

**Chapter 01****Federal Wildland Fire Management Policy and Guidance Overview****Scope**

These standards apply to all the signatories of this document. They are designed to ensure safe and efficient wildland fire, fuels, and fire aviation operations. This document is reviewed annually and updated as needed. Exceptions and/or supplemental direction to the *Interagency Standards for Fire and Fire Aviation Operations* are found in agency specific manuals and handbooks as referenced in individual chapters of this document.

**Purpose**

This document provides a reference for current operational policies, procedures, and guidelines for managing wildland fire and fire aviation operations. Employees engaged in fire management activities will follow all safety standards and guidelines in their agency specific health and safety guides and handbooks. All employees engaged in fire suppression activities will adhere to standards and mitigate risks defined in the *Incident Response Pocket Guide (PMS #461, NFES #1077)*.

**Federal Wildland Fire Management Policy**

In 2001 an update of the 1995 Federal Fire Policy was completed and approved by the Secretaries of Interior and Agriculture. On April 21, 2004 the Secretaries approved the *"Interagency Strategy for the Implementation of the Federal Wildland Fire Policy"*. This document directs the agencies to work together to develop common language, unified guidance and direction for all agencies and bureaus manuals, handbooks and guidelines to complete final implementation of the policy.

**Elements of the Federal Wildland Fire Management Policy****Safety**

Firefighter and public safety is the first priority. All Fire Management Plans and activities must reflect this commitment.

**Fire Management and Ecosystem Sustainability**

The full range of fire management activities will be used to help achieve ecosystem sustainability, including interrelated ecological, economic, and social components.

**Response to Wildland Fire**

Fire as a critical natural process will be integrated into land and resource management plans and activities on a landscape scale across agency boundaries. Response to wildland fires is based on ecological, social and legal consequences of the fire. The circumstances under which a fire occurs, and the likely consequences on firefighter and public safety and

Release Date: January 2005

01-1

1 welfare, natural and cultural resources, and values to be protected; dictate  
2 the appropriate response to fire.

3

#### 4 **Use of Wildland Fire**

5 Wildland fire will be used to protect, maintain and enhance resources and,  
6 as nearly as possible, be allowed to function in its natural ecological role.  
7 Use of fire will be based on approved Fire Management Plans and will  
8 follow specific prescriptions contained in operational plans.

9

#### 10 **Emergency Stabilization and Rehabilitation**

11 Rehabilitation and restoration efforts will be undertaken to protect and  
12 sustain ecosystems, public health, safety, and to help communities protect  
13 infrastructure.

14

#### 15 **Protection Priorities**

16 The protection of human life is the single overriding suppression priority.  
17 Setting priorities among protecting human communities and community  
18 infrastructure, other property and improvements, and natural and cultural  
19 resources will be done based on the values to be protected, human health  
20 and safety, and the costs of protection. Once people have been committed  
21 to an incident, these human resources become the highest value to be  
22 protected.

23

#### 24 **Wildland Urban Interface**

25 The operational roles of the federal agencies as a partner in the Wildland  
26 Urban Interface are wildland firefighting, hazard reduction, cooperative  
27 prevention and education, and technical assistance. Structural fire  
28 suppression is the responsibility of tribal, state or local governments.  
29 Federal agencies may assist with exterior structural fire protection activities  
30 under formal fire protection agreements that specify the mutual  
31 responsibilities of the partners, including funding. (Some federal agencies  
32 have full structural protection authority for their facilities on lands they  
33 administer and may also enter into formal agreements to assist state and  
34 local governments with structural protection.)

35

#### 36 **Planning**

37 Every area with burnable vegetation must have an approved Fire  
38 Management Plan. Fire Management Plan's are strategic plans that define a  
39 program to manage wildland and prescribed fires based on the area's  
40 approved Land Management Plan. Fire Management Plans must provide  
41 for firefighter and public safety; include fire management strategies, tactics,  
42 and alternatives; address values to be protected and public health issues; and  
43 be consistent with resource management objectives, activities of the area,  
44 and environmental laws and regulations.

