

# USFS Line Officer/Agency Administrator's Desk Reference for Fire Program Management

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THIS GUIDE IS SPONSORED BY THE NATIONAL FOREST SERVICE LINE OFFICER TEAM (LOT). IT WAS DEVELOPED BY THE WILDLAND FIRE MANAGEMENT RESEARCH DEVELOPMENT AND APPLICATION (WFM RD&A) TEAM WITH RECOMMENDATIONS FROM AGENCY ADMINISTRATORS AND LINE OFFICERS. FEEDBACK IS ENCOURAGED TO IMPROVE THE UTILITY AND FUNCTION OF THE GUIDE.

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This Line Officer/Agency Administrator Desk Reference Guide for Fire Program Management was created to aid Line Officers who oversee fire management from preseason through the life of a fire and post fire season. References to the original direction (Forest Service Manual, Forest Service Handbook, Interagency Standards and Guide aka Red Book, etc.) are provided.

#### History of the Guide:

In 2009 the National Line Officer Team (NLOT) and WFM RD&A initiated communication about the need for a Line Officer Desk Reference Guide to assist with Fire Management. WFM RD&A staff and a small group from the NLOT worked together to develop the current Line Officer/Agency Administrator Desk Reference Guide for Fire Program Management. The first release of the Desk Reference guide occurred in the spring of 2012.

#### Organization of the Guide:

1. Preseason Guidance
2. Local Unit Incidents
3. Post Fire Activities
4. Prescribed Fire Management
5. Appendices – Reference materials related to planning tools and WFDSS.

## Contents

History of the Guide: .....	1
Organization of the Guide: .....	1
Part 1. Preseason Guidance .....	5
I.    FIRE POLICY AND FOREST SERVICE DIRECTIVES .....	5
A.    Fire Management- Preparedness- 5120 FSM .....	6
B.    Fire Management- Wildfire Response- 5130 FSM .....	9
C.    Wildland Fire Management- Hazardous Fuels Management and Prescribed Fire – 5140 FSM .....	13
D.    Fire and Aviation Management Qualifications Handbook- 5109.17 – FSH .....	15
E.    Red Book Chapter 5, USDA Forest Service Wildland Fire and Aviation Program Organization and Responsibilities .....	17
F.    Wildfire Complexity - Red Book Chapter 11 .....	24
G.    Wildfire Decision Making .....	24
II.   FIRE PLANNING AND ANNUAL PREPAREDNESS .....	25
A.    Spatial Fire Planning and Fire Management Reference System .....	25
B.    Preparedness.....	26
C.    Aviation Plans.....	27
D.    Preparedness Review Checklists.....	27
E.    WFDSS (Wildland Fire Decision Support System) .....	28
F.    Annual Fire Meeting with Local Fire Personnel .....	29
G.    Cooperative Fire Coordination and Agreements .....	29
H.    Reference Documents to Assist with Fire Decision Making.....	30
Part 2. Fires on Your Local Unit .....	32
I.    SUCCESSFUL FIRE MANAGEMENT RESPONSE.....	32
A.    Visiting the Fire.....	32
B.    Fire Information Guidance .....	32
II.   MANAGING FIRES ON YOUR UNIT .....	33
A.    Use of WFDSS .....	33
B.    WFDSS Decision and the Incident Management Team .....	34
C.    Use of Incident Management Teams .....	35
D.    Resource Advisors.....	38
E.    Minimum Impact Suppression Tactics (MIST).....	39
F.    Cost Management .....	40
G.    Incident Business Management.....	41
H.    Turn Back Standards.....	41
I.    Post-Wildfire Activities.....	42

J.	IMT Performance Evaluations.....	42
K.	Long Term Incidents.....	43
L.	Resources Available to Line Officers .....	43
M.	Additional Decision Support Available to Line Officers.....	44
N.	Resources You Can Expect on Large Incidents .....	44
O.	Interagency Coordination and Cooperation .....	45
P.	Geographic Area Multi-Agency Coordination Groups.....	45
Q.	National Multi-Agency Coordination .....	45
R.	Critical Incident.....	45
S.	Presumptive Illness .....	46
T.	Reviews and Investigations.....	47
Part 3: Post Fire Activities .....		51
I.	AFTER ACTION REVIEWS .....	51
II.	BURNED AREA EMERGENCY RESPONSE (BAER) TEAMS .....	51
Part 4: Prescribed Fire Management.....		52
I.	FUELS POLICY AND FOREST SERVICE DIRECTIVES .....	52
A.	Hazardous Fuels Management and Prescribed Fire Planning – 5141 FSM.....	52
B.	Prescribed Fire – 5142 FSM.....	52
C.	Interagency Prescribed Fire Planning and Implementation Procedures Guide –May 2022 .....	54
D.	National Prescribed Fire Program Review – Sept. 2023 .....	55
E.	Chapter 17 of the Red Book, Fuels Management .....	56
F.	Red Book Chapter 5, USDA Forest Service Wildland Fire and Aviation Program Organization and Responsibilities (Fuels Management).....	57
G.	Guidance for Implementation of Federal Wildland Fire Management Policy.....	61
H.	Prescribed Fire Plan and Elements.....	61
I.	Fire Planning and Fuels Portal .....	61
J.	Smoke Planning and Management .....	61
K.	Planning Tools.....	62
II.	REVIEWS.....	62
A.	After Action Reviews – Interagency Prescribed Fire Planning and Procedures Guide.....	62
B.	Declared Wildfire Review .....	63
C.	Air Quality Notice of Violation (NOV) Review.....	64
Appendix 1: Planning Tools.....		65
1.	IFTDSS .....	65
2.	Fuel and Fire Tools (FFT).....	65
3.	Smoke Modeling Tools .....	65

Appendix 2: WFDSS ..... 66

- A. COMMON WFDSS LINE OFFICER QUESTIONS..... 66
- B. DOCUMENTING A DECISION..... 69
- C. APPROVING/REJECTING AND PUBLISHING A DECISION..... 72
- D. PERIODIC ASSESSMENT..... 73
- E. DECISION SUPPORT TOOLS..... 75
- F. AIR QUALITY TOOLS ..... 81
- G. OBTAINING ADDITIONAL WFDSS SUPPORT ..... 81

## Part 1. Preseason Guidance

### I. FIRE POLICY AND FOREST SERVICE DIRECTIVES

The [“Guidance for Implementation of Federal Wildland Fire Management Policy”](#) issued February 13, 2009 and the [Interim Guidance for Wildfire Response](#) issued May, 2010 provides flexibility in the management of wildfires. It also provides broad authorities in development and use of wildfire Incident Objectives.

There are only two types of wildland fires that the agency reports activity on: wildfire incidents and prescribed fires.

An important role of the Forest Service is to manage natural resources on public land and the management of wildfire is a primary mission in that role. According to policy, “Fire, as a critical natural process, will be integrated into land and resource management plans (L/RMP) and activities on a landscape scale and across agency boundaries” (Review and Update of the Federal Wildland Fire Management Policy, January 2001). Managing natural ignitions to achieve Land and Resource Management Plan objectives when risk is within acceptable limits. A wildfire may be concurrently managed for more than one objective.

Human-caused fires and trespass will be managed to achieve the lowest cost and fewest negative consequences with primary consideration given to firefighter and public safety and without consideration to achieving resource benefits. (5130.3 FSM)

Firefighter and public safety is the first priority in every fire management activity. (5103.1 FSM)

All wildfires must have, at a minimum, documented objectives for the protection of life and property with suppression strategies.

- Objectives can change as the fire spreads across the landscape in keeping with changing fuels, weather, and the Land and Resource Management Plan standards, guides, and jurisdictions. However, incorporate the potential for threat to life and property in your initial and subsequent courses of action on every long-duration fire.

Links to federal standards and guides documents:

- Interagency Standards for Fire & Aviation Operations (Red Book): <https://www.nifc.gov/standards/guides/red-book>
- Guidance for Implementation of Federal Wildland Fire Management Policy (2009): [https://www.frames.gov/documents/c5/files/Guidance\\_implementation\\_fed\\_fire\\_2009.pdf](https://www.frames.gov/documents/c5/files/Guidance_implementation_fed_fire_2009.pdf)
- Interim Guidance for Wildfire Response (2010): USDA Forest Service Intranet <https://fsweb.wo.fs.fed.us/fire/fam/firepolicy/index.htm>
- National Wildland Fire Coordinating Group Memorandums Website: <https://www.nwcg.gov/executive-board/correspondence>
- Forest Service Manual 5100- Fire Management. <https://www.fs.usda.gov/im/directives/>
- National Cohesive Wildland Fire Management Strategy and Quadrennial Fire Review (QFR): <https://www.forestsandangelands.gov/strategy/index.shtml>
- Wildland Fire Decision Support System [http://wfdss.usgs.gov/wfdss/WFDSS\\_Home.shtml](http://wfdss.usgs.gov/wfdss/WFDSS_Home.shtml)
- National Interagency Standards for Resource Mobilization <https://www.nifc.gov/nicc/logistics/reference-documents>

## A. Fire Management- Preparedness- 5120 FSM

Preparedness is a continuous process that includes all fire management activities conducted in advance of wildland fire ignitions to ensure an appropriate, risk informed and effective wildland fire response to meet National and Agency goals. Activities include:

1. Developing Agency strategy, doctrine, and standards;
2. Developing Fire Management program and budget proposals; the composition and location of unit, State/Regional, and National level firefighting infrastructure and assets;
3. Working with partners and cooperators to develop an effective, risk-based cooperative readiness program that includes community wildfire mitigation and adaptation;
4. Training; certifying, and managing records; and equipping fire management assets;
5. Detecting fires;
6. Assessing risk; developing, maintaining, and implementing systems to analyze risk, and acquire geospatial information on current and historical fire occurrence, weather, hazard, and fire danger;
7. Developing, maintaining, and implementing systems to mobilize, coordinate, and prioritize the use of firefighting and mitigation personnel and equipment;
8. Evaluating Agency performance to improve future operations.

### 1. *5120.41 – Chief*

The Chief reserves authority to execute all Service-wide agreements with other Federal agencies and approve or reject agreements with foreign countries.

### 2. *5120.42 – Deputy Chief, State and Private Forestry*

1. The Deputy Chief has the responsibility to:
2. Ensure Agency capability is sufficient to meet the Chief's goals.
3. Coordinate with the Regional Foresters to develop a unified Agency program to implement Agency wildland fire management goals.
4. Recommend for approval to the Chief, all Service-wide agreements with other Federal agencies and agreements with foreign countries.

### 3. *5120.43 – Washington Office, Director, Fire and Aviation Management,*

*The Director, Fire and Aviation Management plans, organizes, and implements the National preparedness program to:*

1. Develop the doctrine, National strategies, and risk management principles for the Wildland Fire Program.
2. Provide counsel to the Deputy Chief on the Fire Management program and its capability in meeting the Chief's goals.
3. Recommend the establishment or revision of all Service-wide agreements with other Federal agencies and foreign countries to the Deputy Chief, State and Private Forestry (S&PF). The goal is to collaboratively develop National preparedness plans, Mobilization Guides, procedures, standards, and systems, to train, qualify, equip, and mobilize personnel and assets to meet National and international wildland fire and emergency needs (FSM 5121.1).
4. Consult with the Deputy Chief (S&PF) annually to determine and approve the following:
  - a. The number of all Agency wildland fire response assets;
  - b. Their period of availability, location, and funding; and
  - c. The implementation of the Chief's wildfire preparedness, mitigation, and response goals.
5. Develop and maintain the capability to mobilize wildland fire assets by maintaining and operating the National Interagency Coordination Center (NICC) in collaboration with interagency cooperators (FSM 5123).
6. Establish standards for firefighting assets and qualification requirements for fire support and fire management personnel.

7. Ensure oversight of the development, operation, and maintenance of networks and systems to:
  - a. Assess weather, fire behavior, and fire danger;
  - b. Report fire occurrence;
  - c. Mobilize firefighting personnel and assets;
  - d. Maintain accountability of firefighting equipment and supplies;
  - e. Monitor suppression actions;
  - f. Track training and certifications for fire management personnel;
  - g. Evaluate effectiveness of alternative fire management programs; and
  - h. Assess risk in making strategic and tactical decisions for fire incidents.
8. Conduct National level preparedness reviews to monitor accountability and performance, correct deficiencies, and improve overall operations (FSM 5127.2).
9. Ensure strategic assessments (for example, Cohesive Strategy, Quadrennial Fire Review) are developed to position the Agency to meet both current and future conditions.
10. Ensure National Fire and Aviation Management leadership is trained, equipped, and directed to provide an appropriate, risk-based, and effective response.
11. Certify, recertify, or decertify Agency personnel located in the National Office possessing Area Command and Type 1 position qualifications.

4. *5120.44 – Regional Foresters*

Regional Foresters have the responsibility to:

1. Coordinate with the Deputy Chief to create a unified Agency Wildland Fire program and establish Regional capability to implement the Chief's wildland fire management goals.
2. Ensure the establishment of State-wide agreements that clearly define the responsibilities of all interagency partners in wildland fire activities.
3. Establish supplemental Regional direction (Manual or Handbook) when State or local laws or regulations require additional standards. Examples include requirements related to blood-borne pathogens, first responders, emergency vehicle operations, and hazardous materials.
4. Certify, recertify, or decertify Agency personnel located within the Region possessing Area Command and Type 1 position qualifications, or delegate this responsibility to the Regional Fire Director.
5. Ensure that field units plan and budget fire protection assets are within allocated budgets.
6. Ensure fire management objectives are integrated with Land Management Plan objectives
7. Ensure proper accountability of firefighting tools and equipment.
8. Ensure that Regional Activity Reviews are conducted (FSM 5127.1).

