

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 vision of the Forest Service's Fire and Aviation Management program is to  
18 safely and effectively extinguish fire, when needed; use fire where allowable;  
19 manage our natural resources; and as a Nation live with wildland fire. To  
20 support this vision, five objectives set the foundation for an all-inclusive and  
21 comprehensive High Reliability Fire Management program. These objectives  
22 are intrinsic for supporting the vision.

- 23 • Risk Management and Risk Reduction- transforming our workforce into a  
24 more refined safety culture.
- 25 • Implementing fire management programs to protect the ecology of Forest  
26 Service lands for multiple uses.
- 27 • Enhanced and Improved Collaboration and Partnerships.
- 28 • Learning- utilizing science, research, and innovative practices.
- 29 • Empowerment of employees in leadership, judgment, and decision making.

30  
31 Doctrine is beliefs and teachings which form the fundamental core values of our  
32 work. Doctrinal approach goes beyond strict compliance with procedural rules,  
33 and promotes risk-based application of wildland fire management principles to  
34 improve decision making and firefighter safety. Foundational doctrine has been  
35 codified in Forest Service Manual 5100 direction, and will guide fundamental  
36 wildland fire management policy, practices, behaviors, and customs to be  
37 mutually understood at every level of command.

38  
39 The following collection of principles and beliefs form the foundational doctrine  
40 for fire suppression in the U.S. Forest Service. These principles and beliefs  
41 operate at multiple organizational levels, including:

- 42 • Forest Service Wide (i.e., apply to all employees and activities)
- 43 • Fire and Aviation Management (i.e., are specific to the fire and aviation  
44 management program)
- 45 • Fire Suppression (i.e., are specific to fire fighting activities).

1 **The Operational Environment**

- 2 • *Fire Suppression*  
3 1. No resource or facility is worth the loss of human life, however the  
4 wildland fire suppression environment is complex and possesses inherent  
5 hazards that can, even with reasonable mitigation, result in harm to fire  
6 fighters engaged in fire suppression operations. In recognition of this fact,  
7 we are committed to the aggressive management of risk.  
8

9 **Mission**

- 10 • *Forest Service Wide*  
11 2. The Forest Service is prepared and organized to support national and  
12 international emergencies with trained personnel and other assets when  
13 requested.  
14 3. Agency employees respond when they come across situations where  
15 human life is immediately at risk or there is a clear emergency, and they are  
16 capable of assisting without undue risk to themselves or others.  
17 4. In responding to emergencies, we will bring the same professionalism  
18 and passion for safety as we do to non-emergency situations.  
19 5. Support for local fire emergencies takes priority over accomplishment of  
20 local resource targets. Support of non-local fire emergencies will be at the  
21 discretion of the local line officer, as bounded by agency agreements and  
22 Regional or National direction.  
23 6. A cooperative relationship between the Forest Service and other agencies  
24 is essential. The Forest Service is committed to honor its part of the joint  
25 responsibility to develop and maintain effective working relationships with  
26 its intergovernmental cooperators.  
27 • *Fire & Aviation Management*  
28 7. Fire management is central to meeting the Forest Service mission –  
29 conserving natural resources, restoring ecological health, and protecting  
30 communities.  
31 • *Fire Suppression*  
32 8. Successful fire suppression is essential to support the Forest Service  
33 mission.  
34 9. The intent of wildfire suppression is to protect human life, property, and  
35 at risk lands and resources.  
36

37 **Leadership and Accountability**

- 38 • *Forest Service Wide*  
39 10. The hallmarks of Forest Service leadership are action, attitude, and  
40 accountability.  
41 11. Leaders express clear and concise intent to ensure assignments are  
42 managed safely, effectively, and efficiently.  
43 12. Leaders regularly monitor operations for effectiveness, and take action  
44 when there is recognition of exceptional or problematic employee  
45 performance.

1 13. Both positive reinforcement and discipline will be based on individual  
2 behavior as measured by adherence to the rules; appropriate application of  
3 doctrine, principles, and guidelines; execution of responsibilities  
4 commensurate with role; and appropriate use of available information.

5 • *Fire Suppression*

6 14. Demonstrated fitness for command is a requirement for leadership  
7 positions associated with fire fighting.

8

9 **Roles and Relationships**

10 • *Forest Service Wide*

11 15. Commitment to duty, respect for others, and personal integrity are  
12 expected. Every employee fosters a work environment that is enjoyable,  
13 rewarding, recognizes the value of diversity, and is free of harassment.

