



# FIRE SUPPRESSION: Foundational Doctrine



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*“At this first Pulaski Conference we are focused on defining those simple, clear principles that will encourage complex, intelligent behavior.”*

~Tom Harbour

*National Director of Fire and Aviation Management*

### ***Credits:***

Writers/Editors - The men and women of the Pulaski Conference and Edward D. Hollenshead, FAM, Mark Smith, MCS, Franklin O. Carroll, Black Hills National Forest, and Paul Keller, Zig Zag, OR

Photography - Gary C. Chancey and Karen Wattenmaker, Black Hills National Forest

Graphic Design - Jackie E. Twiss, Center for Design & Interpretation, Denver, CO

# Fire Suppression Foundational Doctrine

*“Let me open with a quote I like from Dee Hock (Visa founder): ‘Simple clear purpose and principles give rise to complex intelligent behavior. Complex rules and regulations give rise to simple stupid behavior.’ We are focused on defining those simple clear principles that will encourage complex intelligent behavior.”*

~Tom Harbour  
National Director of Fire and Aviation Management  
June 6, 2005

## Six key areas of the doctrine:

Defining the Operational Environment  
Mission  
Roles  
Operations  
Leadership & Accountability  
Cost Management  
Risk & Risk Management

*“Doctrine is the body of principles (not rules) that guides an organization’s activities and actions. A principle is the moral or ethical standard that forms the foundation of judgment, mode of action, decision, and behavior. Doctrine is the expression of the fundamental framework, concepts, and principles that guide the planning and conduct of operations. It is authoritative but flexible. Doctrine must be definitive enough to guide specific operation, yet adaptable enough to address diverse and varied situations.”*

Mark Smith  
Mission-Centered Solutions  
June 6, 2005



*“Rules are those decisions you would not leave to the discretion of your best fire fighter.”*  
~Ed Hollenshead

Over the past several years we have seen a tremendous increase in expectations—both internally and externally—placed upon our wildland fire fighters. Fire management complexities have propelled this evolution of today’s fire environment onto a critical path.

Though the environment and the mission of the wildland fire fighter is demanding increased agility in decision making, the fire fighters’ ability to adapt and react has become more constrained. Fire line performance expectations have become

# Defining the Operational Environment



increasingly rules-driven at the expense of addressing the fundamental human factors that lead to critical decision errors, delayed judgments, and improper actions.

The difference between good and bad outcomes often depends on Fire organization leaders, senior and junior, who can and will best focus their efforts on fighting the fire. Firefighting is about thinking creatively and acting decisively.

Knowing why we fight fire and the concepts and ideas that guide

our actions, not rules or prescriptions for action, provides the bedrock of our fire suppression philosophy.

The following pages express our foundational doctrine for Fighting wildland fire and cooperating with our partners. It provides foundational firefighting principles for exercising authority by fire managers, incident commanders, subordinate leaders, and fire fighters. It describes how to think about the conduct of firefighting and applies to all Forest Service personnel.

## DEFINING THE OPERATIONAL ENVIRONMENT

Wildland fire operations can range from traditional fire suppression, to managing an incident within an incident, to responding to the challenges of the All-Risk environment.

The fire suppression environment is a high risk environment. Fire fighters routinely encounter numerous and varied risks in order to accomplish their fire suppression responsibilities. This environment possesses inherent risks that can, even with reasonable mitigation, cause harm or death to fire fighters engaged in fire suppression operations.

The wildland firefighting environment is a dynamic three-dimensional space dominating the fire ground. The mixture of

*“If you can address these (areas of doctrine), it will change the next 100 years of the Forest Service.”*

~Mark Smith



## Defining the Operational Environment

people, machine, technology, and the unalterable laws of nature creates a highly complex environment that can rapidly transition from normal to chaotic to emergency conditions very quickly.

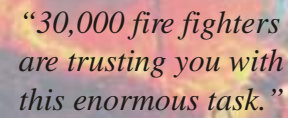
Fire fighting involves a diversity of people and equipment, all with different limitations, capabilities, experience and qualifications. Resources are assembled from volunteer, temporary, contract and career positions. The dynamic complexity of the operational environment requires a high reliability response organization. The suppression organization must minimize internal friction and remain cohesive and resilient to minimize risks and still accomplish the suppression objectives.

While technology plays a key role in expanding the situation awareness tools of firefighting, the essential job has not changed dramatically from 100 years ago. What has changed dramatically is the amount and condition of fuels in forests and grasslands throughout the United States.