5. *5120.45 – Regional Directors, Fire and Aviation Management*

Regional Directors, Fire and Aviation Management have the responsibility to:

1. Plan, organize, and implement, the Regional Wildland Fire Management program.
2. Establish State-wide agreements covering the use of interagency, National Guard, State, and local cooperator forces, and the coordination of Regional interagency wildfire response and mitigation support activities.
3. Provide oversight and conduct preparedness reviews of Forest, Grassland, and Interagency Fire Management programs to ensure units are prepared to make well informed risk-based decisions on all wildland fires that consider objectives within Land Management Plans.
4. Provide oversight, maintain, and ensure the effective operation of GACC in collaboration with interagency
5. cooperators (FSM 5123.1).
6. Provide oversight, maintain, and ensure effective operation of all Agency wildfire response assets (see National Mobilization Guide NFES 2092).

7. Provide oversight to ensure and certify weather, fire danger rating, and risk assessment systems meet National standards and deliver accurate, current, and timely information (Weather Information Management System (WIMS), Remote Automated Weather Station (RAWS), National Fire Danger Rating System (NFDRS), Fire Danger Pocket Cards, Fire Behavior Alerts, and so forth); see Interagency Standards for Fire and Fire Aviation Operations (NWCG, NFES 2724) and Interagency Wildland Fire Weather Station Standards & Guidelines (PMS 426-3).
8. Develop and recommend supplemental Regional direction (Manual or Handbook) to the Regional Forester when State or local laws or regulations require additional standards. Examples include requirements related to blood-borne pathogens, first responders, and hazardous materials. Establish Regional policy supplemental for emergency vehicle operations (FSH 5109.16)
9. Enable the availability of trained and qualified fire management personnel by:
  - a. Ensuring the availability of training programs comply with National, State, and local standards to train and qualify personnel for fire management and emergency assignments.
  - b. Establishing a Regional (or GACC) Qualification Review Committee to recommend certification, recertification, or decertification of personnel to the Regional Forester or designee. This requires an annual review of the qualifications for all Agency personnel possessing Area Command and Type 1 position qualifications. (Forest Service Fire and Aviation Qualifications Guide, Chapter 2) (<https://www.fs.usda.gov/managing-land/fire/publications>).
  - c. Certifying, recertifying, or decertifying Agency personnel within the Region possessing Area Command and Type 1 position qualifications if so designated by Regional Forester.
10. Determine Regional fire management equipment and supply need. Only obtain equipment and supplies meeting National standards and maintain accountability for these items.
11. Schedule and conduct annual preparedness reviews to identify organizational, operational, procedural, personnel, or equipment deficiencies and recommend specific corrective actions.

#### 6. *5120.46 – Forest Supervisors*

Forest Supervisors have the responsibility to:

1. Collaborate with appropriate Federal, State, and local partners to plan, organize, and implement a preparedness and mitigation program for the National Forest or Grassland.
2. Ensure agreements cover interagency, local cooperator and the coordination of wildfire response activities. Establish and maintain cooperative wildland fire management agreements that accurately reflect current conditions, budget, or other significant considerations.
3. Establish a Forest Qualification Review Committee to annually review and recommend certification, recertification, or decertification of personnel (Forest Service Fire and Aviation Qualifications Guide, Chapter 2, Part 1).
4. Certify, recertify, or decertify all unit individuals possessing Type 2 or lower position qualifications.
5. Provide oversight and conduct preparedness reviews of District Fire Management programs to ensure units are preparing to make well informed risk-based decisions on all wildland fires that consider objectives within the Land Management Plan.
6. Ensure spatial fire planning and the Fire Management Reference System are updated and provides guidance, based upon the Land and Resource Management Plan, to respond to unplanned ignitions and support wildland fire decisions and analysis (see the Fire Management Planning Guide at <http://fsweb.wo.fs.fed.us/fire/fmp/>).
7. Ensure dispatch centers are prepared with mobilization and initial response plans to detect and respond to wildfires with effective coordination and mobilization of wildland fire management assets.
8. Ensure that adequate plans, hardware, software, qualified personnel, and facilities are available to coordinate, support, and process the timely and accurate assessment of weather conditions (RAWS network and WIMS), National Fire Danger Rating System (NFDRS), and risk (Wildland Fire Decision Support System (WFDSS)).

9. Ensure Fire Danger Pocket Cards accurately depict current conditions and trends, and are:
  - a. Certified Regionally;
  - b. Posted on the Wildland Fire Application Information Portal website: [Pocket Card Table | Wildland Fire Application Information Portal \(wildfire.gov\)](#)
  - c. Distributed to each Fireline Supervisor on Type 3, 4, and 5 wildfires.
10. Designate Administratively Determined (AD) hiring official(s) (see NWCG Standards for Interagency Incident Business Management (PMS 902, NFES 2160, and FSH 5109.34))  
<http://www.nwcg.gov/publications/pms902>
11. Determine Forest and Grassland fire management equipment and supply needs. Only obtain equipment and supplies meeting National standards and maintain accountability of these items.
12. Implement Regional emergency vehicle operation policy (5109.16).

7. *5120.47 – District Rangers*

District Rangers have the responsibility to:

1. Maintain an organization to meet Agency standards to achieve wildland fire management objectives described in Land and Resource Management Plans. Implement applicable actions identified in unit level and GACC mobilization initial response systems and plans.
2. Provide oversight and ensure employees understand their professional and legal responsibilities and are given timely and accurate information of the latent and emerging risks in the wildland fire environment.

Additional Specific Administrator Responsibilities for Fire and Aviation at the Field Level

The Chapter 5 in the Red Book provides additional information regarding Responsibilities, Preparedness, Wildfire Response, Responsibilities and Oversight, Risk Management Framework, Safety, Fuels, Prescribed Fire, and Fire Management Positions.

B. *Fire Management- Wildfire Response- 5130 FSM*

Agency Administrators (AA) are responsible for implementing an effective, efficient, risk-based wildfire response. All employees are required to support wildfire response actions.

1. *5130.41 – Washington Office, Deputy Chief, State and Private Forestry*

The Washington Office, Deputy Chief, State and Private Forestry is responsible for:

1. Protecting life as the preeminent priority on both emergency and planned work.
2. Communicating a clear vision of Agency goals and management principles, ensuring they are shared and understood by all levels of the organization.
3. Expressing clear intent concerning roles and responsibilities to ensure wildfire response assignments are appropriate, risk-based and effective.

2. *5130.42 – Washington Office, Director of Fire and Aviation Management*

The Washington Office, Director of Fire and Aviation Management is responsible for:

1. Protecting life as the preeminent priority on both emergency and planned work.
2. Leading efforts to develop, update, and implement wildfire response doctrine and risk management principles learning from activities, reviews, and analyses.
3. Setting strategy for National wildfire response efforts in coordination with the Chief of the U.S. Forest Service, Deputy Chiefs, and Regional Foresters.
4. Monitoring and reporting the current National fire management situation to the Chief.
5. Initiating and maintaining contacts with appropriate officials in Federal departments, Tribes, State and local agencies to collaborate and coordinate a risk based and effective wildfire response.

6. Monitoring fire activity and communicating with adjacent organizational levels regarding delegations, decision making and Incident Objectives on wildfires and ensuring sound, appropriate objectives are delineated for wildfires.
7. Monitoring expenditures and ensuring fiscal oversight and accountability in wildland fire operations.
8. In conjunction with interagency partners, prioritizing, coordinating use, and mobilizing Department of Defense resources and National wildfire response resources; see guidelines in National Mobilization Guide, (NFES 2092).
9. Approving or denying requests for the mobilization and training of emergency firefighters to supplement regular personnel during emergency situations. Implementation guidance is located in the Interagency Incident Business Management Handbook (PMS 902, NFES 2160).
10. Initiating and maintaining contacts of mutual interest with appropriate officials in foreign countries on matters regarding fire and aviation management and wildfire response in coordination with the Director of International Programs.

### 3. *5130.43 – Regional Foresters*

Regional Foresters are responsible for:

1. Protecting life as the preeminent priority on both emergency and planned work.
2. Communicating Agency goals and management principles, ensuring they are shared and understood by all levels of the organization.
3. Expressing clear intent concerning roles and responsibilities to ensure wildfire response is appropriate, risk-based, and effective.
4. Ensuring employees under their supervision are available as needed to support wildfire response
5. Ensuring employees with supervisory or managerial responsibilities in wildfire management meet the Interagency Fire Program Management (IFPM) and Forest Service Fire Program Management (FS- FPM) qualification standards (FSM 5125.03), stay abreast of current wildfire response information such as: factors affecting wildfire behavior and effects; wildfire response management and organization; intent and contents of Agency and interagency wildfire management directives; Land and Resource Management Plans; and economic and risk analysis.
6. Ensuring the National Federation of Federal Employees (NFFE) Council Vice President is notified when a Forest Service incident has 300 or more individuals assigned or an incident not under Forest Service jurisdiction has a staffing level of 300 or more Forest Service employees (Master Agreement between FS and NFFE, Article 28), regardless of whether a human resources specialist is ordered in accordance with FSM 5137.03 (2).
7. Monitoring fire activity and communicating with adjacent organizational levels regarding delegations, decision making and Incident Objectives on wildfires and ensuring sound, appropriate objectives are delineated for wildfires.
8. Monitoring expenditures and ensuring fiscal oversight and accountability in wildland fire operations.
9. Monitoring fatigue and exposure to environmental factors (for example, heat, smoke, and so forth) and ensuring fitness for command and leadership in fire management leadership and line positions, see guidelines in NWCG Standards for Interagency Incident Business Management (PMS 902, NFES 2160, FSH 5109.17, zero code, Fire and Aviation Management Qualifications Handbook and FSH 6709.11, and the Health and Safety Code Handbook.
10. Ensuring the immediate and appropriate notification of any aviation and wildfire fatality, serious injury, entrapment, fire shelter deployment, or accident with potential National significance; see definition (Reference FSM 6730 and FSH 6709.12, ch.30 for Accident Reporting and Investigation Policy and Guidelines).
11. Delegating authority for wildfire response to Regional Fire and Aviation Management Directors, with clear expectations to exercise principles that are consistent with Wildland Fire Foundational Doctrine, risk management and the Federal Wildland Fire Management Policy.

12. Approving or denying requests to train and mobilize emergency firefighters, per guidelines located in the NWCG Standards for Interagency Incident Business Management (PMS 902, NFES 2160)
13. Approving and ensuring that Severity funds are used in accordance with National program direction; see 5138.03.
14. Ensuring fire reports are accurate and complete within the required timeframes

4. *5130.44 – Regional Directors, Fire and Aviation Management*

Regional Directors are responsible for:

1. Protecting life as the preeminent priority on both emergency and planned work.
2. Ensuring current wildfire response information, such as: factors affecting wildfire behavior; wildfire response management and organization; intent and contents of agency and interagency wildfire management directives; and economic and risk analysis, is available to employees with supervisory or managerial responsibilities in wildfire management.
3. Monitoring fire activity and communicating with adjacent organizational levels regarding delegations, decision making, and Incident Objectives on wildfires and ensuring sound, appropriate objectives are delineated for wildfires.
4. Coordinating, monitoring, and providing consultation and communication for all Agency and interagency wildfire response operations to ensure all wildfire response actions are managed in an appropriate, risk-based, effective manner. The role of the Geographic Area Fire Program Manager (GFPM) may be delegated to a member of the Regional Office FAM staff that meets the Interagency Fire Program Management (IFPM) requirements. The primary intent of this delegation is to place the appropriate individual who meets IFPM minimum qualification standards in the position of authority to support safe operations in the field. See IFPM Decision Paper #4 for Delegation of Geographic Area Fire Program Manager Role, <https://www.fs.usda.gov/managing-land/ifpm-documents>
5. Determining the need and request approval to train and mobilize emergency firefighters in order to provide additional expertise and skills to supplement regular Forest Service personnel during emergency situations, per guidelines located in the NWCG Standards for Interagency Incident Business Management (PMS 902, NFES 2160).
6. Monitoring cumulative fatigue and exposure to environmental factors (for example, length of assignments, heat, smoke, and so forth) and ensuring fitness for command, leadership, and management, in fire management leadership and support positions, see guidelines NWCG Standards for Interagency Incident Business Management (PMS 902, NFES 2160); FSH 5109.17, zero code, Fire and Aviation Management Qualifications Handbook and FSH 6709.11, and the Health and Safety Code Handbook.
7. Regularly monitor wildland fire response operations for effectiveness and make recommendations for action when there is recognition of exceptional or problematic employee performance; see guidelines in Interagency Standards for Fire and Fire Aviation Operations (NFES 2724, Chapter 5).
8. Conducting or participating in incident after action reviews (AAR), analyses, and investigations.
9. Ensuring immediate and appropriate notification of any aviation and wildfire fatality, serious injury, entrapment, fire shelter deployment, or accident with potential National significance to the Branch Chief for Aviation Safety or Branch Chief for National Ground Operations Risk Management (Reference FSM 6730 and 6709.12, ch.30 for Accident Reporting and Investigation Policy and Guidelines).
10. Ensuring upward reporting of the current fire management situation is occurring daily.