45

46

1 **Science**

2 Fire management plans and programs will be based on a foundation of the  
3 best available science. Research will support ongoing efforts to increase  
4 our scientific knowledge of biological, physical, and sociological factors.  
5 Information needed to support fire management will be developed through  
6 an integrated interagency fire science program. Scientific results must be  
7 made available to managers in a timely manner and must be used in the  
8 development of land management plans, fire management plans, and  
9 implementation plans.

10

11 **Preparedness**

12 Agencies will ensure their capability to provide safe, cost-effective fire  
13 management programs in support of land and resource management plans  
14 through appropriate planning, staffing, training, equipment, and  
15 management oversight.

16

17 **Suppression**

18 Fires are suppressed at minimum cost, considering firefighter and public  
19 safety, benefits, and all values to be protected; consistent with resource  
20 objectives.

21

22 **Prevention**

23 Agencies will work together with their partners, other affected groups, and  
24 individuals to prevent unauthorized ignition of wildland fires.

25

26 **Standardization**

27 Agencies will use compatible planning processes, funding mechanisms,  
28 training and qualification requirements, operational procedures, values-to-  
29 be-protected methodologies, and public education programs for all fire  
30 management activities.

31

32 **Interagency Coordination**

33 Fire management planning, preparedness, prevention, suppression, fire use,  
34 restoration and rehabilitation, monitoring, research, and education will be  
35 conducted on an interagency basis with the involvement of cooperators and  
36 partners.

37

38 **Communication and Education**

39 Agencies will enhance knowledge and understanding of wildland fire  
40 management policies and practices through internal and external  
41 communication and education programs. These programs will be  
42 continuously improved through the timely and effective exchange of  
43 information among all affected agencies and organizations.

44

45

46

**1 Agency Administrator and Employee Roles**

2 Agency administrators will ensure that their employees are trained, certified  
3 and made available to participate in the wildland fire program locally,  
4 regionally, and nationally as the situation demands. Employees with  
5 operational, administrative, or other skills will support the wildland fire  
6 programs as necessary. Agency administrators are responsible and will be  
7 held accountable for making employees available.

8

**9 Evaluation**

10 Agencies will develop and implement a systematic method of evaluation to  
11 determine effectiveness of projects through implementation of the 2001  
12 Federal Wildland Fire Management Policy. The evaluation will assure  
13 accountability, facilitate resolution of areas of conflict, and identify  
14 resource shortages and agency priorities.

15

**16 Training and Qualification**

17 All fire personnel will meet specific agency training, experience, and  
18 qualification requirements for incident assignments. (*See NWCG 310-1,*  
19 *DOI Incident Qualification and Certification System, and FSH 5109-17.*)  
20 Follow all safety policies, standards, and guidelines identified within the  
21 *Interagency Incident Business Management Handbook (IIBMH), Fireline*  
22 *Handbook, Interagency Helicopter Operations Guide (IHOG), Interagency*  
23 *Standards for Fire and Fire Aviation Operations, and Incident Response*  
24 *Pocket Guide (IRPG).*

25

**26 Code of Conduct for Fire Suppression**

27 Firefighter safety comes first on every fire every time. The Ten Standard  
28 Firefighting Orders are firm. We don't break them, we don't bend them.  
29 All 18 Watch Out Situations must be mitigated before engagement or re-  
30 engagement of wildland fire suppression activities. Every firefighter has  
31 the right to know that their or her assignments are safe. Every fireline  
32 supervisor, every fire manager, and every administrator has the  
33 responsibility to confirm that safe practices are known and observed.

34

**35 Economic Efficiency**

36 Fire management programs and activities will be based on economic  
37 analyses that incorporate commodity, non-commodity, and social values.

38

**39 Fire Cause Determination and Cost Recovery**

40 Agency policy requires all wildland fires to be investigated to determine  
41 cause, origin, and responsibility. Agencies must pursue cost recovery, or  
42 document why cost recovery is not initiated for all human-caused fires on  
43 public and/or other lands under protection agreements.

