26 feedback from ICs or ACs) that the candidate has demonstrated
- 27 understanding and application of the responsibilities of an agency
- 28 administrator on large complex fires in the core competencies, and other
- 29 elements that may be relevant.

30

31 **Other Considerations**

32 Core competencies, consistent with Fire Doctrine principles, include:

- 33 ● Safety.
- 34 ● Strategies and tactics for cost containment.
- 35 ● Incident management processes.
- 36 ● Understanding of decision support tools.
- 37 ● Situational awareness of resource availability & allocation.
- 38 ● Understanding fire agreements and cost apportionment.
- 39 ● WFDSS experience.
- 40 ● Monitoring and evaluation of fire operations.
- 41 ● Risk management.
- 42 ● Social/political awareness and interpersonal relations.

43

44

- 1 Other training opportunities to achieve core competencies - Additional training  
2 opportunities/suggestions (will be updated as program is evaluated):
- 3 ● Upper levels of fire leadership and fire management courses
  - 4 ● Function as the Line Officer in sand table exercises and training simulations  
5 in S-420, S-520, and other fire courses.
  - 6 ● Participate in advanced risk management training.
  - 7 ● Get assigned to a Type 1 or Type 2 team as a training assignment (e.g.  
8 shadow Plans) and see the world from their viewpoint.
  - 9 ● WFDSS training (see the WFDSS homepage <http://wfdss.usgs.gov/wfdss>  
10 for training materials).
  - 11 ● Include risk management and fire management topics during annual line  
12 officer meetings.
  - 13 ● Attend staff rides (staff rides need to include a stand that portrays the line  
14 officer perspective).
  - 15 ● Participate in prescribed fires and/or attend prescribed fire training.
  - 16 ● Participate in other leadership and/or decision-making training.

### 17 18 **Guidance on the Selection of Coaches**

19 Coaches can be current or former line officers. The Regional Forester  
20 determines the level of certification for which a coach is qualified.

21 Criteria for individuals serving as Coaches are as follows:

- 22 ● Must be a “Journey” level line officer in dealing with large fire incident, or  
23 rated at an experience level commensurate with incident being managed.  
24 Present and past agency administrators can serve as coaches, including  
25 retirees that were qualified/experienced.
- 26 ● Must be willing and able to serve as a Coach.

### 27 28 **Specific Agency Administrator Responsibilities for Fire and Aviation at the** 29 **Field Level**

#### 30 31 **Responsibilities**

- 32 ● Integrate fire and fuels management across all functional areas.
- 33 ● Implement fire management strategies and integrate natural resource  
34 concerns into collaborative community protection and ecosystem restoration  
35 strategies on the unit.
- 36 ● Manage a budget that includes fire preparedness, prevention, suppression,  
37 and hazardous fuels in an annual program of work for the unit.
- 38 ● Perform duties of agency administrator and maintain those qualifications.
- 39 ● Provide a fully staffed, highly qualified, and diverse workforce in a "safety  
40 first" environment.

41  
42 These responsibilities are based on current policy and provide program guidance  
43 to ensure safe, consistent, efficient, and effective fire and aviation operations.