5. *5130.45 – Forest Supervisors and District Rangers*

Forest Supervisors and District Rangers are responsible for:

1. Protecting life as the preeminent priority on both emergency and planned work.

2. Overseeing management of all aspects of wildfire response on all incidents and ensure all local Agency and interagency wildfire response actions are managed in an appropriate, risk-based, effective manner; see guidelines in Interagency Standards for Fire and Fire Aviation Operations (NFES 2724, Chapter 5).
3. Monitoring fire activity and communicating with adjacent organizational levels regarding delegations, decision making, and Incident Objectives on wildfires and ensuring sound, appropriate objectives are delineated for wildfires.
4. Delegating authority for wildfire response to staff and incident commanders, with clear expectations to exercise principles that are consistent with Wildland Fire Doctrine, see guidelines in Interagency Standards for Fire and Fire Aviation Operations (NWCG, NFES 2724) and Federal Wildland Fire Policy. Success is defined as safely achieving reasonable objectives with the least fire fighter exposure necessary while enhancing stakeholder support for our management efforts.
5. Ensuring employees are mobilized in wildfire positions pursuant to qualifications in accordance with the Fire and Aviation Management Qualifications Handbook (FSH 5109.17) and the Forest Service Fire and Aviation Qualifications Guide (FSFAQG).
6. Assigning appropriate level of management, supervision, and staffing to every wildfire according to the level of complexity; Use Indicators of Incident Complexity (NFES 1077) at initial size-up (or through pre-planned response plans) and thereafter, use the Risk and Complexity Assessment as appropriate, to assure the qualifications of the assigned incident commander are commensurate with the complexity of the incident; see guidelines in Interagency Standards for Fire and Fire Aviation Operations, (NFES 2724; Appendix E and F).
7. Ensuring sound financial management practices are implemented and costs do not drive but are an output of the best risk informed decisions to protect values. To accomplish this, ensure assignment of incident business personnel for advice and counsel to all Type 1, Type 2, or complex incidents. Persons assigned these duties will report directly to the appropriate Agency Administrator in accordance with the incident complexity.
8. Approving and documenting wildfire response decisions in Wildland Fire Decision Support System (FSM 5133.03).
9. Supporting fire management consistent with Agency agreements and Regional or National direction.
10. Annually conveying fire response and risk mitigation responsibilities, expectations, and authorities to Type 3, 4, and 5 Incident Commanders; see guidelines in Interagency Standards for Fire and Fire Aviation Operations, (NFES 2724).
11. Ensuring the locations of all fire-retardant avoidance areas on the unit, identified in the Record of Decision for the Nationwide Aerial Delivery of Fire Retardant, are provided to Incident Commanders, fire management, and supervisory personnel. Also ensuring all applicable reporting and monitoring is completed per the Record of Decision for the Nationwide Aerial Application of Fire Retardant.
12. Ensuring that incident commanders engaged on Type 1, 2 and 3 wildfires have no collateral duties.
13. Ensuring that Medical Emergency Procedures Plans and/or Incident Emergency Plans are developed for all incidents.
14. Monitoring cumulative fatigue and exposure to environmental factors (for example, length of assignments, heat, smoke, and so forth) and ensure fitness for command, leadership, and management in fire management leadership, Agency Administrator, and support positions; see guidelines in Interagency Incident Business Management Handbook (PMS 902, NFES 2160) and FSH 5109.17, zero code, Fire and Aviation Management Qualifications Handbook.
15. Regularly monitor operations for effectiveness and take action when there is recognition of exceptional or problematic employee performance.
16. Ensuring employees with supervisory or managerial responsibilities in wildfire management stay abreast of and are skilled in current wildfire response information, such as: factors affecting wildfire behavior; wildfire response management and organization; intent and contents of Agency and

- interagency wildfire management directives; Land and Resource Management Plans; and economic and risk analysis.
17. Ensuring area burned from unplanned natural ignitions will be assessed to determine if desired conditions described in the Forest Land and Resource Management Plan have been met. These outcomes will be assessed and reported regardless of the strategy and objectives established for management of the wildfire. Refer to annual program direction for specifics on how to report accomplishments resulting from natural ignitions.
  18. Ensuring their respective Geographic Area Coordination Center (GACC) and the appropriate Regional Fire Operations and/or Aviation Safety Program Manager, and the National Technology and Development (NTDP) Director are notified immediately of any aviation and wildfire fatality, serious injury, entrapment, fire shelter deployment, or accident with potential National significance (Reference FSM 6730 and FSH 6709.12, Ch. 30 for Accident Reporting and Investigation Policy and Guidelines).  
The NTDP Director shall be notified for incidents within NTDP's sphere of expertise or for programs that NTDP manages, such as fire shelters, personal protective equipment (PPE), and mobile fire equipment (e.g., accidents involving vehicle burnovers and rollovers and incidences involving fire shelter deployment)
  19. Forest Supervisors must ensure that the Incident Status Summary (ICS-209) is submitted to the Geographic Area Coordination Center.
  20. District Rangers must ensure that a sufficient number of incident after-action reviews are conducted for Type 3, 4, and 5 wildfires to adequately assess the unit's wildland fire response capability, performance, procedures and to enhance learning; see guidelines in Interagency Standards for Fire and Fire Aviation Operations (NFES 2724, Chapter 5) USFS Program Organization & Responsibilities and the Incident Response Pocket Guide (NFES 1077).
  21. Determining the need and requesting authority to train and mobilize emergency firefighters in order to provide additional expertise and skills to supplement regular Forest Service forces during emergency situations; see guidelines in Interagency Incident Business Management Handbook, (PMS 902, NFES 2160).
  22. Ensuring an Individual Wildland Fire Report is prepared for each wildfire and entered into the historic database Fire Statistics System (FIRESTAT, FSM 5180).

## C. Wildland Fire Management- Hazardous Fuels Management and Prescribed Fire – 5140 FSM

### 1. *5140.41 – Deputy Chief, State and Private Forestry*

The Deputy Chief will communicate with the Regional Foresters to establish priorities and create a shared vision for the hazardous fuels management and prescribed fire program.

### 2. *5140.42 – Washington Office, Director, Fire and Aviation Management*

The Director, Fire and Aviation Management must coordinate implementing hazardous fuels management and prescribed fire program by:

Collaborating with Federal and non-Federal partners to:

1. Develop qualification standards for personnel implementing hazardous fuels management and prescribed fire programs;
2. Develop national standards and procedures for planning, establishing program priorities, and implementing hazardous fuels management and prescribed fire programs.

3. Recommend to the Deputy Chief, State and Private Forestry, national strategies, program priorities, and implementing measures to attain the National Cohesive Strategy vision “To safely and effectively extinguish fire when needed; use fire where allowable; manage our natural resources: and as a Nation, live with wildland fire.”
4. Develop, provide oversight, and maintain systems to monitor the impacts and effectiveness of hazardous fuels management and prescribed fire programs to achieve Agency goals and objectives.
5. Utilize a National risk assessment model to inform the identification and prioritization of hazardous fuels reduction projects on National Forest System lands.
  - a. The results of the National risk assessment model will inform the allocation of funds and resources to the Regional level.
  - b. The National risk assessment model will function as both a baseline assessment for the Regions, and as a consistency check against the Regional assessment models to compare the results.
6. Review and approve Regional risk assessments to ensure consistency with the national risk assessment model.

3. *5140.43 – Regional Foresters*

Regional Foresters must:

1. Establish direction that supports the risk-based, strategically planned, prioritized, and cost- effective application of hazardous fuels management and prescribed fire practices to achieve Land and Resource Management Plans objectives.
2. Ensure that Forests and Grasslands coordinate planning and implementation of hazardous fuels management and prescribed fire practices with State and local cooperators and partners.
3. Manage and provide oversight of the regional hazardous fuels management and prescribed fire program and ensure that Forests and Grasslands implement hazardous fuels management and prescribed fire practices in compliance with National and Regional policies and standards.
4. Develop a Regional risk assessment model which identifies and prioritizes hazardous fuels reduction projects consistent with the National risk assessment model. This Regional risk assessment model shall inform hazardous fuels allocations.

4. *5140.44 – Regional Directors, Fire and Aviation Management*

Regional Directors, Fire and Aviation Management must:

1. Coordinate and provide oversight of the regional hazardous fuels management and prescribed fire program to monitor Forests and Grasslands compliance with National and Regional fire management policies and standards.
2. Coordinate the Regional hazardous fuels management and prescribed fire program with the National program, ensuring accurate and timely reporting of all hazardous fuels management and prescribed fire activity.

5. *5140.45 – Forest Supervisors*

Forest Supervisors must:

1. Establish fire management direction in the Land and Resource Management Plan to integrate the role and use of wildland fire and hazardous fuels management in defining and achieving resource objectives.
2. Ensure that the Fire Management Reference System (see the Fire Management Planning Guide, [http://fsweb.wo.fs.fed.us/fire/fmp/Fire\\_Mgt\\_Planning\\_Guide\\_2017FINAL.pdf](http://fsweb.wo.fs.fed.us/fire/fmp/Fire_Mgt_Planning_Guide_2017FINAL.pdf), is current and accurately reflects hazardous fuels management, wildfire response and prescribed fire implementation procedures and standards (sec. 5141).

3. Ensure a fuel treatment effectiveness assessment is conducted on all wildfires which start in or burn areas where hazardous fuels were treated (including treatments by wildfire) (see FSM 5144).
4. Utilize the National, Regional, or locally developed landscape level risk assessment process to inform the identification and prioritization of hazardous fuels reduction projects.
5. Document the project selection process.

6. *5140.46 – District Rangers*

District Ranger must:

1. Integrate the role and use of wildland fire and establish fire management direction to meet resource objectives in the Land and Resource Management plan and other applicable forest-level plans.
2. Assess conditions, plan, and implement a fuels program meeting National standards and Land and Resource Management Plan objectives.
3. Collaborate with State and local partners to coordinate hazardous fuels management and prescribed fire projects and activities.

D. *Fire and Aviation Management Qualifications Handbook- 5109.17 – FSH*

This Handbook provides requirements for position qualifications and certifications in fire and aviation management.

1. *04.1- Washington Office*

1. The Director of Fire and Aviation must:
  - a. Delegate to the George Washington-Jefferson National Forest Qualifications and Review Committee (FQRC) the authority to review all Washington Office responder's qualifications and to recommend certification, recertification, or decertification. The George Washington-Jefferson FQRC recommends certification, recertification, or decertification to the Deputy Director, Operations who takes the appropriate action for the Washington Office responders.
  - b. Delegate to the Assistant Director, Operations, National Interagency Fire Center (NIFC) the authority to establish and maintain a NIFC Qualifications and Review Committee in order to review all NIFC and associated units (such as, National Advanced Fire and Resource Institute (NAFRI), Wildland Firefighter Apprenticeship Program (WFAP), Prescribed Fire Training Center (PFTC)) responder's qualifications and to recommend certification, recertification, or decertification.

2. *04.3 – Regions and Area*

1. Regional Foresters and Area Director must:
  - a. Establish and maintain a Regional Qualification Review Committee (RQRC) (FSM 5120).
  - b. Supplement the fire and aviation management qualifications requirements only to comply with State or local law, such as requirements related to blood borne pathogens, first responder, and hazardous materials requirements.
2. Regional Directors, Fire and Aviation Management may:
  - a. Make exceptions to the NWCG instructor training requirements as provided in The Forest Service Fire and Aviation Qualifications Guide.
  - b. Sign Type 1 Command and General Staff incident qualification cards, if delegated that signing authority by the Regional Forester
3. Special Agent in Charge in each Region must:
  - a. Annually provide a listing of law enforcement personnel assigned within the respective Region who meet the qualifications for Security Specialist Level 1 (SEC1), and Security Managers (SECM's) to the Director of Fire and Aviation Management.
  - b. Ensure all Law Enforcement and Investigations (LEI) personnel meet position requirements if they fill incident positions contained within the FSFAQG.

4. Regional Training Officers must:
  - a. Approve access requests for Incident Qualification and Certification System (IQCS) and forward them on to the Branch Chief, Fire & Aviation Training for submission to IQCS.
  - b. Serve as subject matter expert in their respective Region for the FSH 5109.17 and IQCS.
  - c. Assist the Regional Training Working Teams or the Operations and Workforce Development Staff with workforce analysis through reports provided in the Incident Qualifications and Certification System (IQCS).
  - d. Annually validate the status and role of IQCS users within their Region. The IQCS Security Lead or Forest Service IQCS Agency lead will update the current list of users and provide that information to the National IQCS Program Manager.
5. Regional Qualifications Review Committee (RQRC) must:
  - a. Ensures all RQRC actions are documented and distributed to all committee members. Provides a copy of this documentation for preparedness reviews and auditing purposes.
  - b. Reviews all individuals possessing Area Command or Type 1 Command and General Staff position qualifications based on established review and certification criteria, and employee performance in the position.
  - c. Determines employee ICS qualifications in accordance with:
    - (1) The Wildland Fire Qualifications System Guide (PMS 310-1); except positions in which the Forest Service has elected to deviate from the minimums.
    - (2) The Forest Service Fire and Aviation Qualifications Guide.
  - d. Develop documented employee evaluation criteria for certification, re-certification, and deferral.
  - e. Provide recommendations to the appropriate certifying official or designee responsible for final certification signature.
  - f. Develop the Regional Shortage Category list.
  - g. Develop and provide input for regional and national training needs.
  - h. Establish instructor validation/certification system for 300-400 level course instructors (Field Manager's Course Guide PMS 901-1).
  - i. Provide additional RQRC roles and responsibilities in accordance with FSH 5109.17 direction and the goals of the RQRC.

### 3. *04.4 – Forest Supervisors*

Forest Supervisors must:

1. Establish and maintain a Forest Qualification Review Committee (FQRC) (FSFAQG, Ch 2).
2. Facilitate fair, transparent, and effective fire and aviation management qualifications determinations by the FQRC. Include a Line Officer representative and provide the opportunity for a Union Official to participate on bargaining units.
3. Ensure that fire training nomination and selection processes meet the needs of both the employee and the organization.
4. De-certify an individual's ICS and prescribed fire position qualifications pursuant to administrative review (FSFAQG, Ch 2).
5. Ensure that all required training is completed (for example: fire refresher, chainsaw, rappel, first aid, CPR, other refresher trainings, and so forth) before placement into an available status for assignment.