Our imperfect knowledge of nature and fire behavior only increases the level of complexity. The harsh reality is that to succeed and survive, Forest Service fire fighters must first perceive and believe the complexities of this environment; then think, plan, manage risks and then boldly engage. The actions of a single individual at the critical moment can have great impact in suppression operations.

The fire suppression environment is also influenced by a variety of external conditions – political considerations, line officer direction, budget constraints, media involvement, and public attitudes. Rapid expansion of the wildland urban interface contributes dramatically to the political complexity fire fighters face at all levels. Increasing environmental and health concerns call for increased consideration in fire fighting operations. Fire suppression success hinges on decisions that incorporate the impacts of these factors.

This chaotic environment brings opportunity. The challenge is to recognize opportunity when it occurs in the midst of uncertainty and to seize it to meet clear unambiguous objectives. When viewed through time even the most chaotic of systems may reveal recurring patterns that may then be exploited. The experienced fire fighter will look for these recurring patterns that can be exploited to advantage.



*“30,000 fire fighters  
are trusting you with  
this enormous task.”*

*~Tom Harbour*

# Mission

Successful accomplishment of the fire management suppression responsibility is essential to support the Forest Service mission. This requirement demands a comprehensive and effective doctrine to empower and guide people to use all their training, experience, and judgment in making the best decisions possible in this harsh operational environment.

As the complexity and nature of the operational environment change, the doctrine of wildfire suppression will also expand and evolve to allow fire fighters to accomplish their assigned mission within allocated resources, incorporate an increasing array of technological advances, and manage risks in the uncertainty of the physical and political fire ground.

*"You know the work, you know the business, you have the brains and the energy. I know you'll make history this week."*

~Tom Harbour

## MISSION

### Forest Service Mission

The mission of the Forest Service is to sustain the health, diversity, and productivity of the Nation's forests and grasslands to meet the needs of present and future generations." We express our mission as, "Caring for the land and serving people."

Fire management is central to meeting the Forest Service mission. Fire management is holistic and we believe that fire can be both beneficial and destructive.



Fire is a natural process that has profoundly shaped the landscape and is vital to restoring and maintaining ecosystem health. We will take initiative to enable fire to play its natural role where appropriate.

Like wind and water, fire also can be destructive and can be a formidable threat to critical ecosystem components, human life, and communities – such instances require decisive and creative action on the part of the Forest Service to protect values both within and adjacent to National Forest system lands.

### **Fire suppression**

When it's time to fight fire, we will do so with maximum Efficiency and the highest regard for safety, operating in and occupying that critical ground between risk aversion and unacceptable risk. Our intent is to protect life, property, and at-risk lands and resources.