14 • *Fire & Aviation Management*

15 16. Line officers with fire management responsibilities will have knowledge  
16 and understanding of fire program management.

17 17. Contracted resources will meet identified standards for qualifications,  
18 training, productivity, and efficiency necessary to meet emergency response  
19 needs.

20 18. It is the Forest Service responsibility to initiate and participate in public  
21 education efforts to promote support for necessary fire management  
22 activities.

23

24 • *Fire Suppression*

25 19. Every Forest Service employee has a responsibility to support fire  
26 suppression emergencies in a manner that meets identified needs, and is  
27 within their qualifications and capabilities.

28

29 **Operations**

30 • *Forest Service Wide*

31 20. Employees are expected and empowered to be creative and decisive, to  
32 exercise initiative and accept responsibility, and to use their training,  
33 experience, and judgment in decision-making to carry out their leader's  
34 intent.

35 21. Employees are expected and empowered to make reasonable and  
36 prudent decisions to accomplish the agency mission while minimizing  
37 exposure to hazards.

38 22. Clear, uncomplicated plans and concise orders maximize effectiveness  
39 and minimize confusion.

40 • *Fire Suppression*

41 23. When it is time to fight fire, we do so in a manner that maximizes  
42 effectiveness of effort, has highest regard for firefighter and public safety,  
43 and controls costs.

44 24. Every fire suppression operation is directed toward clearly-defined,  
45 decisive, and obtainable objectives.

- 1 25. Command and control must be decentralized to cope with the  
2 unpredictable nature of fire. To achieve their leader's intent and accomplish  
3 operational objectives, subordinate commanders are required to make  
4 decisions on their own initiative, and to coordinate their efforts.  
5 26. Unity of effort is maintained and suppression actions are coordinated at  
6 all times.  
7 27. Using principles requires judgment in application, while adherence to  
8 rules does not. In combination, principles and rules guide our fundamental  
9 wildland fire suppression practices and behaviors, and are mutually  
10 understood at every level of command.  
11 28. Rapid deployment and concentration of fire suppression resources at the  
12 decisive time and place is essential to successful fire suppression actions.  
13 29. Maintaining high capability for initial attack is essential to public and  
14 fire fighter safety, accomplishment of management objectives, and cost  
15 containment.

### 17 **Risk Management**

- 18 • *Fire Suppression*  
19 30. We practice risk management to minimize the exposure and affects of  
20 the inherent hazards in fire suppression while maximizing the opportunities  
21 to achieve leader intent.

### 23 **Agency Administrator Positions**

24  
25 The Forest Service has developed core fire management competencies. They  
26 are presented here for reference:

- 27 • Knowledge of fire program management including ability to integrate fire  
28 and fuels management across all program areas and functions;  
29 • Ability to implement fire management strategies and integrate natural  
30 resource concerns into collaborative community protection and ecosystem  
31 restoration strategies;  
32 • Knowledge to oversee a fire management program including budget,  
33 preparedness, prevention, suppression, and hazardous fuels reduction;  
34 • Ability to serve as an Agency Administrator during an incident on an  
35 assigned unit; and  
36 • Ability to provide a fully staffed, highly qualified, and diversified  
37 firefighting workforce that exists in a "safety first" and "readiness"  
38 environment.

### 40 **Training and Core Competencies**

- 41 • Attend a regional or national Fire Management Leadership for Agency  
42 Administrators training session;  
43 • Require a shadow assignment with a fully qualified Agency Administrator;  
44 • Receive training or experience with the Wildland Fire Decision Support  
45 System (WFDSS);

- 1 • Ability to provide a Delegation of Authority to Incident Commanders; and  
2 • Attend L-580 *Leadership is Action*.

3

#### 4 **Line Officer Certification Program**

5 The following principles will guide certification of Agency Administrators in  
6 fire management:

- 7 • Regional Foresters are accountable for certification of line officers;  
8 • Line officer evaluation includes standards for training, background and  
9 experience, and demonstrated ability, which will result in a qualitative  
10 evaluation of readiness by the Regional Forester;  
11 • When the complexity level of a fire exceeds a line officer's certification, a  
12 coach will be assigned to advise (but not replace);  
13 • This certification program will be periodically evaluated and updated as  
14 needed;  
15 • Assistance with decision documentation and analysis can be requested  
16 through the Wildland Fire Management RD&A- National Fire Decision  
17 Support Center (NFDSC); and  
18 • The Coaching/Shadowing program, to be administered by each region, is an  
19 integral part of this certification program.