44

45

46

**1 Employee Responsibility**

2 All employees, cooperators, contractors, and volunteers who participate in  
3 wildland fire operations have the duty to treat one another with respect and  
4 maintain a work environment free of harassment.

5

6 Hazing is considered a form of harassment. Hazing is defined as any action  
7 taken, or situation created intentionally, to produce mental or physical  
8 discomfort, embarrassment, or ridicule.

9

10 There is zero tolerance of misconduct, whether it is harassment or hazing,  
11 or any other inappropriate behavior. We must all take responsibility for  
12 creating and ensuring a healthy and safe work environment.

13

14 Every individual has a responsibility to report harassment, inappropriate  
15 behavior, and take positive action to mitigate its effects.

16

**17 Operational Clarification for Consistent Wildland Fire Management  
18 Policy Implementation:**

19 Only one management objective will be applied to a wildland fire. Wildland  
20 fires will either be managed for resource benefits or suppressed. A wildland  
21 fire cannot be managed for both objectives concurrently. If two wildland  
22 fires converge, they will be managed as a single wildland fire.

23

24 Human caused wildland fires will be suppressed in every instance and will  
25 not be managed for resource benefits.

26

27 Once a wildland fire has been managed for suppression objectives, it may  
28 never be managed for resource benefit objectives.

29

30 The Appropriate Management Response (AMR) is any specific action  
31 suitable to meet Fire Management Unit (FMU) objectives. Typically, the  
32 AMR ranges across a spectrum of tactical options (from monitoring to  
33 intensive management actions). The AMR is developed by using FMU  
34 strategies and objectives identified in the Fire Management Plan.

35

36 The Wildland Fire Situation Analysis process is used to determine and  
37 document the suppression strategy from the full range of responses  
38 available for suppression operations. Suppression strategies are designed to  
39 meet the policy objectives of suppression.

40

41 Wildland fire use is the result of a natural event. The Land/Resource  
42 Management Plan, or the Fire Management Plan, will identify areas where  
43 the strategy of wildland fire use is suitable.

44

1 The Wildland Fire Implementation Plan (WFIP) is the tool that examines  
2 the available response strategies to determine if a fire is being considered  
3 for wildland fire use.

4  
5 When a prescribed fire or a fire designated for wildland fire use is no longer  
6 achieving the intended resource management objectives and, contingency or  
7 mitigation actions have failed, the fire will be declared a wildfire. Once a  
8 wildfire, it cannot be returned to a prescribed fire or wildland fire use status.

### 9 10 **Fire Management Objectives**

11  
12 The federal wildland fire management agencies fire management activities  
13 should result in safe, cost-effective fire management programs that protect,  
14 maintain, and enhance federal lands.

15  
16 The objectives of the wildland fire management program are to:

- 17 • Protect human life, property, and natural/cultural resources both within  
18 and adjacent to agency administered lands.
- 19 • Minimize damages and maximize overall benefits of wildland fire  
20 within the framework of land use objectives and Resource  
21 Management Plans.
- 22 • Manage the wildland fire program in accordance with congressional  
23 intent as expressed in the annual appropriations act and enabling  
24 legislation, and comply with applicable departmental manual and  
25 agency policies and procedures.
- 26 • Promote an interagency approach to managing fires on an ecosystem  
27 basis.
- 28 • Employ strategies to manage wildland fires that provide for firefighter  
29 and public safety, minimize cost and resource damage, and are  
30 consistent with values to be protected and management objectives.
- 31 • Restore and rehabilitate resources and improvements lost in or  
32 damaged by fire or suppression activities.
- 33 • Minimize, and where necessary, mitigate human-induced impacts to  
34 resources, natural processes, or improvements attributable to wildland  
35 fire activities.
- 36 • Promote public understanding of fire management programs and  
37 objectives.
- 38 • Organize a fire staff that can apply the highest standards of  
39 professional and technical expertise.
- 40 • Encourage research to advance understanding of fire behavior, effects,  
41 ecology, and management.
- 42 • Integrate fire management through all levels of the planning process.
- 43 • Prevent and investigate all unplanned human-caused fires.