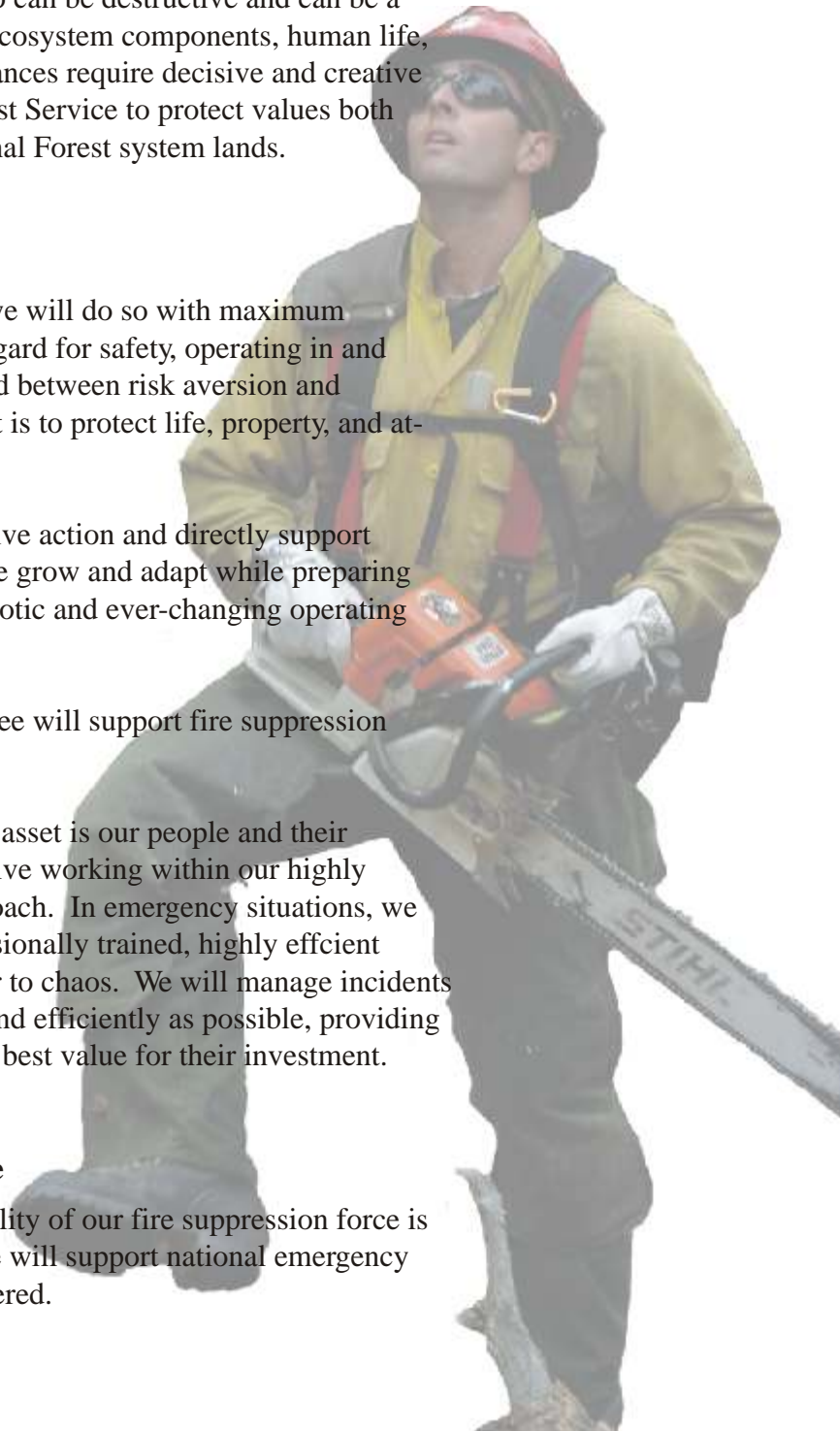
We expect creative and decisive action and directly support our people on the ground. We grow and adapt while preparing for and learning from the chaotic and ever-changing operating environment.

Every Forest Service employee will support fire suppression emergencies.

The Forest Service's greatest asset is our people and their knowledge, skills, and initiative working within our highly adaptive organizational approach. In emergency situations, we effectively mobilize a professionally trained, highly efficient workforce able to bring order to chaos. We will manage incidents as effectively, responsively, and efficiently as possible, providing the American public with the best value for their investment.

### **Other Emergency Response**

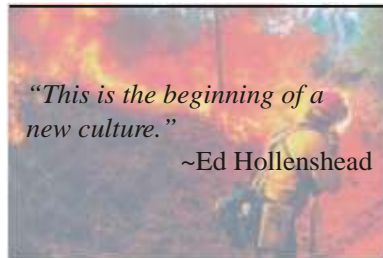
While the primary responsibility of our fire suppression force is wildland fire suppression, we will support national emergency situations when asked or ordered.



# Roles

We also will respond when human life is immediately at risk, or there is another clear emergency, and the responders consider themselves capable of assisting without undue risk to themselves or others.

In responding to emergencies, we will bring the same highly adaptive organizational approach, professionalism, and passion for safety to these situations.



## ROLES

### **Role of agency employees in fire suppression**

Since fire management is integral to the mission of the Forest Service, and fire suppression is integral to the mission of fire management, every employee will have a basic understanding of fire management and each have the responsibility to support the program. Employees have a personal responsibility and will take personal initiative to educate and train to the best of their abilities to meet their fire suppression responsibilities, including clearly understanding and accomplishing their leader's intent.

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

Fire management training and experience is a prerequisite for service as a line officer.

**Line officer and fire organization relationships** – Line Officers have the responsibility to establish clear and concise objectives ensuring that fire suppression is managed as safely,



effectively, and efficiently as possible. Fire management personnel will keep the line officer informed and provide professional Fire suppression expertise and advice. Line Officers and their Fire suppression personnel need to develop strong professional relationships addressing training, preparedness, suppression, and Fire use activities.

Line officers and fire personnel will establish effective communications. Personnel, at any level of the organization, will Freely express concerns to management.