44  
45

**1 Preparedness**

- 2 • Take all necessary and prudent actions to ensure firefighter and public  
3 safety.
- 4 • Ensure sufficient qualified fire and non-fire personnel are available to  
5 support fire operations at a level commensurate with the local and national  
6 fire situation.
- 7 • Ensure accurate position descriptions are developed and reflect the  
8 complexity of the unit. Individual Development Plans promote and enhance  
9 FMO currency and development.
- 10 • Provide a written Delegation of Authority to FMOs that provides an  
11 adequate level of operational authority at the unit level. Include Multi-  
12 Agency Coordinating (MAC) Group authority, as appropriate.
- 13 • Identify resource management objectives to maintain a current Fire  
14 Management Plan (FMP) that identifies an accurate level of funding for  
15 personnel and equipment.
- 16 • Develop preparedness standards that are in compliance with agency fire  
17 policies.
- 18 • Management teams meet once a year to review fire and aviation policies,  
19 roles, responsibilities, and delegations of authority. Specifically address  
20 oversight and management controls, critical safety issues, and high-risk  
21 situations such as transfers of incident command, periods of multiple fire  
22 activity, and Red Flag Warnings.
- 23 • Ensure fire and aviation preparedness reviews are conducted each year and  
24 include the key components of the record of decision for the nationwide  
25 aerial application of fire retardant on National Forest System land.
- 26 • Meet annually with cooperators and review interagency agreements to  
27 ensure their continued effectiveness and efficiency.
- 28 • Meet annually with local US Fish and Wildlife Service and NOAA  
29 Fisheries specialists to ensure the avoidance maps reflect changes during  
30 the year on additional species or changes made for designated critical  
31 habitat, and reporting and monitoring guidelines are still valid and being  
32 applied.
- 33 • Convene and participate in annual conferences and fire reviews.
- 34 • Agency administrators, Fire Program Managers, and/or Safety and Health  
35 Program Managers shall conduct after action reviews on all Type 3 fires  
36 and a minimum of 10% of their unit's Type 4 and 5 fires and document  
37 their inspections in the incident records.

38

**39 Suppression**

- 40 • Ensure use of fire funds is in compliance with Agency policies.
- 41 • All fires must utilize the WFDSS to inform and document decisions related  
42 to course of action, resource allocations, and risk management  
43 considerations. WFDSS will be used to approve and publish decisions on  
44 all fires that exceed initial attack or include a resource management  
45 objective. See table below for WFDSS approval authorities.



- 1 • Personally attend reviews on Type 1 and Type 2 fires. Ensure agency
- 2 administrator representatives are assigned when appropriate.
- 3 • Provide incident management objectives (all wildfires must have a
- 4 protection objective), written delegations of authority, and a complete
- 5 agency administrator briefing to Incident Management Teams.
- 6 • Ensure briefings include any applicable information for avoidance areas and
- 7 waterways per the nationwide aerial application of fire retardant direction,
- 8 mapping, and cultural resources. Include the reporting requirements in the
- 9 briefing if a misapplication of fire chemical occurs. Provide resource
- 10 advisors if the use of aerially applied fire retardant is expected and the unit
- 11 has mapped avoidance areas (which include waterways and 300' or larger
- 12 buffers) and otherwise evaluate the need for resource advisors for all other
- 13 fires, and assign as appropriate.
- 14 • For all unplanned human-caused fires where responsibility can be
- 15 determined, ensure actions are initiated to recover cost of suppression
- 16 activities, land rehabilitation, damages to the resource, and improvements.
- 17 • Ensure structure exposure protection principles are followed.

18  
19 **Responsibilities and Oversight**

- 20 • Agency Administrators are responsible for all aspects of fire management.
- 21 • Agency Administrators will ensure that all Forest Service employees and
- 22 employees of interagency partners working on Forest Service jurisdiction
- 23 wildfires clearly understand direction.
- 24 • Agency Administrators must approve and publish decisions in WFDSS (and
- 25 subsequent courses of action) and issue delegations of authority to the
- 26 incident commander. The agency administrator authority is based on
- 27 incident type, as directed in FSM 5131.3.

| Incident Type   | USFS Approval*  |
|-----------------|---|
| Type I          | Regional Forester level with National oversight                 |
| Type II         | Forest Supervisor level with oversight by the Regional Forester |
| Type III, IV, V | District Ranger level with oversight by the Forest Supervisor   |

29 \*This Authority may be delegated to the next level provided that the line  
30 officer at the next level meets Line Officer wildfire response certification  
31 requirements.

- 32
- 33 • Critical long duration wildfire oversight roles include ensuring that:
  - 34 ○ Up-to-date Published decisions are completed and documented in
  - 35 WFDSS.
  - 36 ○ Hazards are identified and risk assessments are incorporated into
  - 37 Published Decisions.

