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Chapter 05 USDA Forest Service Wildland Fire and Aviation Program Organization and Responsibilities

Introduction

This handbook is intended to be a program reference guide that documents the standards for operational procedures and practices for the USDA Forest Service Fire and Aviation Management program. The standards provided in this handbook are based on current agency and interagency wildland fire management policy, and is intended to provide fire and aviation program guidance and to ensure safe, consistent, efficient and effective fire and aviation operations. This document will be reviewed and updated annually. The Forest Service Director of Fire and Aviation Management, the Director of Human Resources and the Forest Service Line Officer Team have developed core fire management competencies for inclusion into the position descriptions and in selection criteria for Agency Administrators. They are presented here for reference.

Evaluation Criterion

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

Training and Core Competencies

Attend a regional or national "*Fire Management Leadership for Agency Administrators*" training session.

Require a shadow assignment with a fully qualified Agency Administrator.

Receive training or experience in the Wildfire Situation Analysis (WFSA) and Wildland Fire Implementation Plan (WFIP).

Provide a Delegation of Authority to Incident Commanders.

Performance Standards

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

- Integrate fire and fuels management across all functional areas.

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

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

13 14 **Specific Agency Administrator Performance Standards for Fire and** 15 **Aviation at the Field Level**

16 17 **Preparedness**

- 18 • Take all necessary and prudent actions to ensure firefighter and public
19 safety.
- 20 • Ensure sufficient qualified fire and non-fire personnel are available to
21 support fire operations at a level commensurate with the local and national
22 fire situation.
- 23 • Ensure accurate position descriptions are developed and reflect the
24 complexity of the unit. Individual Development Plan's promote and
25 enhance FMO currency and development.
- 26 • Provide a written Delegation of Authority to FMOs that provides an
27 adequate level of operational authority at the unit level. Include Multi-
28 Agency Coordinating (MAC) Group authority, as appropriate.
- 29 • Identify resource management objectives to maintain a current Fire
30 Management Plan (FMP) that identifies an accurate level of funding for
31 personnel and equipment.
- 32 • Develop preparedness and fire use standards that are in compliance with
33 agency fire policies.
- 34 • Management teams meet once a year to review fire and aviation policies,
35 roles, responsibilities, and delegations of authority. Specifically address
36 oversight and management controls, critical safety issues, and high-risk
37 situations such as transfers of incident command, periods of multiple fire
38 activity, and Red Flag Warnings.
- 39 • Ensure fire and aviation preparedness reviews are conducted each year.
- 40 • Meet annually with major cooperators and review interagency agreements
41 to ensure their continued effectiveness and efficiency.
- 42 • Convene and participate in annual conferences and fire reviews.

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1 Suppression

- 2 • Ensure use of fire funds is in compliance with Agency policies.
- 3 • Wildland Fire Situation Analysis (WFSA) is completed and approved on
4 all fires that escape initial attack. Alternative evaluation and certification
5 requirements are followed.
- 6 • WFSA's that are expected to exceed \$10,000,000.00 in suppression costs
7 are forwarded to the Regional Office for review and approval.
- 8 • Management reviews are conducted on all fires that require a WFSA.
9 Personally attend reviews on Type 1 and Type 2 fires.
- 10 • Provide incident management objectives, written delegations of authority,
11 and a complete Agency Administrator Briefing to Incident Management
12 Teams.
- 13 • Evaluate the need for resource advisors for all fires, and assign as
14 appropriate.
- 15 • For all unplanned human-caused fires where responsibility can be
16 determined, ensure actions are initiated to recover cost of suppression
17 activities, land rehabilitation, damages to the resource and improvements.

19 Safety

- 20 • Review safety policies, procedures, and concerns with field fire and
21 aviation personnel.
- 22 • Ensure timely follow-up actions to program reviews, fire preparedness
23 reviews, fire and aviation safety reviews, and management reviews.
- 24 • Monitor the fire situation and provide oversight during periods of critical
25 fire activity and situations of high risk.
- 26 • Ensure there is adequate direction in fire management plans to maintain
27 fire danger awareness.
- 28 • Take appropriate actions with escalating fire potential.
- 29 • Ensure appropriate investigations are conducted for incidents, entrapments,
30 and serious accidents.

32 Fire Use

- 33 • Ensure an approved burn plan is followed for each prescribed fire project,
34 including follow-up monitoring and documentation to ensure management
35 objectives are met.
- 36 • Ensure that a Wildland Fire Implementation Plan (WFIP) is completed and
37 implemented for all fires managed for resource benefits.
- 38 • Provide management oversight by personally visiting wildland and
39 prescribed fire activities each year.
- 40 • Ensure compliance with National and Regional Office policy and direction
41 for prescribed fire activities and ensure that periodic reviews and
42 inspections of the prescribed fire program are completed.
- 43 • Approve Prescribed Fire Plans. Authority may be delegated to the Agency
44 Administrators as provided under specific directions.

- 1 • Review Prescribed Fire Plans and recommend or approve the plans
2 depending upon the delegated authority. Ensure that the Prescribed Fire
3 Plan has been reviewed and recommended by a qualified technical
4 reviewer who was not involved in the plan preparation.
5

6 **Fire Management Positions**

7 The following lists show the minimum operational experience recommended for
8 fire management positions. *The Interagency Fire Program Management*
9 *Qualifications Standards* will be used as guidelines in conjunction with specific
10 agency requirements when filling vacant fire program positions, and as an aid in
11 developing Individual Development Plans (IDPs) for employees.
12

13 **Specific Fire Management Staff Performance Standards for Fire** 14 **Operations at the Field Level**

15 **Preparedness**

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

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14 **Suppression**

- 15 • Ensure completion of a job hazard analysis (JHA) for fire and fire aviation
- 16 activities, and implement applicable risk mitigation measures.
- 17 • Provide for and personally participate in periodic site visits to individual
- 18 incidents and projects.
- 19 • Utilize the incident complexity analysis to ensure the proper level of
- 20 management is assigned to all incidents.
- 21 • Ensure incoming personnel and crews are briefed prior to fire and aviation
- 22 assignments.
- 23 • Coordinate the development of the Wildland Fire Situation Analysis
- 24 (WFSA) with local unit staff specialists for all fires that escape initial
- 25 attack.
- 26 • Ensure effective transfer of command of incident management occurs and
- 27 safety is considered in all functional areas.
- 28 • Monitor fire activity to anticipate and recognize when complexity levels
- 29 exceed program capabilities. Increase managerial and operational
- 30 resources to meet needs.
- 31 • Complete cost recovery actions when unplanned human-caused fires occur.

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33 **Safety**

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

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1 **Fire Use**

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