**Fire management positions** – Fire fighters will be qualified for assignments. All employees assigned fire suppression responsibilities at the local, geographic area, or national level will meet established interagency and agency competencies and associated qualifications. Fire fighters have a responsibility to be aware of the roles of fire and resource management in the fulfillment of the Agency’s overall mission.

**Employee’s role in creating a positive work environment** – It is the responsibility of every employee to foster a work environment that is enjoyable, rewarding, recognizes the value of diversity, and is free of harassment. Employee awareness of the functions of all levels of the agency fosters respect for the contributions of all employees regardless of rank or responsibilities. Forest Service employees must gain knowledge and develop awareness of agency programs and various disciplines essential to program implementation. Informed employees reduce departmentalism, lead to enhanced cross-department communications, and increase trust and respect for professionalism throughout the diversity of disciplines within the agency.

It is the agency’s responsibility to orient and mentor new employees and provide cross training to enhance inter-disciplinary and organizational awareness.

**Other agency personnel** – Every employee has the responsibility to support and/or participate in the fire management program. Administrative employees, engineers, resource specialists, and researchers play a critical role in successful fire operations. There is a broad spectrum of opportunities for participation; each person will identify the niche that is most consistent with their personal/professional needs, abilities, and goals.



# Roles

*“Ninety-five percent of the wildland fire doctrine already exists. But where is it? Where does it sit? How is it managed? Who writes it? Who keeps it fresh?”*

~Mark Smith

## **The roles of inherently governmental and contracted resources**

Each region or geographic area will evaluate and coordinate between local and state resources. Areas to analyze include draw-down levels and ability of state and local government to perform and assist in fire suppression activities.

Primary initial attack is inherently governmental. Contracted fire suppression resources are a supplemental resource.

Contracted resources will meet the same qualification standards, professionalism, training, productivity, and efficiency as governmental resources.

## **Relationship of agency targets and fire suppression**

Support for local fire operations takes priority over accomplishment of local resource targets. Support for non-local fire operations does not take priority over local resource targets unless determined by regional or national priorities.

## **The professionalism of fire suppression personnel**

The leadership, knowledge, skill and initiative primary fire fighters attain and exhibit is integral to the success of fire suppression and overall mission of fire management. Recognizing primary fire fighters as professionals in their field helps to bridge the communication gap between fire fighters and fire management as a whole.

## **The role of other agency cooperators**

The cooperative relationship between the Forest Service and other agency cooperators is essential. It is the responsibility of the Forest Service to develop working interagency relationships with these agencies.



We will establish unity of command when dealing with multi-agency incidents using unified command when deemed appropriate by all agencies that have jurisdictional authority.

The Forest Service will continue to work with cooperating agencies to strengthen pre-suppression planning for incidents on public lands including mission difference and specific land management issues.

We will develop strong local relationships for incidents occurring on non-Forest Service lands.

## **The role of the agency in public education**

Educating and informing the public about both the natural role of fire and fire risk is becoming extremely important, especially in wildland urban interface areas. Where these areas exist Forests must work with cooperating agencies and the media to increase awareness in these communities. Public contacts must address the risks and mitigations to these risks, and to educate the public about their own responsibilities when living in fire prone areas.

The Forest Service will be proactive in initiating and participating in public education when fire conditions exist that may have public impact. When fires occur in multi-jurisdictional protection areas every effort will be taken to partner with other cooperating agencies and the news media to foster strong working relations in educating the public with a common message.

## **OPERATIONS**

### **Purpose of Fire Suppression Doctrine**

Fire suppression doctrine covers our fundamental beliefs on the subject of fire suppression. Doctrine establishes a particular way of thinking about fire suppression. It provides a philosophy for leading fire fighters in suppression operations, a mandate for

professionalism, and a common language. Fire suppression doctrine does not consist of procedures to be applied to specific situations so much as it sets forth general guidance that requires judgment in application. Therefore, while authoritative, doctrine is not prescriptive. Doctrine is about tools, not rules.

## **The Nature of Fire suppression**

Fire is a complex, dynamic, and often unpredictable phenomenon. Fire suppression requires mobilizing a complex organization that includes management, command, support, and fire suppression personnel, as well as airplanes, vehicles, machinery, and communications equipment. While the magnitude and complexity of the fire itself and of the human suppression response to it will vary, the fact that fire suppression operations are inherently dangerous will never change. A fire fighter using the best available science, equipment, and training, and working within the scope of agency doctrine and policy, can still suffer serious injury or death. Any doctrine or policy that neglects this basic truth is incomplete.