20

#### 21 **Line Officers will be evaluated in three basic areas:**

- 22 • Training;  
23 • Background and experience; and  
24 • Demonstrated understanding of concepts and principles.

25

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

29

#### 30 **Guidelines**

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

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

37

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

- 40 • **Training:** Fire Management Leadership or National Fire Management for  
41 Line Officers, and attain WFDSS Certification as described per  
42 authorization level in FSM 5120.

43

44

45

- 1 • **Background and Experience:**  
2 ○ Successful management of a minimum of one Type 3 or higher fire, or  
3 one successful higher complexity fire (Type 2 or higher) quality  
4 shadow assignment (consider complexity and size of the fires).  
5 ○ Management oversight of a low-complexity fire program and/or  
6 experience as an Agency Administrator or representative.  
7 ○ Applicable experience in all hazard or other incident oversight may be  
8 considered in lieu of this experience.  
9 ○ Consider career fire experience.
- 10 • **Demonstrated Ability:** Successful evaluation by a coach (including  
11 feedback from ICs or ACs) that the candidate has demonstrated  
12 understanding and application of the responsibilities of an Agency  
13 Administrator on smaller low-complexity fires with a basic understanding  
14 of the elements of the core competencies.  
15
- 16 **Journey Level** - The line officer could manage a moderate to high complexity  
17 fire. The line officer needs to be certified at the Working Level and should meet  
18 the following:
- 19 • **Training:** Fire Management Leadership or National Fire Management for  
20 Line Officers, and attain WFDSS Certification as described per  
21 authorization level in FSM 5120.
- 22 • **Background and Experience:**  
23 ○ Successful management of a minimum of one Type 2 or higher fire, or  
24 one successful higher complexity fire (Type 1) quality shadow  
25 assignment, depending on fire experience (complexity and size of the  
26 fires should be considered).  
27 ○ Management oversight of a moderate-complexity fire program, or  
28 experience as an Agency Administrator or representative on Type 2 or  
29 higher fires.  
30 ○ Applicable experience in all-hazard or other incident oversight may  
31 also be considered in lieu of other guidelines.
- 32 • **Demonstrated Ability:** Successful evaluation by a coach (including  
33 feedback from ICs or ACs) that the candidate has demonstrated  
34 understanding and application of the responsibilities of an Agency  
35 Administrator on moderate to large complex fires in the core competencies,  
36 and other elements that may be relevant.  
37
- 38 **Advanced Level** - The line officer could manage a high complexity fire. The  
39 line officer needs to be certified at the Journey Level, and should meet the  
40 following:
- 41 • **Training:** Fire Management Leadership or National Fire Management for  
42 Line Officers, and attain WFDSS Certification as described per  
43 authorization level in FSM 5120.  
44  
45  
46

- 1 • **Background and Experience:**  
2 ○ Successful management of a minimum of five Type 1 or 2 fires (at least  
3 one of which is a Type 1 fire), depending on fire experience  
4 (complexity and size of the fires should be considered).  
5 ○ Management oversight of a moderate to high-complexity fire program.  
6 ○ Applicable experience in all hazard or other incident oversight may  
7 also be considered in lieu of other guidelines.
- 8 • **Demonstrated Ability:** Successful evaluation by a coach (including  
9 feedback from ICs or ACs) that the candidate has demonstrated  
10 understanding and application of the responsibilities of an Agency  
11 Administrator on large complex fires in the core competencies, and other  
12 elements that may be relevant.

13

**Other Considerations**

14  
15 Core competencies, consistent with Fire Doctrine principles, include:

- 16 • Safety;  
17 • Strategies and tactics for cost containment;  
18 • Incident management processes;  
19 • Understanding of decision support tools;  
20 • Situational awareness of resource availability & allocation;  
21 • Understanding fire agreements and cost apportionment;  
22 • WFDSS experience;  
23 • Monitoring and evaluation of fire operations;  
24 • Risk management; and  
25 • Social/political awareness and interpersonal relations.