Forest Supervisors may delegate signing authority for the Incident Qualifications Card to the Unit Fire Program Manager for Type 2 command and general staff positions (FSFAQG, Ch. 2).

### 4. *04.6 – District Rangers*

District Ranger must:

1. If delegated by the Supervisor, sign incident qualifications cards for employees with qualifications no higher than firefighter, Type 1 (FFT1) and firefighter, Type 2 (FFT2).
2. Authorize and grants certification for employees for FFT1 and FFT2 by signing the "Agency Certification" on the inside front cover of the Position Task Book.

5. *04.7 – First Line Supervisors*

First line Supervisors must:

1. Prepare employees to function safely and effectively in the wildland fire environment. This preparation can be accomplished through training, education, experience, and physical fitness training. It must be tailored to the specific aviation and fireline assignments for which the employees are being prepared.
2. Identify training that reflects the needs of the Forest and Region with the aid of the Forest Fire Management Program Staff Officer.
3. Identify present and future organizational training needs and include those needs in the annual Individual Development Plan (FS-6100-2). Employees may work with the Unit Fire Training Officer to complete the Incident Responders Development Plan (IRDP) in IQCS.
4. Approve individual training requests.

E. Red Book Chapter 5, USDA Forest Service Wildland Fire and Aviation Program  
Organization and Responsibilities

*Specific Line Officer Responsibilities for Fire and Aviation at the Field Level*

The Forest Service has developed core fire management competencies for Line Officers with oversight responsibilities over fire management programs. They are presented here for reference:

- 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 exercising authority to initiate prescribed fire and other hazardous fuel reduction activities;
- 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 "life first" and "readiness" environment.

**Responsibilities**

- Line Officers are responsible for all aspects of fire management.
- Integrate fire and fuels management across all functional areas.
- Implement fire management strategies and integrate natural resource concerns into collaborative community protection and ecosystem restoration strategies on the unit.
- Manage a budget that includes fire preparedness, prevention, suppression, and hazardous fuels in an annual program of work for the unit.
- Perform duties of Agency Administrator and maintain those qualifications.
- Provide a fully staffed, highly qualified, and diverse workforce in a "safety first" environment.
- Support and participate in wildfire prevention.
- Ensure operational fire management responsibilities remain separated from Agency Administrator responsibilities in order to avoid collateral duty conflicts.

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

### **Preparedness**

Preparedness is a continuous process that includes all fire management activities conducted in advance of wildfire ignitions to ensure an appropriate, risk informed and effective wildfire response to meet National and agency goals.

- Take all necessary and prudent actions to ensure firefighter and public safety.
- Ensure sufficient qualified fire and non-fire personnel are available to support fire operations at a level commensurate with the local and national fire situation.
- Ensure accurate position descriptions are developed and reflect the complexity of the unit. Individual Development Plans (IDP) promote and enhance fire management officer (FMO) currency and development.
- Provide a written Delegation of Authority to FMOs that provides an adequate level of operational authority at the unit level. Include Multi-Agency Coordinating (MAC) Group authority, as appropriate.
- Ensure the plans contained in the Fire Management Reference System (FMRS) are based on resource objectives found in the land and resource management plan (L/RMP).
- Ensure budget requests and allocations reflect preparedness requirements from the program of work and support objectives from the LRMP.
- Develop preparedness standards that are in compliance with agency fire policies.
- Management teams meet once a year to review fire and aviation policies, roles, responsibilities, and delegations of authority. Specifically address oversight and management controls, critical safety issues, and high-risk situations such as transfers of incident command, periods of multiple fire activity, and Red Flag Warnings.
- Ensure fire and aviation preparedness reviews are conducted each year and include the key components of the record of decision for the nationwide aerial application of fire retardant on NFS land.
- Meet annually with cooperators and review interagency agreements to ensure their continued effectiveness and efficiency.
- Meet annually with local US Fish and Wildlife Service and National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Fisheries specialists to ensure the avoidance maps reflect changes during the year on additional species or changes made for designated critical habitat and reporting and monitoring guidelines are still valid and being applied.

### **Wildfire Response**

- Ensure use of fire funds is in compliance with Agency policies.
- WFDSS will be used to approve and publish decisions on all fires. As appropriate, use analytical tools and products to inform and support decision-making. See Chapter 11 for the fire criteria that require a published decision.
- Personally attend reviews on Type 1 and Type 2 fires. Ensure Agency Administrator representatives are assigned when appropriate.
- Provide incident management objectives, written delegations of authority, and a complete Agency Administrator briefing to Incident Management Teams (IMT).
- Ensure briefings include any applicable information for avoidance areas and waterways per the nationwide aerial application of fire retardant direction, mapping, and cultural resources. Include the reporting requirements in the briefing if a misapplication of fire chemical occurs. Provide resource advisors if the use of aerially applied fire retardant is expected and the unit has mapped avoidance areas (which include waterways and 300' or larger buffers) and otherwise evaluate the need for resource advisors for all other fires, and assign as appropriate.

- For all unplanned human-caused fires where responsibility can be determined, ensure actions are initiated to recover cost of suppression activities, land rehabilitation, damages to the resource, and improvements.
- Ensure structure exposure protection principles are followed (FSM 5135).
- Ensure that a sufficient number of incident after action reviews are conducted for Type 3, 4, and 5 wildfires to adequately assess the unit’s wildfire response capability, performance, procedures and to enhance learning.
- Ensure smoke impacts to the public and fire personnel are addressed through IMTs ordering of air resource advisors (ARA, technical specialist) on type 1 fires to the maximum extent practicable. Consider ordering ARAs to type 2 fires (as per Public Law 116-9, the Dingell Act, 2019 <https://www.congress.gov/116/plaws/publ9/PLAW-116publ9.pdf> ).

**Wildfire Response Responsibilities and Oversight**

- Agency Administrators will ensure that all Forest Service employees and employees of interagency partners working on Forest Service jurisdiction wildfires clearly understand direction.
- Agency Administrators must approve and publish decisions in WFDSS in a timely manner and issue delegations of authority to the Incident Commander in accordance with FSM 5133.3.
- Analytical tools and/or products both within WFDSS and outside of the application should be used to inform and support strategic decision-making and risk assessment inputs.
- Line officers will assign agency administrators to oversee incidents and approve WFDSS decisions based on qualification level according to incident type.

Table1. USFS Decision Approval by Incident Type, Red Book Chapter 5

Incident Type	USFS AA Qualification Level to Approve WFDSS Decisions and Provide Incident Oversight <sup>1</sup>
Type 1	Wildfire Agency Administrator Type 1, WFA1
Type 2	Wildfire Agency Administrator Type 2, WFA2
Type 3, 4, 5	Wildfire Agency Administrator Type 3, WFA3

<sup>1</sup>Authority may be retained at the regional forester level.

- Critical long duration wildfire oversight roles include ensuring that:
  - Up-to-date Published Decisions are completed and documented in WFDSS.
  - Hazards are identified and risk assessments are incorporated into Published Decisions.
  - Coordination with partners and potentially affected parties is conducted (including smoke impacts); Unified Command is implemented early when appropriate.
  - Air resource advisors (ARA, technical specialist) are utilized on type 1 fires to maximum extent practicable and consideration of ordering for type 2 fires 9as per Public Law 116-9, the Dingell Act, 2019).
  - Resource capacity and availability are adequately assessed to meet expectations.
- This oversight role should address concerns of the States, cooperators, and the public, including air quality impacts from multiple wildfires.

**Use of Wildfire to Achieve Land Management Objectives During Preparedness Levels 4 and 5**

- Wildfire response decisions that include objectives to improve or enhance natural resources must be approved by the Regional Forester at Geographic and/or National Preparedness Levels 4 and 5. Approving officials should consider relative risks vs gains, organizational needs to adequately staff the incident, the duration of those resource commitments, and the extents to which the planned

response might add to or relieve the strain on resource availability nationally. Human-caused fires are not eligible for such consideration. Only naturally occurring wildfires in areas where the Land and Resource Management Plan has determined that fire does play a role in managing natural systems are eligible for such consideration.

- The Regional Forester or designee will assume the role of the deciding official for the decision in the WFDSS. This requirement does not apply to long-duration events that are not in pursuit of natural resource objectives such as those instances where it is too dangerous for responders or there are insufficient resources available to mount an effective response, and a long-term control strategy is adopted out of managerial necessity rather than preference.
- To the extent practical, regions and forests should adopt pre-ignition practices and systems for determining relative risks and opportunities including the short-term (this year) and long-term (future years) implications of these decisions in such a way as to facilitate a meaningful yet timely discussion with the Regional Foresters office shortly after candidate fires are detected.

### **Safety**

- Review safety policies, procedures, and concerns with field fire and aviation personnel.
- Ensure timely follow-up actions to program reviews, fire preparedness reviews, fire and aviation safety reviews, and management reviews.
- Monitor the fire situation and provide oversight during periods of critical fire activity and situations of high risk.
- Ensure there is adequate direction in fire management plans to maintain fire danger awareness.
- Take appropriate actions with escalating fire potential.
- Ensure appropriate investigation or Lessons Learned analyses are conducted for incidents, entrapments, and serious accidents (see FSM 6730).

### *Agency Administrator Training and Qualifications for Wildland Fire Management*

There are six separate and distinct qualifications for agency administrators related to fire management—three for wildfire decision making and three for prescribed fire. The training and experience requirements and certification process for both wildfire and prescribed fire are described below.

### **Agency Administrator Core competencies:**

Core competencies that must be demonstrated by Agency Administrators exercising decision-making authority for wildfires or prescribed fires include:

- Risk-informed decision-making
- Wildfire response and incident management processes
- WFDSS/IFTDSS and other decision support tools
- Fuels management and prescribed fire processes
- Fire Prevention, mitigation, and education processes
- Social, political, economic, and environmental impacts of wildland fire management activities and prescribed fire management activities
- Collaboration with partners and stakeholders
- Fiscal management

These core competencies form the basis for the agency administrator position task book which is used to document that an individual has indeed demonstrated these competencies while working toward certification. For access to the position task book, Wildfire Pathways Diagram, and additional information on the Forest Service agency administrator fire qualification programs, visit the Agency Administrator Toolbox (<https://wfmrda.nwcg.gov/>).

**Definitions**

Agency administrator (AA): A general term meaning the official with the delegated authority, responsibility, and qualifications for decision-making on incidents or prescribed fires within a particular administrative unit.

Agency representative (AREP): The AREP facilitates coordination, cooperation, and dialogue between the incident management team (IMT) and host agency administrator (AA). The AREP is delegated by the host unit AA or designee and works with the command functional area.

Agency administrator trainee: An AA working on qualification at any given level by performing the role under the supervision and authority of a fully qualified AA.

Coach: An AA qualified at a level commensurate with the incident or project being managed (e.g., WFA2 or WFA1 for wildfire and RXA2 or RXA1 for prescribed fire). The role of the coach is to advise and support the agency administrator trainee through various aspects of a wildfire incident, prescribed fire, or all-hazards incident.

Incident or Project Type	Minimum Qualification Level to Serve as Agency Administrator Coach/Evaluator
Wildfire – Type 1	Wildfire Agency Administrator Type 1, WFA1
Wildfire – Type 2	Wildfire Agency Administrator Type 2, WFA2
Wildfire – Type 3, 4, 5	Wildfire Agency Administrator Type 3, WFA3
Prescribed Fire – High Complexity	Prescribed Fire Agency Administrator Type 1, RXA1
Prescribed Fire – Moderate Complexity	Prescribed Fire Agency Administrator Type 2, RXA2
Prescribed Fire – Low Complexity	Prescribed Fire Agency Administrator Type 3, RXA3

Coach/shadow team: A team comprised of a qualified coach and group of shadows who may travel to multiple incidents and support sites to increase their level of understanding.

Line officer: A Forest Service official who serves in a direct line of command from the chief and has been delegated authority to make and execute decisions for their administrative unit(s). Examples are the deputy chiefs, director of law enforcement and investigations, regional foresters, station directors, forest supervisors, deputy forest supervisors, district rangers, and deputy district rangers. Line officers have authority to issue direction within delegated levels.

Shadow: A learning opportunity to observe various elements of a fire program. This position does not perform the duties of an AA but observes a qualified AA during an incident for the purpose of increasing understanding of the duties. The shadow may participate as an individual or part of a group of trainees. These opportunities are observational learning assignments; task book recommendations should be reserved for active trainee assignments where tasks are being performed; however certain aspects of the position task book may be accomplished during the assignment.

**Agency Administrator Wildfire Qualification Program**

The following principles will guide certification of Agency Administrators (AAs) in wildfire management:

- Regional Foresters are accountable for annual qualification of Agency Administrators by review process established by Regional Forester, such as Regional Line Officer Team;

- Agency Administrator evaluation includes standards for training, background and experience, demonstrated ability, and utilizing the Task Book and Wildfire Pathways Chart which will result in a qualitative evaluation of readiness by the Regional Forester;
- When the complexity level of a wildfire exceeds an Agency Administrator’s certification, a coach will be assigned;
- Care should be taken when assigning Agency Administrators to ensure operational fire management responsibilities remain separated from Agency Administrator responsibilities in order to avoid collateral duty conflicts. Consider delegating authority in writing to ensure expectations and responsibilities are clearly delineated;
- Agency Administrator competencies (aka qualification level) supersedes position (e.g., a District Ranger qualified at the WFA1 may be the AA for a Type 1 Incident);
- Assistance with decision documentation and analysis can be requested through the Wildland Fire Management Research, Development and Application – National Fire Decision Support Center (NFDSC); and The coaching/shadow functions, to be administered by each region, is an integral part of this qualification program.

**AAs will be evaluated in three basic areas:**

- Training;
- Experience; and
- Demonstrated understanding of concepts and principles as outlined in the Position task book.