## **Fire Suppression Preparedness Philosophy**

Fire suppression preparedness is the result of activities that are planned and implemented prior to fire ignitions. Preparedness is a continuous process that includes developing and maintaining fire suppression infrastructure, predicting fire activity, identifying values at risk, hiring, training (interagency drills & scenarios), equipping, pre-positioning, and deploying fire fighters and equipment, evaluating performance, correcting deficiencies, and improving operations. Preparedness provides the basis for identifying required fire suppression capabilities and implementing coordinated programs to develop those capabilities. All preparedness activities should be focused on developing these capabilities and successful suppression operations.

As the hardware of wildland fire suppression improves through technological development, so must the tactical, operational, and strategic usage adapt to its improved capabilities to maximize our own capabilities. Standardization should be considered and implemented where appropriate, but not at the expense of innovation.



## Fire Suppression Philosophy

Fires are easier and less expensive to suppress when they are smaller. When the management goal is full suppression, aggressive attack is the single most important method to ensure the safety of Fire fighters and the public and to limit suppression costs. When the management goal is other than full suppression, or when conditions dictate a limited suppression response, decisiveness is still essential but a less aggressive attack is acceptable. Aggressive attack provides the Incident Commander maximum flexibility in suppression operations. Successful attack relies on speed and appropriate force. All aspects of fire suppression benefit from this philosophy. Planning, organizing, and implementing fire suppression operations should always meet the objective of directly, quickly, and economically contributing to the suppression effort. Every fire fighter, whether in a management, command, support, or direct suppression role, should be committed to maximizing the speed and efficiency with which the most capable fire fighters can engage in suppression action.

## Fire Suppression Command Philosophy

It is essential that our philosophy of command supports the way we fight fire. First and foremost, in order to generate effective decision making on the fire line and to cope with the unpredictable nature of fire, command and control must be decentralized.

That is, subordinate commanders must make decisions on their own initiative, based on their understanding of their leader's intent, coordinated efforts, and operational objectives. Further, a competent subordinate commander who is at the point of decision will naturally better appreciate the true situation than a senior commander some distance removed. Individual initiative and responsibility are of paramount importance.

However, this does not imply that unity of effort does not exist or that suppression actions are not coordinated. Unity of effort requires coordination and cooperation among all forces toward a commonly understood objective. Unified coordinated action, whether between adjacent single resources on the fire line or between the highest command level and the most subordinate fire fighter, is critical to successful fire suppression and is not incompatible with the philosophy of decentralized command.



## Principles of Suppression Operations

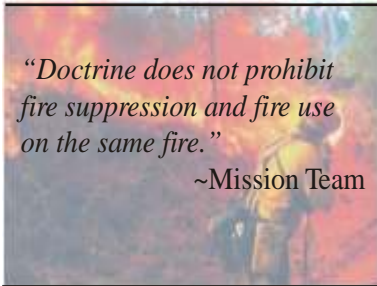
The primary means by which we implement decentralized command and maintain unity of action is through the use of universal principles of suppression operations. These principles guide our fundamental fire suppression practices, behaviors, and customs, and are mutually understood at every level of command. These include but are not limited to the Standard Fire Suppression Orders, the 18 Watch Out Situations, LCES and the Downhill Line Construction Checklist. These principles are fundamental to how we perform fire suppression operations. They are not absolute rules. They provide guidance in the form of concepts and values. Using these principles requires judgment in application, which is intended to improve decision making and fire fighter safety.

## Principles of Action

Additionally, the Principles of Action are a set of precepts that, as fundamentals, lend context in developing overall fire strategy. They help us frame the management and conduct of fire suppression operations. Again, these are not absolute, immutable rules. These four principles give us a consistent set of considerations with which to evaluate decisions, plans and actions in different situations.

**Objective** - The principle of the objective is to direct every fire suppression operation toward a clearly defined, decisive, and obtainable objective. The objective of fire suppression operations is to achieve the suppression objectives that support the overall management goals for the fire.

**Speed and Focus** - Speed is rapidity of action. Focus is the convergence of resources at the desired position to initiate action. The principle of speed and focus maintains that rapidly deploying and concentrating fire suppression resources, in a calculated fashion, at the decisive time and place increases the likelihood of successful suppression actions.



*“Doctrine does not prohibit fire suppression and fire use on the same fire.”*

~Mission Team

**Positioning** - The principle of positioning maintains that rapid, flexible and opportunistic movement increases the effectiveness of fire suppression resources. Positioning ranges from single resource offensive or defensive reactions to dynamic fire conditions to pre-positioning of multiple resources based on predicted activity and values at risk. Positioning should always be undertaken with speed and focus in mind, and with sufficient time for positioning to occur before operations begin.