- 1 ○ Coordination with partners and potentially affected parties is conducted
- 2 (including smoke impacts). Unified command is implemented early if
- 3 necessary.
- 4 ○ Resource capacity and availability are adequately assessed to meet
- 5 expectations.
- 6 ● This oversight role should address concerns of the states, cooperators, and
- 7 the public including air quality impacts from multiple wildfires.

8

**9 Safety**

- 10 ● Review safety policies, procedures, and concerns with field fire and
- 11 aviation personnel.
- 12 ● Ensure timely follow-up actions to program reviews, fire preparedness
- 13 reviews, fire and aviation safety reviews, and management reviews.
- 14 ● Monitor the fire situation and provide oversight during periods of critical
- 15 fire activity and situations of high risk.
- 16 ● Ensure there is adequate direction in fire management plans to maintain fire
- 17 danger awareness.
- 18 ● Take appropriate actions with escalating fire potential.
- 19 ● Ensure appropriate investigation or Lessons Learned analyses are conducted
- 20 for incidents, entrapments, and serious accidents.

21

**22 Prescribed Fire**

- 23 ● Ensure an approved burn plan is followed for each prescribed fire project,
- 24 including follow-up monitoring and documentation to ensure management
- 25 objectives are met.
- 26 ● Provide management oversight by personally visiting wildland and
- 27 prescribed fire activities each year.
- 28 ● Ensure compliance with National and Regional Office policy and direction
- 29 for prescribed fire activities and ensure that periodic reviews and
- 30 inspections of the prescribed fire program are completed.
- 31 ● Approve Prescribed Fire Plans. Authority may be delegated to other Line
- 32 Officers as provided under agency guidance and policy.
- 33 ● Review Prescribed Fire Plans and recommend or approve the plans
- 34 depending upon the delegated authority. Ensure that the Prescribed Fire
- 35 Plan has been reviewed and recommended by a qualified technical reviewer
- 36 who was not involved in the plan preparation.

37

**38 Fire Management Positions**

39 The following standards show the minimum operational experience required for  
40 fire management positions. The *Interagency Fire Program Management*  
41 *Qualifications Standard (IFPM)* and *Forest Service Fire Program Management*  
42 *Standard (FS-FPM)* will be used in conjunction with specific agency  
43 requirements when filling vacant fire program positions, and as an aid in  
44 developing Individual Development Plans (IDPs) for employees.

45

**1 Specific Fire Management Staff Responsibilities for Fire Operations at the  
2 Field Level**

3

**4 Preparedness**

- 5 ● Use sound risk management practices as the foundation for all aspects of  
6 fire and aviation management.
- 7 ● Ensure that only trained and qualified personnel are assigned to fire and  
8 aviation duties.
- 9 ● Develop, implement, evaluate, and document fire and aviation training  
10 program to meet current and anticipated needs.
- 11 ● Establish an effective process to gather, evaluate, and communicate  
12 information to managers, supervisors, and employees. Ensure clear concise  
13 communications are maintained at all levels.
- 14 ● Ensure fire and aviation management staffs understand their roles,  
15 responsibilities, authority, and accountability.
- 16 ● Develop and maintain effective communication with the public and  
17 cooperators.
- 18 ● Regardless of funding level, provide a safe, effective, and efficient fire  
19 management program.
- 20 ● Organize, train, equip, and direct a qualified work force. An Individual  
21 Development Plan (IDP) must be provided for incumbents who do not meet  
22 new standards. Establish qualification review process.
- 23 ● Take appropriate action when performance is exceptional or deficient.
- 24 ● Ensure fire and aviation policies are understood, followed, and coordinated  
25 with other agencies as appropriate.
- 26 ● Ensure that adequate resources are available to implement fire management  
27 operations.
- 28 ● Provide fire personnel with adequate guidance, training, and decision-  
29 making authority to ensure timely decisions.
- 30 ● Develop and maintain agreements, annual operating plans, and contracts on  
31 an interagency basis to increase effectiveness and efficiencies.
- 32 ● Develop, maintain, and annually evaluate the FMP to ensure accuracy and  
33 validity.
- 34 ● Ensure budget requests and allocations reflect preparedness requirements in  
35 the FMP.
- 36 ● Develop and maintain current operational plans. (e.g., dispatch, pre-attack,  
37 prevention).
- 38 ● Ensure that reports and records are properly completed and maintained.
- 39 ● Ensure fiscal responsibility and accountability in planning and expenditures.
- 40 ● Assess, identify, and implement program actions that effectively reduce  
41 unwanted wildland fire ignitions and mitigate risks to life, property, and  
42 resources.
- 43 ● Work with cooperators to identify processes and procedures for providing  
44 fire safe communities within the wildland urban interface.