26

27 Other training opportunities to achieve core competencies - Additional training  
28 opportunities/suggestions (will be updated as program is evaluated):

- 29 • Upper levels of fire leadership and fire management courses;  
30 • Function as the Line Officer in sand table exercises and training simulations  
31 in S-420, S-520, and other fire courses;  
32 • Participate in advanced risk management training;  
33 • Get assigned to a Type 1 or Type 2 team as a training assignment (e.g.  
34 shadow Plans) and see the world from their viewpoint;  
35 • WFDSS training (see the WFDSS homepage <http://wfdss.usgs.gov/wfdss>  
36 for training materials);  
37 • Include risk management and fire management topics during annual line  
38 officer meetings;  
39 • Attend staff rides (staff rides need to include a stand that portrays the line  
40 officer perspective);  
41 • Participate in prescribed fires and/or attend prescribed fire training;  
42 • Participate in other leadership and/or decision-making training; and  
43 • For additional information, a copy of the *Line Officer Desk Reference for*  
44 *Fire Program Management* can be downloaded at:

1 [http://www.wfmrda.nwcg.gov/docs/6-1-](http://www.wfmrda.nwcg.gov/docs/6-1-2012_Line_Officer_Desk_Reference_Guide_for_Fire_Mgmt.pdf)  
2 [2012\\_Line\\_Officer\\_Desk\\_Reference\\_Guide\\_for\\_Fire\\_Mgmt.pdf](http://www.wfmrda.nwcg.gov/docs/6-1-2012_Line_Officer_Desk_Reference_Guide_for_Fire_Mgmt.pdf)

3

#### 4 **Guidance on the Selection of Coaches**

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

7 Criteria for individuals serving as Coaches are as follows:

- 8 • Must be a “Journey” level line officer in dealing with large fire incident, or  
9 rated at an experience level commensurate with incident being managed;  
10 Present and past Agency Administrators can serve as coaches, including  
11 retirees that were qualified/experienced; and
- 12 • Must be willing and able to serve as a Coach.

13

#### 14 **Specific Agency Administrator Responsibilities for Fire and Aviation at the** 15 **Field Level**

16

##### 17 **Responsibilities**

- 18 • Integrate fire and fuels management across all functional areas.
- 19 • Implement fire management strategies and integrate natural resource  
20 concerns into collaborative community protection and ecosystem restoration  
21 strategies on the unit.
- 22 • Manage a budget that includes fire preparedness, prevention, suppression,  
23 and hazardous fuels in an annual program of work for the unit.
- 24 • Ensure the GSA Wildland Fire Equipment Catalog is used as the primary  
25 and mandatory source of supply for wildland fire suppression equipment,  
26 supplies and protective clothing. Any deviation must follow the  
27 requirements listed in FSH 6309.32 - Required Sources of Supplies and  
28 Services and FAR 8.002 - Priorities for Use of Government Supply Sources.  
29 The deviation must be supported by a Job Hazard Analysis (JHA) that  
30 documents the specific reason the stock item does not meet the job  
31 requirements and is signed by the applicable line officer. The purchasing  
32 official must confirm that the JHA supports the alternate purchase.
- 33 • Perform duties of Agency Administrator and maintain those qualifications.
- 34 • Provide a fully staffed, highly qualified, and diverse workforce in a "safety  
35 first" environment.
- 36 • Support and participate in wildfire prevention.

37

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

40

##### 41 **Preparedness**

- 42 • Take all necessary and prudent actions to ensure firefighter and public  
43 safety.



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

### 36 **Suppression**

- 37 • Ensure use of fire funds is in compliance with Agency policies.
- 38 • All fires must utilize the WFDSS to inform and document decisions related  
39 to course of action, resource allocations, and risk management  
40 considerations. WFDSS will be used to approve and publish decisions on  
41 all fires that exceed initial attack or include a resource management  
42 objective. See table below for WFDSS approval authorities.
- 43 • Personally attend reviews on Type 1 and Type 2 fires. Ensure Agency  
44 Administrator representatives are assigned when appropriate.

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

#### 17 Responsibilities and Oversight

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

26

Incident Type	USFS Approval*
Type 1	Regional Forester level with National oversight
Type 2	Forest Supervisor level with oversight by the Regional Forester
Type 3,4,5	District Ranger level with oversight by the Forest Supervisor

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

30

- 31 • Critical long duration wildfire oversight roles include ensuring that:
- 32 ○ Up-to-date Published decisions are completed and documented in  
33 WFDSS.
- 34 ○ Hazards are identified and risk assessments are incorporated into  
35 Published Decisions.
- 36 ○ Coordination with partners and potentially affected parties is conducted  
37 (including smoke impacts). Unified command is implemented early if  
38 necessary.

- 1 ○ Resource capacity and availability are adequately assessed to meet
- 2 expectations.
- 3 ● This oversight role should address concerns of the states, cooperators, and
- 4 the public including air quality impacts from multiple wildfires.
- 5

#### 6 **Risk Management Framework**

7 Sound decision-making relies on identifying reasonable objectives for protection  
8 of critical values at risk, while considering the amount and quality of exposure  
9 to firefighters and probability of success. The following Risk Assessment and  
10 Risk Decision questions are designed to inform fire management decisions by  
11 stimulating thinking and prompting dialogue, analyzing and assessing risk, and  
12 recognizing shared risks and communicating those risks within the Agency and  
13 with partners and stakeholders.