**Simplicity** - The principle of simplicity is that clear uncomplicated plans and concise orders maximize effectiveness and minimize confusion. Simplicity contributes to successful actions.



## LEADERSHIP & ACCOUNTABILITY

### Fire Leadership

People are our most important asset in the fire suppression organization. In true professional manner they execute operations in a complex, dynamic and at times unpredictable environment. They deserve our very best leaders of Character and competence with the initiative to achieve excellence while Maintaining accountability in the face of a sometimes daunting task.

Leaders in the organization must be capable of independent and intelligent action willing and eager to accept the new roles and responsibilities required of them. The hallmarks of Forest Service leadership are action, attitude, and accountability.

Leadership defined means providing purpose, direction and motivation for wildland fire fighters working to accomplish difficult tasks under dangerous and sometimes stressful conditions. This concept as well as improving the organization applies to all individuals, not just those in leadership positions.

Leadership is a heritage passed from Forest Service leader to leader since the founding of the agency, mainly acquired by observation, experience and emulation. Working with other leaders is the most effective Forest Service leader's school. Our agency culture embraces mentoring and continuous learning as essential to development of future leadership where *every leader is a firefighter, and every firefighter is a leader.*

### Character

**Leadership Values and Principles** - Effective leaders demonstrate a commitment to duty, respect for others, and personal integrity.

Their commitment to duty is reflected in:

- Proficiency of skills in their job both technical and leadership.
- Sound and timely decisions.
- Their ensuring tasks are understood, supervised and accomplished.





- Development of subordinates for the future.

Leaders demonstrate respect by:

- Knowing and looking out for the well being of their subordinates.
- Keeping their subordinates informed.
- Nurturing the capacity of their team.
- Employing subordinates in accordance with their capabilities.

Leaders demonstrate integrity by:

- Knowing their strengths and weaknesses and seeking improvement.
- Seeking and accepting responsibility for their actions.
- Setting an example worthy of emulation.

### Leadership Attributes

Physical, mental, and emotional attributes contribute to leadership fitness. Effective leaders:

- Take actions to promote good health and physical fitness that enhances their ability to better think, decide and act under stress.
- Demonstrate inner drive to improve and succeed; have the capacity to think and apply what they learn in accomplishing the leader's intent; maintain situational awareness; and exercise good judgment under stress.
- Remain level headed and exert self control in tough Situations; maintain a balance of attitude to place proper perspective in different situations; have the humility to seek assistance; and have the confidence to act appropriately under stress.

### Competence and Accountability

Effective leadership occurs when there is a partnership among agency administrators, fire supervisors, and fire fighters in which roles and responsibilities are commonly understood, honored, and redeemed.

Demonstrated fitness of command is a requirement for leadership positions associated with fire fighting. In this context, we do not accept mediocrity in leadership at any level. We do not measure fitness simply by the training courses and tasks completed. Those selected for leadership positions will have demonstrated they:

- possess and exercise interpersonal, conceptual, and technical skills;

# Leadership & Accountability

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- Knowledge;
- Experience;
- physical, mental, and emotional capacity.

Leaders will have also demonstrated high self-awareness – an ability to recognize when a situation may exceed their capabilities and a willingness to request appropriate help. This demonstrated fitness provides for greater operational flexibility and discretion.

Leaders clearly communicate intent. Effective leaders prepare clear, concise, uncomplicated plans and concise instructions to ensure thorough understanding of:

- Task
- Purpose
- End State
- Acceptable actions and restrictions (consistent with the leader's intent)

Leaders empower their subordinates. They will only order details regarding execution if measures which serve the same objective have to be harmonized, if political or “fire fighting” constraints require it. They give the latitude to subordinate leaders in the execution of their mission.

Leaders regularly monitor performance for effectiveness and have a duty to take action when there is recognition of performance problems or exceptional performance.

Accountability, both positive reinforcement and negative, at all levels of the organization will be based on individual behavior as measured by:

- Adherence to the rules.
- Appropriate application of doctrine, principles and guidelines.
- Execution of responsibilities commensurate with role.
- Appropriate use of available information.

Administrative actions are based on agreed to and known distinctions between acceptable and unacceptable behavior – on agreed to and known distinctions between errors and willful violations.