45

**1 Suppression**

- 2 ● Provide for and personally participate in periodic site visits to individual
- 3 incidents and projects.
- 4 ● Utilize the Organizational Needs Assessment and/or Complexity Analysis
- 5 to ensure the proper level of management is assigned to all incidents.
- 6 ● Ensure incoming personnel and crews are briefed prior to fire and aviation
- 7 assignments.
- 8 ● Coordinate the development of Published Decisions within WFDSS with
- 9 local unit staff specialists for all fires that escape initial attack.
- 10 ● Ensure effective transfer of command of incident management occurs and
- 11 safety is considered in all functional areas.
- 12 ● Monitor fire activity to anticipate and recognize when complexity levels
- 13 exceed program capabilities. Increase managerial and operational resources
- 14 to meet needs.
- 15 ● Complete cost recovery actions when unplanned human-caused fires occur.
- 16 ● Ensure structure exposure protection principles are followed.
- 17 ● Ensure all misapplications of wildland fire chemicals are reported and
- 18 appropriate consultation conducted as needed (see Chapter 12).
- 19 ● Ensure 5% assessment of fires less than 300 acres that had aerial fire
- 20 retardant used and have avoidance areas as a result of the record of decision
- 21 for the nationwide aerial application of fire retardant on National Forest
- 22 System land is completed and documented for misapplication reporting.
- 23 ● Ensure all assessments of impacts to threatened and endangered species or
- 24 cultural resources are conducted by trained and qualified resource
- 25 personnel.

**26 Safety**

- 28 ● Ensure completion of a Job Hazard Analysis (JHA) for fire and fire aviation
- 29 activities, and implement applicable risk mitigation measures.
- 30 ● Ensure work/rest and R&R guidelines are followed during all fire and
- 31 aviation activities. Deviations are approved and documented.
- 32 ● Initiate, conduct, and/or participate in fire management related reviews and
- 33 investigations.
- 34 ● Monitor fire season severity predictions, fire behavior, and fire activity
- 35 levels. Take appropriate actions to ensure safe, efficient, and effective
- 36 operations.

**37 Prescribed Fire**

- 39 ● Ensure a written, approved burn plan exists for each prescribed fire project.
- 40 ● Ensure all escaped prescribed fires receive a review at the proper level.
- 41 ● Provide the expertise and skills to fully integrate fire and aviation
- 42 management into interdisciplinary planning efforts.
- 43 ● Ensure compliance with National and Regional Office policy and direction
- 44 for prescribed fire activities and ensure that program reviews and
- 45 inspections of the prescribed fire program are completed.

**1 Structure Exposure Protection Principles**

2

**3 Mission and Role**

4 A significant role of the Forest Service is to manage natural resources on public  
5 land, and management of unwanted wildland fire is a primary mission in that  
6 role. Wildland firefighter training, tools, and personal protective equipment are  
7 based on the wildland environment. This does not prevent using wildland  
8 tactics in the Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) when risks are mitigated.  
9 Wildland firefighter training for the WUI, however, is centered on the concepts  
10 of preventing wildland fire from reaching areas of structures and/or reducing the  
11 intensity of fire that does reach structures. Fire suppression actions on structures  
12 that are outside federal jurisdiction, outside the scope of wildland firefighting  
13 training, or beyond the capability of wildland firefighting resources are not  
14 appropriate roles for the Forest Service.