- 14 ● *Risk Assessment:*
  - 15 1. What are the critical values at risk?
  - 16 2. What is the chance the critical values will be impacted, and if so what
  - 17 are the consequences?
  - 18 3. What are the opportunities to manage fire to meet land management
  - 19 objectives?
  - 20 4. What are the possible low probability/high consequence events?
  - 21 5. Who are the stakeholders that should be consulted prior to making a
  - 22 decision?
- 23 ● *Risk Decision:*
  - 24 1. What alternatives (objectives, strategies, and tactics) are being
  - 25 considered?
  - 26 2. What is the exposure of responders for the alternatives being
  - 27 considered?
  - 28 3. What is the relative probability of success associated with the
  - 29 alternatives being considered?
  - 30 4. What alternative provides for the best balance between the desired
  - 31 outcome and exposure to responders?
  - 32 5. What are the critical thresholds that will trigger reconsideration of the
  - 33 proposed alternative and how will they be monitored?

#### 35 **Safety**

- 36 ● Review safety policies, procedures, and concerns with field fire and
- 37 aviation personnel.
- 38 ● Ensure timely follow-up actions to program reviews, fire preparedness
- 39 reviews, fire and aviation safety reviews, and management reviews.
- 40 ● Monitor the fire situation and provide oversight during periods of critical
- 41 fire activity and situations of high risk.
- 42 ● Ensure there is adequate direction in fire management plans to maintain fire
- 43 danger awareness.
- 44 ● Take appropriate actions with escalating fire potential.

- 1 • Ensure appropriate investigation or Lessons Learned analyses are conducted  
2 for incidents, entrapments, and serious accidents.  
3
- 4 **Fuels**
- 5 • Complete a fuels treatment effectiveness assessment on all wildfires which  
6 start in or burn into a fuel treatment area.
- 7 • Enter results of the assessment in the Fuels Treatment Effectiveness  
8 Monitoring (FTEM) database found at: [www.nwportal.fs.usda.gov](http://www.nwportal.fs.usda.gov) within  
9 90 days of control of the fire.  
10
- 11 **Prescribed Fire**
- 12 • Provide program leadership by visiting prescribed fire treatment projects  
13 and providing leader's intent to prescribed fire personnel.
- 14 • Ensure compliance with National and Regional Office policy and direction  
15 for prescribed fire activities and ensure that periodic reviews and  
16 inspections of the prescribed fire program are completed.
- 17 • Adhere to procedures for Regional and/or National level approvals for new  
18 and continued prescribed fire activities at National Preparedness Levels 4  
19 and 5 as described in the *National Interagency Mobilization Guide*.
- 20 • Ensure a Prescribed Fire Plan is written and approved for each project prior  
21 to implementation in accordance with the *Interagency Prescribed Fire*  
22 *Planning and Procedures Guide* available at:  
23 [www.nwecg.gov/pms/RxFire/rxfire.htm](http://www.nwecg.gov/pms/RxFire/rxfire.htm)
- 24 • Review Prescribed Fire Plans:
- 25 ○ Ensure that the prescribed fire plan has been reviewed and  
26 recommended by a qualified technical reviewer.
- 27 ○ Ensure that prescribed fire plans are designed to achieve desired  
28 conditions as described in Land and Resource Management Plans and  
29 project-specific NEPA analysis.
- 30 • Approve Prescribed Fire Plans:
- 31 ○ Minimum qualifications for Forest Supervisors, District Rangers, other  
32 Line Officers and formally delegated "Acting" Line Officers to approve  
33 prescribed fire plans are:
- 34 ■ Completing a National or Regional Fire Management Leadership  
35 course, or
- 36 ■ Qualifying in a Type 1 or 2 Command and General Staff position  
37 (currency not required), or
- 38 ■ Qualifying as a Prescribed Fire Burn Boss (RXB1 or RXB2) or  
39 Prescribed Fire Manager (RXM1 or RXM2) (currency not  
40 required).
- 41 ○ Authority to approve prescribed fire plans is held at the Forest  
42 Supervisor level but may be delegated in writing to other qualified line  
43 officers or staff.