## COST MANAGEMENT

When fire suppression is deemed necessary in order to protect lives and property, our efforts will be undertaken with the highest regard for safety and incidents will be managed as effectively and efficiently as possible.

Cost management is a very significant component of meeting fire suppression objectives, but is not an overriding goal in itself. Once the objectives of the suppression effort have been clearly defined, the appropriate resources will be committed to meet the stated objectives. Successfully and efficiently meeting objectives will not be sacrificed for the sole purpose of “cost savings.”

Fire suppression will be based on sound risk management decision making-processes and take into account values protected and resources at risk. Care will be taken to ensure that the expenditures undertaken to meet the suppression objectives are commensurate with the values to be protected, while understanding that other factors may influence suppression expenditures, including the environment: social, political, economic, and biophysical. These factors can all lead to expenditures that, though they are not tied directly to values at risk, can be legitimate reasons for undertaking suppression actions.



## RISK & RISK MANAGEMENT

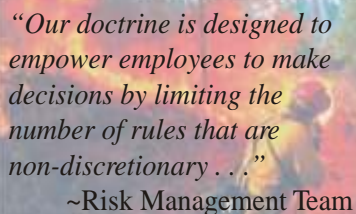
Fire suppression is an inherently dangerous job and very hazardous. No resource or facility is worth the loss of human life; however while working within their agency doctrine and policy, fire fighters using the best available science, equipment, and training can be killed or injured. Our employees are expected to make reasonable and prudent decisions to accomplish the agency mission while minimizing loss of life and serious injuries. Fire fighters are empowered and expected to manage the risks of fire suppression.

### **Risk Management Concept:**

The purpose of risk management is to minimize the exposure and affects of the inherent hazards in fire suppression while maximizing the opportunities to achieve mission objectives during fire suppression operations. Risk management includes communications and a process for situational awareness, hazard assessment, hazard control, decision point and evaluation.

### **Principals**

- ❑ Safety is the ability fire fighters have to deal with risks or hazards to avoid damage or losses and yet still achieve the leader's intent,
- ❑ Risk management is a dynamic process exercised by everyone having fire suppression responsibilities or duties. It allows individuals to assess a given situation and take what they determine is the most appropriate course of action based on leaders' intent,
- ❑ We recognize and accept the inherent risks associated with fire suppression. We depend on our doctrine, training, skilled experience, and leadership to mitigate those risks. Disregard for these recognized inherent risks and failure to practice risk management is unacceptable, regardless of whether or not it results in injury or death.



*“Our doctrine is designed to empower employees to make decisions by limiting the number of rules that are non-discretionary . . .”*  
~Risk Management Team



- ❑ Individuals will be held accountable for their decisions. Those decisions should be considered to be reasonable and prudent based on doctrine, training, and experience given the context of the situation.
- ❑ In order to mitigate effects of fatigue of mind and body, it is a fire suppression leadership responsibility, as well as a personal responsibility to appropriately manage fatigue.
- ❑ To promote a bias for action fire fighters are expected to maximize suppression opportunities while minimizing exposure to inherent risks.
- ❑ Organizational learning is crucial to risk management. Fire fighters are students of fire and continually learn from all situations including successes, failures, agency safety investigations, and reviews. We foster an atmosphere of willful communication. Therefore it's critical that employee statements for agency safety investigations are treated as "confidential".
- ❑ Extensive formal and informal training is critical to risk management and mission accomplishment.
- ❑ Fire suppression leadership ensures all employees with an incident qualifications card adhere to and maintain an appropriate level of physical fitness.
- ❑ Recognize those practicing and promoting the use of risk management in the accomplishing the agency mission.