This qualification program is a multi-level process where Agency Administrators demonstrate competence in one of three levels of managing wildfires: WFA3, WFA2, and WFA1.

**Guidelines**

In consideration of the appropriate level (WFA3, WFA2, and WFA1) to assign an Agency Administrator, the Regional Forester should consider the following guidelines:

- For individuals that do not meet at least the working level, a coach will be assigned to support that Agency Administrator in managing type 3 or higher wildfire incidents.

Wildfire Agency Administrator Type 3 (WFA3) –

The Agency Administrator could manage a Type 3, 4 or 5 wildfire or similar complexity incident. The WFA3 must meet the following to be certified at the working level:

- Required Training: Refer to the Federal Wildland Fire Qualifications Supplement at: [https://iqcsweb.nwcg.gov/sites/default/files/inline-files/FedSupplement\\_2024.pdf](https://iqcsweb.nwcg.gov/sites/default/files/inline-files/FedSupplement_2024.pdf)
- Other Background, Experience, and Training That Supports:
  - Applicable experience in prescribed fire, wildfire, all-hazard or other incident oversight may also be considered in addition to other guidelines.
  - Management oversight of a moderate-high complexity fire program as defined by Interagency Fire Program Management (IFPM) standards
- Demonstrated Ability: Successful evaluation by a coach (including feedback from IC or area commanders [AC]) and Regional Line Officer Team and subsequent certification by the Regional Forester that the candidate has demonstrated understanding and application of the responsibilities of an WFA3 trainee. Use the WFA3 position task book to document.

Wildfire Agency Administrator Type 2 (WFA2) –

The WFA2 could manage type 2 or lower complexity fires or similar incidents.

- Required Training: Refer to the Federal Wildland Qualification Supplement at: [https://iqcsweb.nwcg.gov/sites/default/files/inline-files/FedSupplement\\_2024.pdf](https://iqcsweb.nwcg.gov/sites/default/files/inline-files/FedSupplement_2024.pdf)
- Other Background, Experience, and Training That Supports:
  - Applicable experience in prescribed fire, wildfire, all-hazard or other incident oversight may also be considered in addition to other guidelines.
  - Management oversight of a moderate-high complexity fire program as defined by IFPM standards.
- Demonstrated Ability: Successful evaluation by a coach (including feedback from ICs or ACs) that the candidate has demonstrated understanding and application of the responsibilities of an WFA2. Use the WFA2 position task book to document.

**Wildfire Agency Administrator Type 1 (WFA1) –**

The WFA1 could manage one or more type 1 wildfire or similar complexity incidents.

- Required Training: Refer to the Federal Wildland Fire Qualifications Supplement at : [https://iqcsweb.nwcg.gov/sites/default/files/inline-files/FedSupplement\\_2024.pdf](https://iqcsweb.nwcg.gov/sites/default/files/inline-files/FedSupplement_2024.pdf)
- Other Background, Experience, and Training That Supports:
  - Applicable experience in prescribed fire, wildfire, all-hazard or other incident oversight may also be considered in addition to other guidelines.
  - Management oversight of a moderate to high-complexity fire program as defined by IFPM standards
- Demonstrated Ability: Successful evaluation by a coach (including feedback from ICs or ACs) and Regional Line Officer Team and subsequent certification by the Regional Forester that the candidate has demonstrated understanding and application of the responsibilities of an WFA1 on large complex fires. Use the WFA1 position task book to document.

**Evaluation Process-**

- Every trainee will receive an evaluation from a qualified Agency Administrator/Agency Administrator Representative or coach using the Agency Administrator Task Book.
- Individuals involved in a shadow assignment should receive creditable experience through documentation.
- The purpose of the Task Book is to provide consistency for the Agency Administrator Coach/Evaluator to evaluate trainees and document their demonstrated abilities to achieve the core competencies, which will be used as a component to achieve the next level certification.
- Every trainee will complete a Task Book for evaluation from an Agency Administrator.

Training opportunities and work experiences to achieve and maintain core competencies:

- Refer to the Wildfire Pathways Diagram found in the Agency Administrator Toolbox.  
<https://wfmrda.nwcg.gov/agency-administrator-toolbox/agency-administrator-resources>

**Currency**

The requirement to perform satisfactorily in a specified position within the last five years in order to maintain qualification for the position.

**Certifying Official**

The certifying official for all Agency Administrator qualifications will be at the Regional Forester level and shall not be delegated to Forest Supervisors or Regional Fire Directors.

## **Incident Qualification Card**

Incident qualification cards for any responder with Agency Administrator qualifications will be signed by the Regional Forester and shall not be delegated to Forest Supervisors or Regional Fire Directors regardless of other qualifications. An electronic incident qualification card utilizing the IQCS portable document format (PDF) is authorized.

### **F. Wildfire Complexity- Red Book Chapter 11**

Wildfires are typed by complexity, from type 5 (least complex) to type 1 (most complex). The ICS organizational structure develops in a modular fashion based on the complexity of the incident. Complexity is determined by completing a risk and complexity assessment (RCA). (Refer to samples in Redbook appendix E and F.)

Incidents not meeting the recommended incident typing characteristics in this chapter should have a documented RCA (appendix E: <https://www.nwcg.gov/sites/default/files/publications/pms236.pdf> ) verifying the command organization is appropriate.

### **Wildfire Risk and Complexity Assessment**

NWCG has adopted the RCA form as a replacement for the Incident Complexity Analysis form and the Organizational Needs Assessment form. The RCA assists personnel with evaluating the situation, objectives, risks, and management considerations of an incident and recommends the appropriate organization necessary to manage the incident. The RCA form is found in Redbook appendix E.

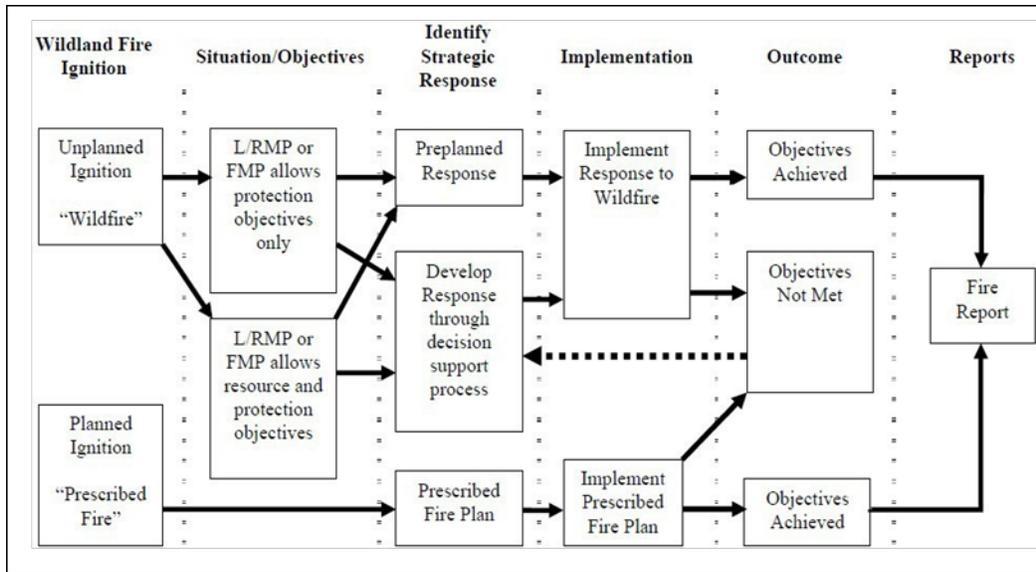
The RCA also includes common indicators of incident complexity to assist firefighters and managers with determining incident management organizational needs. These common indicators are found in appendix F (<https://www.nwcg.gov/sites/default/files/publications/pms236.pdf> ).

The RCA can be used to populate the “Relative Risk Assessment” and “Organization Assessment” portions of the Wildland Fire Decision Support System (WFDSS).

### **G. Wildfire Decision Making**

The following flow chart (Figure 1) is a visual representation demonstrating how managers might work through the decision process for an ignition regardless of the source. Management actions depend on the provisions in the approved Land, Resource and Fire Management Plan. The chart is generally applicable to most agencies’ fire management programs. However, specific exceptions may exist.

Figure 1. “Guidance for Implementation of Federal Wildland Fire Management Policy” 2009. Flow chart



The Risk Management Cycle is discussed in RMRS GTR-298 Decision Making for Wildfires: A Guide for Applying a Risk Management Process at the Incident Level, and is a useful decision reference <https://www.fs.usda.gov/research/treesearch/43638>

### Incident Objectives and Requirements

Examination of wildland fire incident decisions during 2015 and 2016 (in WFDSS) revealed that most Incident Objectives are written generally enough that they could apply to any fire in the country. This makes them of little use to Incident Management Teams in developing strategies and tactics to achieve an Agency Administrator's intent for managing a specific fire and for Agency Administrators seeking to clarify the objectives they want accomplished. Similarly, Strategic Objectives and Management Requirements, established from forest plans, are the basis for Incident Objectives and Incident Requirements but are rarely written with wildland fire specificity.

This decreases the likelihood that NEPA-based management direction is adequately implemented on a wildfire as intended.

The WFM RD&A Decision Support Toolbox <https://wfmrda.nwcg.gov/decision-support-toolbox/decision-science-deeper-dive> provides examples and guidance for writing good Incident Objectives and Requirements.

- Creating Incident Specific Objectives in WFDSS describes some best practices for creating incident specific objectives.
- USDA FS Briefing Paper provides recommendations and examples for improving Incident Objectives
- White Paper- Improving WFDSS Incident Objectives & Incident Requirements and Relaying Leader's Intent explains how Objectives, Requirements, Course of Action, Rationale are related and provides suggestions for improving the understanding of leader's intent. It also helps IMTs understand how best to provide feedback to AAs to clarify leader's intent and fire priorities.

## II. FIRE PLANNING AND ANNUAL PREPAREDNESS

### A. Spatial Fire Planning and Fire Management Reference System

The Fire Management Planning Guide,

[http://fsweb.wo.fs.fed.us/fire/fmp/Fire\\_Mgt\\_Planning\\_Guide\\_2017FINAL.pdf](http://fsweb.wo.fs.fed.us/fire/fmp/Fire_Mgt_Planning_Guide_2017FINAL.pdf) replaces Forest Service Handbook 5109.19.

The guide introduces the Fire Management Reference System (FMRS) and Spatial Fire Planning (SFP) concept as a replacement for Fire Management Plans (FMP) referenced in the Guidance for Implementation of Federal-Wildland Fire Management Policy, February 2009, and previous policy issuance. The SFP and the FMRS, when prepared according to the Fire Management Planning Guide, will meet the intent of the Federal Wildland Fire Policy requiring an FMP for each acre of burnable vegetation.

Wildfire management, in response to ignitions, can help maintain or improve current conditions toward the desired conditions stated in the Land and Resource Management Plan (LRMP). However, current fuel conditions are dynamic, due to wildfires and prescribed fires, which can be easily displayed spatially, hence, the need for a spatial Fire Management Planning rather than a narrative Fire Management Plan.

The LRMPs of the National Forests and Grasslands provide direction and make decisions while SFP products visually depict that direction and FMRS documents guide implementation of the LRMP direction and decisions. Strategic Objectives, represented in the SFP format, must link back to the resource management objectives found in the LRMP. LRMP objectives will also provide the basis for development and periodic revision of the FMRS implementation documents. These documents will be completed in collaboration with partner agencies to identify issues or concerns, especially regarding values at risk. Our strategy for response should be reflective of the Cohesive Strategy and collaboration with adjoining land managers, after a thorough assessment of risk, in relation to communities and other values.

SFP can clearly represent only those LRMP objectives, requirements, social and resources/values at risk necessary to inform decisions related to a potential incident. SFP is implemented using Strategic Objective shapes and Management Requirement shapes that best represent an administrative unit's planning direction and will likely differ based on the complexity of a unit.

Assistance in developing the FMRS and spatial planning in WFDSS is available from Regional Fire Planners and the Wildland Fire Management Research Development and Application group (<https://wfmrda.nwcg.gov>).

Additional information regarding Fire Management Planning including policy and implementation, definitions, and reporting can be found in the Red Book Chapter 9: Fire Management Planning.

For information on utilizing the Spatial Fire Planning method in WFDSS, see the WFDSS Spatial Fire Planning Guide located on the WFDSS Training page [http://wfdss.usgs.gov/wfdss/WFDSS\\_Training.shtml](http://wfdss.usgs.gov/wfdss/WFDSS_Training.shtml).

## B. Preparedness

The 2024 Redbook (<https://www.nifc.gov/standards/guides/red-book>) chapter 10 defines Fire Preparedness:

Fire preparedness is the state of being ready to respond to wildfires based on identified objectives and is the result of activities that are planned and implemented prior to fire ignitions.

Preparedness requires:

- Identifying necessary firefighting capabilities;
- Implementing coordinated programs to develop those capabilities;
- A continuous process of developing and maintaining firefighting infrastructure;
- Predicting fire activity;
- Implementing prevention activities;
- Identifying values to be protected;
- Hiring, training, equipping, prepositioning, and deploying firefighters and equipment;
- Reviewing preparedness plan compliance;
- Correcting deficiencies; and
- Improving planning and operations.

Preparedness activities should focus on developing interagency response capabilities that will result in safe, effective, and efficient fire operations aligned with risk-based fire management decisions.

Preparedness activities will be consistent with direction in the approved land and resource management plans (L/RMP) and fire management plans.