- 1 ○ Approve prescribed fire plan amendments and determine the need for
- 2 additional technical review of proposed plan amendments prior to
- 3 approval.
- 4 ● Reauthorize all prescribed fire plans if more than one year has elapsed since
- 5 last authorization.
- 6 ● Report all instances of prescribed fires resulting in a wildfire declaration
- 7 and/or air quality Notice-of-Violation.

#### 9 **Fire Management Positions**

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

#### 17 **Specific Fire Management Staff Responsibilities for Fire Operations at the** 18 **Field Level**

##### 20 **Preparedness**

- 21 ● Use sound risk management practices as the foundation for all aspects of
- 22 fire and aviation management.
- 23 ● Ensure that only trained and qualified personnel are assigned to fire and
- 24 aviation duties.
- 25 ● Develop, implement, evaluate, and document fire and aviation training
- 26 program to meet current and anticipated needs.
- 27 ● Establish an effective process to gather, evaluate, and communicate
- 28 information to managers, supervisors, and employees. Ensure clear concise
- 29 communications are maintained at all levels.
- 30 ● Ensure fire and aviation management staffs understand their roles,
- 31 responsibilities, authority, and accountability.
- 32 ● Develop and maintain effective communication with the public and
- 33 cooperators.
- 34 ● Regardless of funding level, provide a safe, effective, and efficient fire
- 35 management program.
- 36 ● Organize, train, equip, and direct a qualified work force. An Individual
- 37 Development Plan (IDP) must be provided for incumbents who do not meet
- 38 new standards. Establish qualification review process.
- 39 ● Take appropriate action when performance is exceptional or deficient.
- 40 ● Ensure fire and aviation policies are understood, followed, and coordinated
- 41 with other agencies as appropriate.
- 42 ● Ensure that adequate resources are available to implement fire management
- 43 operations.
- 44 ● Provide fire personnel with adequate guidance, training, and decision-
- 45 making authority to ensure timely decisions.

- 1 • Develop and maintain agreements, annual operating plans, and contracts on  
2 an interagency basis to increase effectiveness and efficiencies.
- 3 • Develop, maintain, and annually evaluate the FMP to ensure accuracy and  
4 validity.
- 5 • Ensure budget requests and allocations reflect preparedness requirements in  
6 the FMP.
- 7 • Develop and maintain current operational plans. (e.g., dispatch, pre-attack,  
8 prevention).
- 9 • Ensure that reports and records are properly completed and maintained.
- 10 • Ensure fiscal responsibility and accountability in planning and expenditures.
- 11 • Assess, identify, and implement program actions that effectively reduce  
12 unwanted wildland fire ignitions and mitigate risks to life, property, and  
13 resources.
- 14 • Work with cooperators to identify processes and procedures for providing  
15 fire adapted communities within the wildland urban interface.

16

**17 Suppression**

- 18 • Provide for and personally participate in periodic site visits to individual  
19 incidents and projects.
- 20 • Utilize the Organizational Needs Assessment and/or Complexity Analysis  
21 to ensure the proper level of management is assigned to all incidents.
- 22 • Ensure incoming personnel and crews are briefed prior to fire and aviation  
23 assignments.
- 24 • Coordinate the development of Published Decisions within WFDSS with  
25 local unit staff specialists for all fires that escape initial 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 resources  
30 to meet needs.
- 31 • Complete cost recovery actions when unplanned human-caused fires occur.
- 32 • Ensure structure exposure protection principles are followed.
- 33 • Ensure all misapplications of wildland fire chemicals are reported and  
34 appropriate consultation conducted as needed (see Chapter 12).
- 35 • Ensure 5% assessment of fires less than 300 acres that had aerial fire  
36 retardant used and have avoidance areas as a result of the record of decision  
37 for the nationwide aerial application of fire retardant on National Forest  
38 System land is completed and documented for misapplication reporting.
- 39 • Ensure all assessments of impacts to threatened and endangered species or  
40 cultural resources are conducted by trained and qualified resource  
41 personnel.

42

**43 Safety**

- 44 • Ensure completion of a Job Hazard Analysis (JHA) for fire and fire aviation  
45 activities, and implement applicable risk mitigation measures.