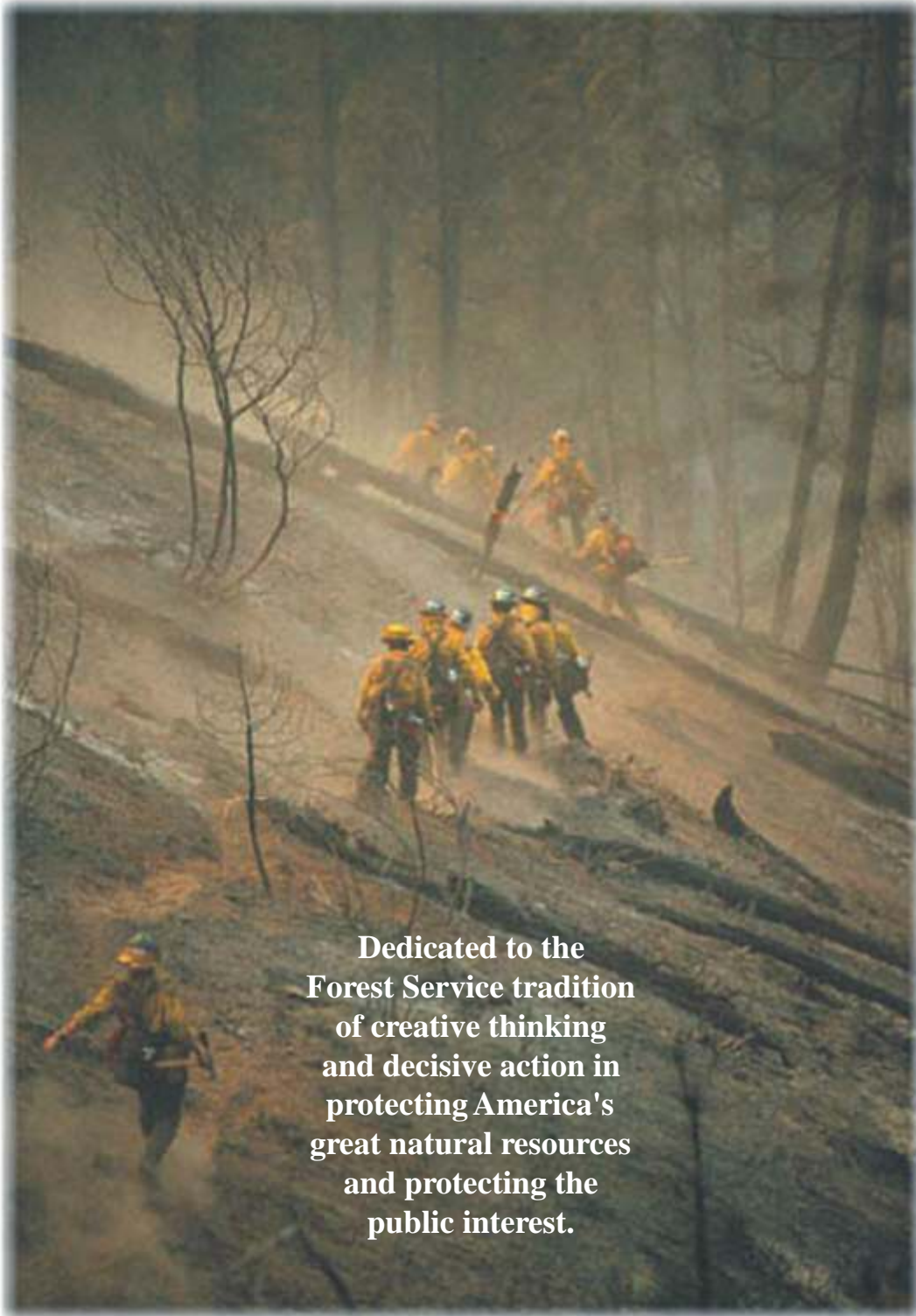
## MAKING IT HAPPEN

Reading and understanding the ideas in this publication are the initial steps on the path to becoming more creative and decisive leaders and fire fighters. The primary way a fire fighter becomes a fire leader is through training and education, both of which are firmly rooted in doctrine. Doctrine establishes the philosophy and practical framework for how we fight fire. Education develops the understanding, creativity, judgment, and the background essential for effective fire line leadership. Training follows doctrine and develops the tactical and technical proficiency that underlies all successful action. On-the-job training completes the picture by allowing individuals and groups to integrate their training and education, producing a whole that is greater than the sum of the parts. The lessons we learn from training and operational experience then modify doctrine.

Doctrine establishes the fundamental beliefs of the Forest Service on the subject of fire suppression and how we practice our profession. Doctrine establishes a particular way of thinking about fire suppression and our way of fire suppression, a philosophy for leading fire fighters on the fire line, a mandate for professionalism, and a common language. Doctrinal development benefits from our collective experience and distills its lessons to further education and training.



Our doctrine within the Forest Service begins with the philosophy contained in our mission statement. This philosophy underlies publications that contain tactics, techniques, and procedures for specific functions. This body of thought helps form fire fighters and fire suppression leaders through its implementation in education and training.



**Dedicated to the  
Forest Service tradition  
of creative thinking  
and decisive action in  
protecting America's  
great natural resources  
and protecting the  
public interest.**