Preparedness plans should include, but are not limited to:

- Fire Danger Operating Plan (as specified by agency requirements)
- Preparedness Level Plan
- Initial Response/Pre-planned Dispatch Plan
- Step-up/Staffing Plan
- Fire Prevention/Mitigation Plan (as specified by agency requirements)
- Closure/Restriction Plan (as specified by agency requirements)
- Geographic Area Mobilization Guide (updated annually)
- Geographic Area Draw-Down guidance (update annually)

Chapter 10 of the Red Book provides more detailed information regarding preparedness.

### C. Aviation Plans

For further direction, see, FSM 5711.2, FSH 5709.1620.43 Chapter 20 and the [National Aviation Safety and Management Plan](#).

The Washington Office, Director of Fire and Aviation Management, has the many responsibilities in regards to aviation management. These responsibilities may be delegated to the Assistant Director of Fire and Aviation Management (Aviation) and include developing and maintaining an Aviation Management Plan that is updated and supplemented annually at the regional/area and forest/station levels (FSM 5711).

The National Aviation Safety and Management plan establishes general operational procedures policy for aviation activities supporting land management and wildfire management programs within the jurisdiction of the respective agency.

Additional aviation plans that would need Line Officer approval include but are not limited to the following:

- Helibase plans
- Rappel plans
- Helicopter Operations and Safety plans
- Interagency Mishap plan
- Tactical Operations plan

The Forest Service Fire and Aviation Management site has a variety of resources including directories, Manual and Handbook references, Guides and Publications, and forms. <https://www.fs.usda.gov/managing-land/fire/aviation> and <https://www.fs.usda.gov/managing-land/fire/aviation/publications>

The Forest Service Fire and Aviation Management Safety Management Systems site provides links to many aviation safety resources, such as aviation safety library, operational risk assessments, safety summaries, etc. Aviation Safety Management Systems | US Forest Service (usda.gov).

Chapter 16 of the Red Book discusses Aviation Operations and Resources.

### D. Preparedness Review Checklists

Ensure fire and aviation preparedness reviews are conducted each year and include the key components of the record of decision for the nationwide aerial application of fire retardant on National Forest System land.

See the [USFS Preparedness Reviews https://www.nifc.gov/standards/usfs-preparedness-review](https://www.nifc.gov/standards/usfs-preparedness-review) site for links to Checklists in the following areas:

- Agency Administrator
- Fire Management Administration
- Geographic Area Coordination Center
- Aviation Management
- Safety Officer
- Training
- Aviation Base Review
- Individual Firefighter
- Dispatch
- Engines
- Interagency Hotshot Crew
- Smokejumper
- Helicopter Module
- Dozer
- Hand Crew Non-IHC

Chapter 5 of the Red book states that Agency Administrators have the responsibility to “provide a written Delegation of Authority to FMOs that provides an adequate level of operational authority at the unit level. Include Multi- Agency Coordinating (MAC) Group authority, as appropriate.”

## E. WFDSS (Wildland Fire Decision Support System)

### 1. Background

The Wildland Fire Decision Support System (WFDSS) is a web-based decision support system that provides a single dynamic decision-analysis and documentation system for use beginning at the time of discovery and concluding when the fire is declared out. WFDSS allows the Agency Administrator to describe the fire situation, create Incident Objectives and Requirements, develop a Course of Action, evaluate Relative Risk, complete an Organization Assessment, and publish a decision.

As an internet-based system with multiple database links, WFDSS can give decision support in a timely and efficient manner. WFDSS provides the following advantages over previous systems:

- Allows users to pre-load Fire Management Plan/Land and Resource Management Plan Strategic Objectives and Management Requirements in advance of fire season by Fire Management Unit, Strategic Objective or other boundary pertinent to a unit or its values.
- Combines desktop applications for fire modeling into a web-based system for easier data acquisition.
- Provides an easy method for fire managers and analysts to accurately document decision-making processes by allowing results of analyses to be included in the incident content and inserted into a decision.
- Allows for quick inclusion of necessary objectives and requirements into a decision and aids in ensuring the Course of Action taken for an incident is in compliance with unit specific plans.
- It is a web-based application for easier sharing of analyses and reports across all levels of the federal wildland fire organizations.
- Introduces economic principles into the fire decision process.
- Provides a map display intended to help users visualize data geographically.
- Integrates national and interagency geospatial datasets.
- Spatially displays unit’s Fire Management Units (FMU) or Strategic Objective/Management Requirement shapes (SO) so decision makers can quickly determine which areas are likely to be impacted by an incident and provide planning direction to address those areas in the decision.
- Provides one decision-analysis process and documentation system for all types of wildland fires. Decisions in WFDSS are approved and published by the appropriate Line Officer. It is imperative that a decision be reviewed carefully as once approved and published, a decision becomes a system of record and all WFDSS users can view the information. Additionally, the action CANNOT be undone. If there is an error in the

information, or new information is added for documentation or update (i.e. fire behavior, Management Action Points) a new decision must be created and approved to permanently update the record.

## 2. *Preseason – WFDSS review and profile updates*

A number of things need to be completed for WFDSS prior to fire season to ensure efficient use of the application during a fire.

- Ensure all that need, have a WFDSS account. Help Topic: [https://wfdss.usgs.gov/wfdss\\_help/WFDSSHelp\\_Accesing\\_e-Authenticate.htm](https://wfdss.usgs.gov/wfdss_help/WFDSSHelp_Accesing_e-Authenticate.htm)
- WFDSS access is now through the FAMAUTH Wildland Fire Application Portal: <https://famauth.wildfire.gov/index.htm>.
- For more information see the WFDSS Help Topic on User Profile: [https://wfdss.usgs.gov/wfdss\\_help/WFDSSHelp\\_request\\_acct.html](https://wfdss.usgs.gov/wfdss_help/WFDSSHelp_request_acct.html)
- Ensure Line Officers and managers have the necessary WFDSS User Roles to accomplish work. See the WFDSS Help Topic WFDSS User Roles, [https://wfdss.usgs.gov/wfdss\\_help/WFDSSHelp\\_user\\_role.html](https://wfdss.usgs.gov/wfdss_help/WFDSSHelp_user_role.html)
- Ensure Land and Resource Management Plan(s) direction is preloaded by a Data Manager. See the WFDSS Help Topic Data Management [https://wfdss.usgs.gov/wfdss\\_help/WFDSSHelp\\_Data\\_Mgmt.html](https://wfdss.usgs.gov/wfdss_help/WFDSSHelp_Data_Mgmt.html)
- Ensure appropriate local data is preloaded by a Data Manager, such as prescribed burn and fuels treatment areas, barriers, structures, no dip streams, etc. See the WFDSS Help Topic Data Management, [https://wfdss.usgs.gov/wfdss\\_help/WFDSSHelp\\_Data\\_Mgmt.html](https://wfdss.usgs.gov/wfdss_help/WFDSSHelp_Data_Mgmt.html)
- Review the following:
  - What you need to know about WFDSS for the current year – Under the Decision Learning Resources Banner: [https://wfdss.usgs.gov/wfdss/WFDSS\\_Training.shtml](https://wfdss.usgs.gov/wfdss/WFDSS_Training.shtml)

## F. *Annual Fire Meeting with Local Fire Personnel*

Local fire management organizations meet once a year to review fire and aviation policies, roles, responsibilities, and delegations of authority. Specifically address oversight and management controls, critical safety issues, and high-risk situations such as transfers of incident command, periods of multiple fire activity, and Red Flag Warnings.

Chapter 5 of the Red Book provides additional guidance regarding Agency Administrators Responsibilities for Fire and Aviation at the Field Level for the Forest Service.

## G. *Cooperative Fire Coordination and Agreements*

Meet annually with cooperators and review interagency agreements to ensure their continued effectiveness and efficiency.

Chapter 8 of the Red Book discusses Interagency Coordination and Cooperation including sections on

- National Agreements for Wildland Fire Management
- Multi-Agency Management and Coordination
- NWCG Standards for Interagency Incident Business Management
- Types of Agreements
- Operating Plans
- International Wildland Fire Coordination and Cooperation
- National Wildland Fire Management Structure
- Standards for Cooperative Agreements
- Elements of Agreements
- All-Hazard Coordination and Cooperation
- International Non-Wildland Fire Coordination and Cooperation

Meet annually with cooperators and review interagency agreements to ensure their continued effectiveness and efficiency. Chapter 8 of the Red Book Interagency Coordination and Cooperation provides more information regarding agreements.

### **There are many types of agreements:**

- Interagency Agreements
- Regional/State Cooperative Agreements

- Local Cooperative Agreements
- Emergency Assistance
- Contracts

**Elements of an agreement should address:**

- The authorities appropriate for each party to enter in an agreement. Specifically, 42 USC 1856 “incurred cost.”
- The roles and responsibilities of each agency signing the agreement.
- An element addressing the cooperative roles of each participant in prevention, presuppression, suppression, fuels, and prescribed fire management operations.
- All mutually approved operations that require reimbursement will be identified and agreed to by an agreement which is required if participating parties have a cost-share. The mechanism and timing of the funding exchanges will be identified and agreed upon.
- Appropriation limitations – Parties to this agreement are not obligated to make expenditures of funds or reimbursements of expenditures under terms of this agreement unless the Congress of the United States of America appropriates such funds for that purpose by the Counties of \_\_\_\_\_, by the Cities of \_\_\_\_\_, and/or the Governing Board of Fire Commissioners of\_\_\_\_\_.
- Liabilities/waivers – Each party waives all claims against every other party for compensation for any loss, damage, personal injury, or death occurring as a consequence of the performance of this agreement unless gross negligence on any part of any party is determined.
- Termination procedure – The agreement shall identify the duration of the agreement and cancellation procedures.
- A signature page identifying the names of the responsible officials shall be included in the agreement.

*1. Cooperative Fire Protection Agreements*

Cooperative Fire Protection Agreements authorize coordination among Military, State, Local and Federal agencies for wildfire response activities, document the coordination among the parties, and establish the method and rate of payment. Agreements should be in place in advance of wildfire responses.

- a. *FSM 5135- Wildfire Response Action on Private Land, Structure Fires, Structure Protection in the Wildland Urban Interface, and Response to Non-Wildlife Incidents*

To support within our authority, State, Tribal, and local agencies in a coordinated, effective wildfire response. The Agency policy on response actions for structure fire extinguishment, fire response in the wildland urban interface and non-wildfire incidents is based on the premise that other Departments and agencies must fulfill their primary roles and responsibilities on lands that are outside Federal jurisdiction. Structure firefighting and primary non-fire emergency response is outside the scope of standard Agency wildfire firefighting training.

- b. Interagency Incident Business Management Handbook <https://www.nwcg.gov/publications/pms902>

See Chapter 50 Interagency Cooperative Relations.

- c. FSH 5109.11 - Grants, Cooperative Agreements, and Other Agreements Handbook; Chapter 30 - Cooperative Law Enforcement, Forest Road, and Fire Protection Agreements Grants and Agreements manual and handbook for further direction on Cooperative Fire Protection Agreements.

Wildland fire protection activities include, but are not limited to: prevention, detection, suppression, training, aviation, wildland fire use, and fuels management. Cooperative Fire Protection Agreements cover activities related to wildland fire, approved severity activities, and presidentially declared emergencies or disasters under FEMA authorities only. Cooperative Fire Protection Agreements authorize coordination among State and Federal agencies for these activities, and document the coordination among the parties, ensuring maximum protection of resources.

*H. Reference Documents to Assist with Fire Decision Making*

Although not all inclusive, the references listed below may assist a Line Officer in decision making and support the specific analysis and risk assessments:

- Interagency Standards for Fire & Aviation Operations (Red Book)

- Agency Administrator's Guide to Critical Incident Management, publication 926 from <https://www.nwcg.gov/publicationspms926>
- Land and/or Resource Management Plan
- Operational Plans
- Fire Danger Operating and Preparedness Plans
- Dispatch Annual Operating Plans
- Statewide Cooperative Agreements, Protection Responsibilities, Fire Restrictions Plans
- Local/State Smoke Management Guidelines
- Resource Mitigations for Wildland Fire Activities - addressing potential impacts of fire management on Threatened, Endangered, Proposed and Candidate (TEPC) plants and wildlife.
- Predictive Services Products, (7,14, 30 and 90 day weather and climate outlooks)
- Historical Season Ending Events and Timing
- Fire History and associated documentation (fire behavior reports, weather, final maps, severity maps, etc.)
- The WFM RD&A Agency Administrator Toolbox page: Agency Administrator Resources | Wildland Fire Management RD&A (nwcg.gov)
  - Forest Service Agency Administrator Qualifications
  - Delegation of Authority, Leaders Intent and Briefing Package Template
  - Links to Incident Objectives Project with example and references for better Incident Objectives
  - Decision Making for Wildland Fire Incidents
  - Agency Administrator Refresher content
- WFDSS Help content: [https://wfdss.usgs.gov/wfdss\\_help/index.htm](https://wfdss.usgs.gov/wfdss_help/index.htm)

## Part 2. Fires on Your Local Unit

### I. SUCCESSFUL FIRE MANAGEMENT RESPONSE

At the time of the initial fire report a dispatcher will ensure an initial incident is created in an IRWIN (Integrated Reporting of Wildland Fire Information) connected system, typically a Computer Aided Dispatch (CAD) system, which will be read into WFSS.

If the preplanned action is being met, and operations are successful with initial resources, no further documentation is needed in WFSS.

#### 1. *InciWeb- Incident Website*

InciWeb is an interagency all-risk incident information management system. The system was developed with two primary missions:

1. Provide the public a single source of incident related information
2. Provide a standardized reporting tool for the Public Affairs community

A number of supporting systems automate the delivery of incident information to remote sources. This ensures that the information regarding active incidents is consistent, and the delivery is timely.

Pertinent fire information should be posted on InciWeb as soon as possible after the incident begins.