15

16 Forest Service leadership will express clear and concise “leader’s intent” to  
17 ensure structure protection assignments are managed safely, effectively, and  
18 efficiently. Leaders are expected to operate under existing policies and doctrine  
19 under normal conditions. Where conflicts occur, employees will be expected to  
20 weigh the risk versus gain, and operate within the intent of Agency policy and  
21 doctrine.

22

**23 Strategic Principles**

- 24 ● The Forest Service actively supports creation of Firewise Communities and  
25 structures that can survive wildland fire without intervention. We support  
26 the concept that property owners have primary responsibility for reducing  
27 wildfire risks to their lands and assets.
- 28 ● The Forest Service will actively work toward applying Firewise concepts to  
29 all Forest Service owned structures, facilities, and permitted use to serve as  
30 a model to publics and communities.
- 31 ● The Forest Service will apply strategy and tactics to keep wildland fires  
32 from reaching structures, as prudent to do so, considering risk management  
33 for firefighters and publics, fire behavior, values at risk including natural  
34 resources, availability of firefighting resources, and jurisdictional  
35 authorities.
- 36 ● The Forest Service will be proactive in developing agreements with  
37 interagency partners to clarify its structure protection policy.
- 38 ● The Forest Service structure protection role is based on the assumption that  
39 other Departments and agencies will fulfill their primary roles and  
40 responsibilities. The Forest Service will not usurp individual, local, or state  
41 responsibility for structure protection.
- 42 ● Prior to task implementation, a specific structure protection role briefing  
43 will be accomplished.

44

45

46

1 **Tactical Applications**

2

3 **Structure Protection Definition**

4 Actions taken in advance of a fire reaching structures or other improvements are  
5 intended to safely prevent the fire from damaging or destroying these values at  
6 risk. For the Forest Service, structure protection involves the use of standard  
7 wildland fire suppression tactics and control methods; including the use of  
8 standard equipment, fire control lines, and the extinguishing of spot fires near or  
9 on the structure when safe and practical.

10

11 **USFS Role**

12 As documented in a Forest Service doctrinal principle, "Agency employees  
13 respond when they come across situations where human life is immediately at  
14 risk or there is a clear emergency, and they are capable of assisting without  
15 undue risk to themselves or others". This principle serves as a foundational  
16 basis for the roles employees play in structure protection.

17

18 Pursuant to this "structure protection" policy provided above, Forest Service  
19 personnel may engage support from other cooperators in structure protection  
20 activities when 1) requested by local government under terms of an approved  
21 cooperative agreement or 2) when operating within a unified command. The  
22 agency is permitted, without agreement, to render emergency assistance to a  
23 local government in suppressing wildland fires, and in preserving life and  
24 property from the threat of fire, when properly trained and equipped agency  
25 resources are the closest to the need, and there is adequate leadership to do so  
26 safely. The agency will NOT routinely provide primary emergency response  
27 (medical aids, fire suppression, HAZMAT, etc... as identified on "run cards" or  
28 preplanned dispatch scenarios) nor will the agency supplant the local  
29 government responsibility to do so.

30

31 The contents of a cooperative agreement will clearly define the responsibilities  
32 of partners. Regarding structural fire protection, typical Forest Service  
33 responsibilities in the case of mutual aid, initial attack, extended attack, or large  
34 fire support include:

- 35 • To provide initial attack through extended attack actions consistent with  
36 application of wildland fire strategy and tactics.
- 37 • To supply water in support of tribal, state or local agencies having  
38 jurisdictional responsibility for the fire. This would include the use of water  
39 tenders, portable pumps, hose, tanks, and supporting draft sites.
- 40 • To assist or supply foam or chemical suppressant capability with engines or  
41 aerial application.
- 42 • To assist local authorities in the event of evacuations.
- 43 • To assist local authorities by assessing (triaging) structures for defensibility  
44 from wildfire.
- 45 • To coordinate with local authorities on actions taken by Private Structure  
46 Protection Companies.

1 As such, there should not be an expectation that the Forest Service will:

- 2 • “Wrap” or set up and administer sprinklers around privately owned  
3 structures.
- 4 • Remove fuels immediately surrounding a structure such as brush,  
5 landscaping, or firewood.