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

8

### 9 **Prescribed Fire**

- 10 • Ensure a written, approved burn plan exists for each prescribed fire project.  
11 • Prepare and implement all prescribed fire plans in accordance with the  
12 *Interagency Prescribed Fire Planning and Procedures Guide* available at:  
13 [www.nwccg.gov/pms/RxFire/rxfire.htm](http://www.nwccg.gov/pms/RxFire/rxfire.htm)  
14 • Ensure that the Prescribed Fire Burn Boss assigned to each project is  
15 qualified at the appropriate level as determined by project complexity (see  
16 the *Interagency Prescribed Fire Planning and Procedures Guide* at  
17 [www.nwccg.gov/pms/RxFire/rxfire.htm](http://www.nwccg.gov/pms/RxFire/rxfire.htm) for specific guidance).  
18 • Review and update all prescribed fire plans as necessary to comply with  
19 new policy or procedures and submit to agency administrator for review and  
20 approval.  
21 • Submit amendments to prescribed fire plans to the agency administrator for  
22 approval.  
23 • Resubmit prescribed fire plans to agency administrator if more than one  
24 year has elapsed since last authorization was signed.

25

### 26 **Structure Exposure Protection Principles**

27

#### 28 **Mission and Role**

29 A significant role of the Forest Service is to manage natural resources on public  
30 land, and management of unwanted wildland fire is a primary mission in that  
31 role. Wildland firefighter training, tools, and personal protective equipment are  
32 based on the wildland environment. This does not prevent using wildland  
33 tactics in the Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) when risks are mitigated.  
34 Wildland firefighter training for the WUI, however, is centered on the concepts  
35 of preventing wildland fire from reaching areas of structures and/or reducing the  
36 intensity of fire that does reach structures. Fire suppression actions on structures  
37 that are outside federal jurisdiction, outside the scope of wildland firefighting  
38 training, or beyond the capability of wildland firefighting resources are not  
39 appropriate roles for the Forest Service.

40

41 Forest Service leadership will express clear and concise “leader’s intent” to  
42 ensure structure protection assignments are managed safely, effectively, and  
43 efficiently. Leaders are expected to operate under existing policies and doctrine  
44 under normal conditions. Where conflicts occur, employees will be expected to

1 weigh the risk versus gain, and operate within the intent of Agency policy and  
2 doctrine.

3

#### 4 **Strategic Principles**

- 5 • The Forest Service actively supports creation of Firewise and Fire Adapted  
6 Communities and structures that can survive wildland fire without  
7 intervention. We support the concept that property owners have primary  
8 responsibility for reducing wildfire risks to their lands and assets.
- 9 • The Forest Service will actively work toward applying Firewise concepts to  
10 all Forest Service owned structures, facilities, and permitted use to serve as  
11 a model to publics and communities.
- 12 • The Forest Service will apply strategy and tactics to keep wildland fires  
13 from reaching structures, as prudent to do so, considering risk management  
14 for firefighters and publics, fire behavior, values at risk including natural  
15 resources, availability of firefighting resources, and jurisdictional  
16 authorities.
- 17 • The Forest Service will be proactive in developing agreements with  
18 interagency partners to clarify its structure protection policy.
- 19 • The Forest Service structure protection role is based on the assumption that  
20 other Departments and agencies will fulfill their primary roles and  
21 responsibilities. The Forest Service will not usurp individual, local, or state  
22 responsibility for structure protection.
- 23 • Prior to task implementation, a specific structure protection role briefing  
24 will be accomplished.

25

#### 26 **Tactical Applications**

27

#### 28 **Structure Protection Definition**

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

35

#### 36 **USFS Role**

37 As documented in a Forest Service doctrinal principle, “Agency employees  
38 respond when they come across situations where human life is immediately at  
39 risk or there is a clear emergency, and they are capable of assisting without  
40 undue risk to themselves or others”. This principle serves as a foundational  
41 basis for the roles employees play in structure protection.

42

43 Pursuant to this “structure protection” policy provided above, Forest Service  
44 personnel may engage support from other cooperators in structure protection  
45 activities when 1) requested by local government under terms of an approved  
46 cooperative agreement or 2) when operating within a unified command. The



1 agency is permitted, without agreement, to render emergency assistance to a  
2 local government in suppressing wildland fires, and in preserving life and  
3 property from the threat of fire, when properly trained and equipped agency  
4 resources are the closest to the need, and there is adequate leadership to do so  
5 safely. The agency will NOT routinely provide primary emergency response  
6 (medical aids, fire suppression, HAZMAT, etc... as identified on "run cards" or  
7 preplanned dispatch scenarios) nor will the agency supplant the local  
8 government responsibility to do so.