<https://inciweb.nwcg.gov/>

#### A. Visiting the Fire

Appendix A in the Red Book provides a list of Sample Questions for Fire Site Visits by Agency Administrators. Categories cover: Management Direction, Safety, Fire Suppression Operations, Administration, and Dispatch Office.

#### B. Fire Information Guidance

On fires on National Forest System lands, Public Information Officers (PIOs) work for the US Forest Service, even if they are not regular US Forest Service employees. PIOs on incidents can respond to questions from all news media, including national news media, about the incident only.

The US Forest Service local unit is responsible for the content of fire communications during and after a fire. PIOs must coordinate continually with the local National Forest Public Affairs Officer (PAO) and/or Line Officer. Delegations of Authority will stress the importance of Line Officer responsibility for all fire communications, regardless of medium. Additional guidance can be found: <https://www.nifc.gov/fire-information/pio-bulletin-board>

Fire managers should also coordinate with forest and regional PIOs regarding localized talking points/key messages.

#### 1. *Media Interview Reminders*

Older versions of the Incident Response Pocket Guide (IRPG) provided a list of measures to keep in mind during media interviews and is as follows:

- Ensure the appropriate Public Information Officer or the local Public Affairs Office is aware of media visits.
- Be prepared. Know the facts. Develop a few key messages and deliver them. Prepare responses to potential tough questions. If possible, talk to reporter beforehand to get an idea of subjects, direction, and slant of the interview.
- Be concise. Give simple answers (10-20 seconds), and when you're done, be quiet. If you botch the answer, simply ask to start again.
- Be honest, personable, professional, presentable (remove sunglasses and hats).
- Look at the reporter, not the camera.
- Ensure media are escorted and wearing PPE when going to the fireline or hazardous sites.
- NEVER talk "off the record," exaggerate, or try to be cute or funny.
- DON'T guess or speculate or say "no comment." either explain why you can't answer the question or offer to track down the answer.

- DON'T disagree with the reporter. Instead, tactfully and immediately clarify and correct the information.
- DON'T speak for other agencies or offices.
- DON'T use jargon or acronyms.

## II. MANAGING FIRES ON YOUR UNIT

### A. Use of WFDSS

The Wildland Fire Decision Support System (WFDSS) is a web-based decision support system that provides a single dynamic documentation system for use beginning at the time of discovery and concluding when the fire is declared out. WFDSS allows the Agency Administrator (AA) to describe the fire situation, create Incident Objectives and Requirements, develop a Course of Action, evaluate Relative Risk, complete and Organization Assessment, and publish a decision.

All fires will have a published decision within WFDSS when they:

- Escape initial attack; or
- Exceed initial response; or
- Include objectives with both protection and resource benefit elements consistent with land management planning documents.

These incidents will have a Published Decision within WFDSS. A Published WFDSS Decision establishes objectives, a Course of Action and Rationale for incidents with varying duration, spread potential, costs, or other considerations. The level of documentation to publish a decision should be commensurate to the incident duration, spread potential, cost, or Relative Risk. Agency-specific direction established in memos or other policy documents may further define WFDSS documentation requirements.

Additional information can be found in Chapter 11 and Appendix N of the Red Book, Appendix 2 of this document and the WFDSS Help ([http://wfdss.usgs.gov/wfdss\\_help/index.htm](http://wfdss.usgs.gov/wfdss_help/index.htm)).

#### 1. Initial Decision

When determining if a decision is needed consider the following (Redbook Chapter 11):

- The fire affects or is likely to affect more than one agency or more than one administrative unit within a single agency (for example more than one National Forest).
- The fire is burning into or expected to burn into wildland-urban interface.
- Significant safety or other concerns such as air quality are present or anticipated.
- The Relative Risk Assessment indicates the need for additional evaluation and development of best management practices for achieving land and resource objectives.

#### 2. Incident Objectives

In an Incident Decision, there should be a direct tie between Incident Objectives, Incident Requirements, Course of Action, and the Rationale. They are all tiered down from the LRMP direction and provide the AA's intent and basis for the tactical plan.

Continuity of information within the WFDSS Decision leads to clearer understanding and implementation of LRMP direction. The leader's intent (Incident Objectives), the sideboards for the incident (Incident Requirements), and the intended actions (Course of Action / Management Action Points) all describe the AA's decision regarding how to implement that LRMP direction. This information should not be tactical in nature to avoid unnecessarily limiting the IMT's ability to take actions based on fire behavior and priority.

Information from the LRMP tiered down to the tactical plan (Incident Action Plan) will result in sound fire management on public lands and ensure implementation of the land management direction. Most importantly, firefighters will not be engaged in activities that are not important or that contradict LRMP direction. A clear articulation of the "why" allows IMTs to utilize a risk-management dialogue with their staffs and the AA to ensure the fire is managed while considering firefighter exposure.

It is the AA's responsibility to ensure the WFDSS Decision follows policy and guidance. Many land management units have a designated "WFDSS user" who crafts WFDSS Incident Objectives and Incident Requirements for AA approval. Anyone who

is an Incident Author, Owner, or Editor can create these statements, but the Approver (usually the Agency Administrator) must review them carefully to ensure they 1) provide clear leader's intent, 2) are aligned with the LRMP, 3) are relatively few in number, 4) do no conflict, 5) indicate the "what, when, where, why" and 6) give an overall sense of priority.

Multiple resources including examples of how to create quality Incident Objectives are available on the Decision Support Toolbox page Reference & Guidance | Wildland Fire Management RD&A (nwcg.gov) on the WFM RD&A's website, see the heading WFDSS Related Documents.

### 3. *Criteria for a New Decision*

Redbook Chapter 11, A new decision is required when:

- The Periodic Assessment indicates the Course of Action (decision) is no longer valid; or
- The fire moves beyond the Planning Area; or
- The incident exceeds an established agency threshold for approval authority (cost or complexity); or
- The Risk and Complexity Assessment indicates that the incident exceeds existing management capability.

Considerations for determining when a new decision is needed:

- Costs are expected to exceed the estimated final costs in the current Decision; or
- Management Action Points have changed since the current Decision was published.

Additional information about WFDSS can be found in the Redbook Appendix N and Appendix 2 of this document. User support information, training materials, and other resources can be found at the WFDSS homepage.

[https://wfdss.usgs.gov/wfdss/WFDSS\\_Home.shtml](https://wfdss.usgs.gov/wfdss/WFDSS_Home.shtml)

## B. *WFDSS Decision and the Incident Management Team*

The Agency Administrator has the overall responsibility for completing the incident decision documentation, including objectives, priorities, Course of Action(s), and publishing the WFDSS Decision. However, when an IMT has been delegated authority to manage an incident it is important the team and the local unit work together to outline the Course of Action to be taken to successfully manage that incident. If the incident is multi-jurisdictional, the issue of responsibility could be further compounded between agencies. On some incidents, the Agency Administrator(s) may choose to delegate some WFDSS tasks to the IMT. For more specific guidance review NWCG memo 005-2012 "Wildland Fire Decision Support System and the Role of Incident Management". [https://wfmrda.nwcg.gov/sites/default/files/docs/Reference/NWCG/NWCG-005-2012\\_WFDSS\\_and\\_Role\\_of\\_IMTs.pdf](https://wfmrda.nwcg.gov/sites/default/files/docs/Reference/NWCG/NWCG-005-2012_WFDSS_and_Role_of_IMTs.pdf)

### 1. *Delegating portions of WFDSS to the IMT*

The Agency Administrator should negotiate with the IMT regarding the type of WFDSS involvement desired and clearly document those decisions within the Delegation of Authority or Leader's Intent as directed by the agency. Local unit capability may be exceeded by the activity or complexity level on the unit. In those situations, the Line Officer may decide to delegate some WFDSS tasks to the IMT through coordination with local fire personnel, interagency partners, and IMT agreement. The Incident Commander (IC) should ask questions to fully understand the Line Officer's expectations before signing the delegation.

Incident management tasks that are best performed through the cooperation of the local unit and the IMT might include:

- Updating (uploading) fire perimeters.
- Ordering and managing staff to run fire models and/or complete a long-term assessment.
- Drafting updates for inclusion in the Periodic Assessment that describe the current incident status and key events. The Periodic Assessment should be completed by the Line Officer, who is responsible to ensure the WFDSS Decision is still representative of the actions being taken on the fire, but the IMT should provide input for the Line Officer's consideration.
- Updating strategic tactical responses to the incident such as MAP development and revision, outlining and modifying the Course of Action, estimates and updates of expected final incident costs.

### 2. *Agency Administrator Responsibilities Regarding Decisions*

All decision documentation functions can be performed by the IMT through a delegation of authority with the exception of the

responsibilities of the Agency Administrator which include:

- Approving a decision.
- Writing the Rationale for the decision.
- Initiating a new decision process during the Periodic Assessment. However, working together the IMT usually provides recommendations about changing conditions, needed tactics, and implementation strategies that might initiate a new decision within WFDSS.
- Entering or editing Strategic Objectives or Management Requirements for the local unit from local unit planning documents (typically done by a Unit's WFDSS Data Manager). However, the team has the responsibility to clarify local unit objectives and requirements with that unit.

### C. Use of Incident Management Teams

When the decision has been made to order an Incident Management Team to take over management of a wildland fire, the following must be completed by the responsible Line Officer with jurisdictional and/or protection authority for the area on which the incident occurs.

#### 1. *Determining Team Type - Wildfire Risk and Complexity Assessment (Redbook Chapter 11)*

The National Wildfire Coordinating Group has adopted the Wildland Fire Risk and Complexity Assessment (PMS 236) as a replacement for the Incident Complexity Analysis and the Organizational Needs Assessment. The PMS 236 assists personnel with evaluating the situation, objectives, risks, and management considerations of an incident and recommends the appropriate organization necessary to manage the incident. The Wildland Fire Risk and Complexity Assessment can be found here: <https://www.ncg.gov/publications/PMS236> and within the Wildland Fire Decision Support System (WFDSS).

The PMS 236 also includes common indicators of incident complexity to assist firefighters and managers with determining incident management organizational needs.

Populating the Relative Risk Assessment and Organization Assessment portions of the Wildland Fire Decision Support System (WFDSS) fulfill the need for a Wildland Fire Risk and Complexity Assessment.

#### 2. *Ordering an Incident Management Team and Transfer of Command*

The following Information is from regional guides developed for field use. The responsible Line Officer/ Agency Administrator will:

- Place the request for an Incident Management Team, in coordination with unit fire staff, through their Dispatch Center as soon as that need has been identified and verified by Organizational Needs Assessment for the incident. Identify the type of team needed, place for the team to report to for the Line Officer's briefing, and time to report at that location.
- Be sure ordered time lines are reasonable. Consider the time necessary to assemble and transport the team, avoid night mobilization when possible, and most likely time to effect transition from the current incident management organization to the national or geographic area team.
- The ordering unit will specify times of arrival and transfer of command and discuss these timeframes with both the incoming and outgoing command structures.

#### 3. *Prior to meeting the Team*

The responsible Agency Administrator, with assistance from appropriate staff will:

- Prepare and document a Decision within WFDSS and Line Officer's briefing package.
- Prepare the Delegation of Authority and Leader's Intent Letter.
- Appoint a resource advisor to work with the Incident Management Team and brief that person on their responsibilities and authority.
- Consider the need for an incident business advisor (IBA) to assist in managing fiscal aspects of the incident. A general rule of thumb as to when an IBA should be used is anytime the incident is suspected to be a person-caused trespass fire, whenever claims are involved or likely to be.
- Assign an incident business advisor (INBA) to provide incident business management oversight commensurate with complexity.

- Notify and assemble key staff and other personnel, including cooperators, essential to preparing for and transitioning to the incoming Incident Management Team.

Transition from local management to team management of the incident:

- Avoid transition during the active burning period or an operational period to which resources are assigned and being managed by the local organization.
- If no resources are assigned to the incident, take-over of the incident by the team may occur as practical; however, current fire behavior and area involved by the incident should be compatible with objectives stated for the team within the Published WFDSS Decision.
- Ensure the availability of the current incident commander and any key personnel to personally meet with and brief the incoming team.

#### 4. *Setting Team Expectation*

In 2014, the WO FAM requested a field review of WFDSS Decision Documentation. It was noted that the Incident Objectives being written in many decisions were not site specific, but general and applicable to any acre on any landscape. Additional findings noted that many Delegation of Authority (DOA) letters, Leaders Intent, In-Briefing Packages and the WFDSS decision documentation lacked consistency, providing potentially misleading direction to Incident Management Teams. It was challenging for the IMTs to interpret and implement the expectations from all these documents since they were all outlining different priorities or expectations. In response to these inconsistencies the WFM RD&A pulled together several example documents to build consistent templates for the DOA, Leaders Intent, and In-Briefing Package for the field to use to help alleviate these inconsistencies. These templates can be found in the Red Book as cited below (Appendix D and G).

#### **Delegation of Authority Letter**

Agency Administrators must approve and publish decisions in WFDSS (and subsequent Courses of Action) and issue delegations of authority to the incident commander. The Agency Administrator's authority is based on incident type, as directed in Chapter 5 of the Redbook and FSM 5130.

Chapter 11 and Appendix G of the Red Book provides direction and templates on delegations of authority and leader's intent. Agency Administrators must issue written delegations of authority to Incident Commanders.

The delegation should bridge direction provided in the Wildland Fire Decision Support System Decision, the Leader's Intent Letter and the Team In-Briefing Package.

##### a. *Leaders Intent*

This is an optional document to provide leadership expectations from the Agency Administrator information to an IMT that is not directly related to the strategic direction for managing a wildfire (strategic direction belongs in the WFDSS Decision). This Leader's Intent Document is one piece of many components of the entire Briefing Package provided to the Incident Management Team (IMT).

Appendix G of the Red Book and the WFM RD&A webpage – Agency Administrator Resources provides a Leader's Intent Letter Template in the Line Officer Forms and Templates section.