6

7 As addressed above, the Forest Service will apply strategy and tactics to keep  
8 wildland fires from reaching structures, as prudent to do so, considering risk  
9 management for firefighters and publics, fire behavior, values at risk including  
10 natural resources, availability of firefighting resources, and jurisdictional  
11 authorities.

12

13 The Forest Service shall not:

- 14 • Take direct suppression actions on structures other than those that tactically  
15 reduce the threat of fire spread to them.
- 16 • Enter structures or work on roofs of structures for the purpose of direct  
17 suppression actions.

18

19 In consideration of Forest Service owned or leased structures outside of  
20 structure fire protection areas these same policies apply. The use of Firewise  
21 principles and aggressive fire prevention measures will be employed for Forest  
22 Service structures at every opportunity.

23

24 If a Forest Service structure is determined to be at risk, “wrapping” or other  
25 indirect protection methods for the structure can be authorized by the Agency  
26 Administrator. Documentation of these decisions needs to be placed in the fire  
27 documentation package and the unit files. Any employee engaged in  
28 “wrapping” or other indirect methods of protection operations will be  
29 thoroughly briefed and trained in correct safety and personal protection  
30 equipment procedures, especially if the use of ladders or climbing on the  
31 structure is necessary. In any case, the Forest Service holds that no structure is  
32 worth the risk of serious injury to an employee in an attempt to protect that  
33 structure or facility from fire.

34

#### 35 **Local Government Role**

36 Local government has the responsibility for emergency response, including  
37 structure protection, within their jurisdiction. This responsibility is usually  
38 found within the fire agencies’ charter and is substantiated by tax dollar revenue  
39 (sales and/or property tax).

40

#### 41 **Cost**

42 Local governments assume the financial responsibility for emergency response  
43 activities, including structure protection, within their jurisdictions. Local  
44 government will order resources deemed necessary to protect structures within  
45 their jurisdiction. Local agencies will not be reimbursed for performing their  
46 responsibilities within their jurisdiction.

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**05-15**

**1 Tactical Operating Principles**

2 When engaging in structure protection activities, as defined above, Forest

3 Service personnel will apply the following principles:

- 4 ● The first priority for all risk-decisions is human survival, both of firefighters  
5 and the public.
- 6 ● Incident containment strategies specifically address and integrate protection  
7 of defensible improved property and wildland values.
- 8 ● Direct protection of improved property is undertaken when it is safe to do  
9 so, when there are sufficient time and appropriate resources available, and  
10 when the action directly contributes to achieving overall incident objectives.
- 11 ● Firefighter decision to accept direction to engage in structure protection  
12 actions is based on the determination that the property is defensible and the  
13 risk to firefighters can be safely mitigated under the current or potential fire  
14 conditions.
- 15 ● A decision to delay or withdraw from structure protection operations is the  
16 appropriate course of action when made in consideration of firefighter  
17 safety, current or potential fire behavior, or defensibility of the structure or  
18 groups of structures.
- 19 ● Firefighters at all levels are responsible to make risk-decisions appropriate  
20 to their individual knowledge, experience, training, and situational  
21 awareness.
- 22 ● Every firefighter is responsible to be aware of the factors that affect their  
23 judgment and the decision-making process, including: a realistic perception  
24 of their own knowledge, skills, and abilities, the presence of life threat or  
25 structures, fire behavior, availability of resources, social/political pressures,  
26 mission focus, and personal distractions such as home, work, health, and  
27 fatigue.
- 28 ● An individual's ability to assimilate all available factors affecting  
29 situational awareness is limited in a dynamic wildland urban interface fire  
30 environment. Every firefighter is responsible to understand and recognize  
31 these limitations, and to apply experience, training and personal judgment  
32 to observe, orient, decide, and act in preparation for the "worst case".
- 33 ● It is the responsibility of every firefighter to participate in the flow of  
34 information with supervisors, subordinates, and peers. Clear and concise  
35 communication is essential to overcome limitations in situational  
36 awareness.