9  
10 The contents of a cooperative agreement will clearly define the responsibilities  
11 of partners. Regarding structural fire protection, typical Forest Service  
12 responsibilities in the case of mutual aid, initial attack, extended attack, or large  
13 fire support include:

- 14 • To provide initial attack through extended attack actions consistent with  
15 application of wildland fire strategy and tactics.
- 16 • To supply water in support of tribal, state or local agencies having  
17 jurisdictional responsibility for the fire. This would include the use of water  
18 tenders, portable pumps, hose, tanks, and supporting draft sites.
- 19 • To assist or supply foam or chemical suppressant capability with engines or  
20 aerial application.
- 21 • To assist local authorities in the event of evacuations.
- 22 • To assist local authorities by assessing (triaging) structures for defensibility  
23 from wildfire.
- 24 • To coordinate with local authorities on actions taken by Private Structure  
25 Protection Companies.

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

- 27 • "Wrap" or set up and administer sprinklers around privately owned  
28 structures.
- 29 • Remove fuels immediately surrounding a structure such as brush,  
30 landscaping, or firewood.

31  
32 As addressed above, the Forest Service will apply strategy and tactics to keep  
33 wildland fires from reaching structures, as prudent to do so, considering risk  
34 management for firefighters and publics, fire behavior, values at risk including  
35 natural resources, availability of firefighting resources, and jurisdictional  
36 authorities.

37  
38 The Forest Service shall not:

- 39 • Take direct suppression actions on structures other than those that tactically  
40 reduce the threat of fire spread to them.
- 41 • Enter structures or work on roofs of structures for the purpose of direct  
42 suppression actions.

43  
44 In consideration of Forest Service owned or leased structures outside of  
45 structure fire protection areas these same policies apply. The use of Firewise

1 principles and aggressive fire prevention measures will be employed for Forest  
2 Service structures at every opportunity.

3

4 If a Forest Service structure is determined to be at risk, “wrapping” or other  
5 indirect protection methods for the structure can be authorized by the Agency  
6 Administrator. Documentation of these decisions needs to be placed in the fire  
7 documentation package and the unit files. Any employee engaged in  
8 “wrapping” or other indirect methods of protection operations will be  
9 thoroughly briefed and trained in correct safety and personal protection  
10 equipment procedures, especially if the use of ladders or climbing on the  
11 structure is necessary. In any case, the Forest Service holds that no structure is  
12 worth the risk of serious injury to an employee in an attempt to protect that  
13 structure or facility from fire.

14

#### 15 **Local Government Role**

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

20

#### 21 **Cost**

22 Local governments assume the financial responsibility for emergency response  
23 activities, including structure protection, within their jurisdictions. Local  
24 government will order resources deemed necessary to protect structures within  
25 their jurisdiction. Local agencies will not be reimbursed for performing their  
26 responsibilities within their jurisdiction.

27

#### 28 **Tactical Operating Principles**

29 When engaging in structure protection activities, as defined above, Forest  
30 Service personnel will apply the following principles:

- 31 • The first priority for all risk-decisions is human survival, both of firefighters  
32 and the public.
- 33 • Incident containment strategies specifically address and integrate protection  
34 of defensible improved property and wildland values.
- 35 • Direct protection of improved property is undertaken when it is safe to do  
36 so, when there are sufficient time and appropriate resources available, and  
37 when the action directly contributes to achieving overall incident objectives.
- 38 • Firefighter decision to accept direction to engage in structure protection  
39 actions is based on the determination that the property is defensible and the  
40 risk to firefighters can be safely mitigated under the current or potential fire  
41 conditions.
- 42 • A decision to delay or withdraw from structure protection operations is the  
43 appropriate course of action when made in consideration of firefighter  
44 safety, current or potential fire behavior, or defensibility of the structure or  
45 groups of structures.

- 1 • Firefighters at all levels are responsible to make risk-decisions appropriate  
2 to their individual knowledge, experience, training, and situational  
3 awareness.
- 4 • Every firefighter is responsible to be aware of the factors that affect their  
5 judgment and the decision-making process, including: a realistic perception  
6 of their own knowledge, skills, and abilities, the presence of life threat or  
7 structures, fire behavior, availability of resources, social/political pressures,  
8 mission focus, and personal distractions such as home, work, health, and  
9 fatigue.
- 10 • An individual's ability to assimilate all available factors affecting  
11 situational awareness is limited in a dynamic wildland urban interface fire  
12 environment. Every firefighter is responsible to understand and recognize  
13 these limitations, and to apply experience, training and personal judgment  
14 to observe, orient, decide, and act in preparation for the "worst case".
- 15 • It is the responsibility of every firefighter to participate in the flow of  
16 information with supervisors, subordinates, and peers. Clear and concise  
17 communication is essential to overcome limitations in situational  
18 awareness.