##### b. *Agency Administrator/IMT Briefing Checklist*

The Agency Administrator's briefing is a crucial procedure that should be given thorough attention and preparation, in consideration of the general hurried state of business during the transition between extended attack, an escaped fire and the anticipation of an Incident Management Team. The Line Officer's briefing will provide information, guidance, and direction, including constraints, necessary for the successful management of the incident.

The briefing must be provided any time an Incident Management Team is assigned, including changing teams before all Incident Objectives have been met, and whenever major jurisdictional responsibilities are added or otherwise change within the incident. Either at the time of the Agency Administrator briefing for the Incident Management Team, or at a separate place and time, if necessary, ensure that the IMT has an opportunity to meet with, be briefed by, and thoroughly transition with the current incident commander and the members of their organization prior to assuming command of the incident.

For an Agency Administrators Briefing to IMT template consult Appendix D of the Red Book while also consulting Geographic Area and Regional sites for localized specific information regarding briefings.

c. *The purpose of the Agency Administrator briefing is to:*

- Provide a common understanding between the Agency Administrator and the Incident Management Team of the environmental, social, political, economic, legal, and other management issues relevant to the incident and its location.
- Inform the IMT of the history, current status of the incident and actions taken to date, including weather, fire behavior, and effectiveness of tactics.
- Present other documents providing intelligence and aids to management of the incident, including maps (units using Spatial Fire Planning in WFDSS could display directly from WFDSS or download the relevant maps for display purposes), photos, GIS products, weather forecasts, Fire Management Plans, phone lists, agreements, operational period plans, and current ICS-209.
- Present the published decision and the Delegation of Authority letter from the Agency Administrator to the Incident Commander.
- Identify key agency personnel who will be involved with the IMT, including the Line Officer's Representative, Resource Advisor, and Incident Business Advisor.
- Establish procedures and schedules for communication between the Agency Administrator and incident commander.
- Establish how news media, public information, and important local and political contacts will be handled on the incident.
- Establish resource ordering procedures.
- Identify the IMT's responsibility for initial attack and support of other Forest incidents.
- Establish the disposition of Forest suppression resources and local participation on the incident.
- Establish understanding for the use of trainees on the incident.
- Establish Forest and incident policy on compensable meal breaks, work / rest, rest and recuperation, and open vs closed camps.
- Establish standards for return of the incident to local management, including mop-up and fire suppression rehabilitation expectations. Refer to section L for more information.
- Identify special safety awareness concerns and expectations.

d. *Conducting the Line Officer/Agency Administrator briefing*

The agenda for the Agency Administrator's briefing to an IMT is outlined in Appendix D of the Redbook. The briefing should be planned for a comfortable setting away from most distractions, where the incoming Incident Management Team and all required representatives of the host agency can assemble. It should take place as soon as the incoming team is assembled. It is essential that the Line Officer ensure notification of the briefing time and location to the incident commander, usually through the dispatch network.

The briefing should be led by the responsible Line Officer and follow an organized format to ensure information exchange and minimize the time required of the team prior to them mobilizing to the incident location. All agency participants must be prepared for their part in this procedure and all pertinent information and documentation must be printed/distributed in sufficient quantities for required distribution.

5. *Transfer of Command – Team Transition*

The following guidelines will assist in the transfer of incident command responsibilities from the local unit to incoming Complex Incident Management Team (CIMT) and back to the local unit. Refer to the Red Book Chapter 11 for additional information.

- The local team or organization already in place remains in charge until the local representative briefs their counterparts on the incoming team, a Delegation of Authority has been signed, and a mutually agreed time for transfer of command has been established.
- Clear lines of authority must be maintained in order to minimize confusion and maintain operational control.
- Transfers of command should occur at the beginning of an operational period, whenever possible. All operational personnel will be notified on incident command frequencies when transfer of command occurs. Do not plan a transition during an operational period.

## 6. *AA Role with IMT/CIMT throughout the Incident*

### General Guidelines:

After assigning the Incident Management Team to a wildland fire on your unit, the Line Officer should allow those with delegated authority and responsibility to manage the situation and resources assigned to it. The responsible Agency Administrator will provide oversight to the Incident Management Team, primarily through monitoring the appropriateness of the WFDSS Published Decision, effectiveness of the team's tactical implementation of that decision, direction in the delegation of authority and/or Leader's Intent Letter, and overall relationship with the host unit, cooperators, and incident support organization. You must be prepared to provide necessary oversight, guidance, and direction to each level of the incident management organization by staying informed of events and participating in intelligence and strategy discussions in order to understand the current and emerging situation and be able to respond when decisions and direction are required.

Remember, the team is working for you. You have the same obligation to them as you would to any other member of your regular organization to support their needs to get the job done. Find out what other specific needs the team may have or anticipate and help make those resources available to them.

The responsible Agency Administrator, or a delegated representative (Agency Administrator's representative or fire staff) should be available to the incident commander for quick consultation and decision making on an arranged basis through established communications contact points and times and scheduled meetings.

The following are suggestions for the Agency Administrator to help you remain focused during a large fire incident on your unit.

- Recognize that every fire has potential.
- Be available and be involved, do not micro-manage the incident. Let people do their work, and make sure they know you are there to lead and support them.
- Review daily Incident Action Plans and ensure tactics and other direction are compatible with the Strategic Objectives and Incident Objectives provided for the incident within WFDSS. Firefighter and public safety must be given visible and sincere emphasis.
- Provide oversight and direction to the Resource Advisor.
- Ensure that unit/district welfare and caretaking is on-going. Local personnel can become overwhelmed by the events, activities, and organization related to a large fire. Keep your folks informed and involved, but do not let them become overloaded by a combination of the fire and their normal duties, and do not let them feel left out.
- Keep your key publics and local government officials informed and involved.
- Understand the big picture; do the best you can with what you have. Increasingly, your large fire is not the only game in town. If you are competing for resources, you may need to consider alternative management strategies.
- Know what is going on, see for yourself, stay ahead of the power curve.
- Use experienced advisors, coaches, or deputies to help you and your staff better manage the situation of increased volume and complexity of business during this period.
- Do not hesitate to bring in help to increase your unit's depth and situational management capability.

### D. *Resource Advisors*

When a wildland fire is managed by an Incident Management Team, the Agency Administrator (AA) should assign a resource advisor (READ) to work for them, and with the team, to represent AA direction for meeting land and resource objectives during fire suppression. The READ is responsible for identifying and evaluating potential impacts of fire operations on natural and cultural resources, as well as to the social and political atmosphere affecting the unit. The READ will use their local understanding and familiarity to integrate these issues and concerns into the fire management strategy and tactics and assist the IMT in developing mitigations which satisfy the mutual objectives of wildland fire suppression and resource protection.

The decision to appoint a Resource Advisor should be made early in the decision process for managing a large wildland fire incident. Ideally, the READ is appointed and briefed by the AA before the Incident Management Team is in place

and assumes direct management of the objectives set for the fire. The READ should be involved in the preparation of the WFDSS decision and the AA's briefing to the IMT. That person should be made available to the team on as near a full-time basis during the team's management of the incident as possible.

Consequently, the AA should take necessary steps to alleviate the READ of other routine responsibilities to the extent possible.

Throughout the incident, the AA should be available to the READ for consultation and monitoring of issues and events. In all events, the AA and READ must remember that the READ works for both the AA and with the team.

Redbook Chapter 11 provides information regarding Resource Advisors.

### *1. Resource Advisor Responsibilities*

The Resource Advisor is responsible for anticipating the impacts of fire operations on natural and cultural resources and for communicating protection requirements for those resources to the Incident Commander. The Resource Advisor should ensure IMT compliance with the Land/Resource Management Plan. The Resource Advisor should provide the Incident Commander with information, analysis, and advice on these areas:

- Land Ownership
- Hazardous materials
- Fuel breaks (locations and specifications)
- Water sources and ownership
- Mineral resources (oil, gas, mining activities)
- Critical watersheds, wildfire habitat
- Military issues
- Grazing allotments
- Recreational areas
- Special status species (threatened, endangered, proposed, sensitive)
- Poisonous plants, insects, and snakes
- Utility rights-of-way (power, communication sites)
- Riparian areas
- Archeological site, historic trails, paleontological sites
- Fisheries
- Native allotments
- Special management areas (wilderness areas, wilderness study areas, recommended wilderness, national monuments, national conservation areas, national historic landmarks, areas of critical environmental concern, research natural areas, wild and scenic rivers)
- A majority of these data layers can be preloaded in WFDSS to help streamline sharing of information with line officers, Incident Management Teams, Resource Staffs etc.

The Resource Advisor and Agency Administrator Representative positions are generally filled by local unit personnel. These positions may be combined and performed by one individual. Duties are stated in the Resource Advisor's Guide for Wildland Fire (NWCG PMS 313), available here: <https://www.nwcg.gov/publications/pms313>

### *E. Minimum Impact Suppression Tactics (MIST)*

The IRPG provides guidance on MIST and where desired should be included in Incident Objectives.

The intent of Minimum Impact Suppression Tactics is to manage a wildland fire with the least impact to natural and cultural resources. Firefighter safety, fire conditions, and good judgment dictate the actions taken. By minimizing impacts of fire management actions, unnecessary resource damage is prevented and cost savings can be realized. These actions include, but are not limited to:

#### *1. Line construction and mop-up*

- Consider:
  - Cold-trailing fireline.
  - Using wetline or sprinklers as control line.

- Using natural or human made barriers to limit fire spread.
- Burning out sections of fireline.
- Limiting width and depth of fireline necessary to limit fire spread.
- Locate pumps and fuel sources to minimize impacts to streams.
- Minimize cutting of trees and snags to those that pose safety or line construction concerns.
- Move or roll downed material out of fireline construction area.
- In areas of low spotting potential, allow large diameter logs to burn out.
- Limb only fuels adjacent to the fireline with potential to spread outside the line or produce spotting issues.
- Minimize bucking of logs to check/extinguish hot spots; preferably roll logs to extinguish and return logs to original position.
- Utilize extensive cold-trailing and/or hot-spot detection devices along perimeter.
- Increased use of fireline patrols/monitoring.
- Flush-cut stumps after securing fireline.

## 2. Long Term incidents

- Consult with Resource Advisor to locate suitable campsites. Scout thoroughly to avoid hazards (bee's nests, widow-makers, etc.).
- Plan for:
  - Helispot locations
  - Supply deliveries
  - Trash backhaul
  - Disposal of human waste
- Minimize ground and vegetation disturbance when establishing sleeping areas.
- Use locally approved storage methods to animal proof food and trash.
- When abandoning camp, rehab impacts created by fire personnel.

## F. Cost Management

### *Redbook Chapter 11:*

An Incident Business Advisor (INBA) must be assigned to any fire with costs of \$5 million or more. If a qualified INBA is not available, the approving official will appoint a financial advisor to monitor expenditures.

Incident cost objectives will be included as a performance measure in Incident Management Team evaluations.

A Large Fire Cost Reviews (FS) may be conducted at the discretion of the Washington Office, at the request of the Regional Office, or when requested by multi-jurisdictional cooperators (Red Book, Chapter 18).

### 1. Cost Share

Mutually approved operations that require reimbursement and/or compensation will be identified and agreed to by all participating parties through a cost-share agreement. The mechanism and timing of the funding exchanges will be identified and agreed upon.

Red Book Chapter 8 in terms of cost sharing, Annual Operating Plans should address

- The cost-sharing methodologies that will be utilized should wildfire spread to a neighboring jurisdiction in a location where fire is not wanted.
- The cost-share methodologies that will be used should a jurisdiction accept or receive a wildland fire and manage it to create benefit.
- Any distinctions in what cost-share methodology will be used if the reason the fire spreads to another jurisdiction is attributed to a strategic decision, versus environmental conditions (weather, fuels, and fire behavior), or tactical considerations (firefighter safety, resource availability) that preclude stopping the fire at jurisdictional boundaries. Examples of cost-sharing methodologies may include, but are not limited to, the following:
  - When a wildland fire that is being managed for benefit spreads to a neighboring jurisdiction because of strategic decisions, and in a location where fire is not wanted, the managing jurisdiction shall be responsible for wildfire suppression costs.

- In those situations where weather, fuels, or fire behavior of the wildland fire precludes stopping at jurisdiction boundaries cost-share methodologies may include but are not limited to:
  - Each jurisdiction pays for its own resources – fire suppression efforts are primarily on jurisdictional responsibility lands.
  - Each jurisdiction pays for its own resources – services rendered approximate the percentage of jurisdictional responsibility, but not necessarily performed on those lands.
  - Cost share by percentage of ownership.
  - Cost is apportioned by geographic division. Examples of geographic divisions are divisions A and B (using a map as an attachment); privately owned property with structures; or specific locations, such as campgrounds.
  - Reconciliation of daily estimates (for larger, multi-day incidents) – this method relies upon daily, agreed-to, cost estimates, using incident action plans or other means to determine multi-agency contributions. Reimbursements can be made upon actuals.

The percentage for how to apply actuals can be based on estimates, but actuals must be used when final settlement is completed.

Chapter 18 of the Red Book provides guidance on Large Fire Cost Reviews.

Consult Geographic and Regional sites for more localized cost share guidance and templates.

## G. Incident Business Management

The Incident Business Advisor (INBA) works under the direct supervision of the Agency Administrator and in coordination with the IMT. The primary duty of the INBA is to provide the Agency Administrator or their delegate with an overview of incident management business practices, make recommendations for improvements, and facilitate communication with the IMT and other resources assigned in support of the incident.

All federal agencies have adopted the [NWCG Standards for Interagency Incident Business Management](#) (PMS 902, NFES 2160, and FSH 5109.34) as the official guide to provide execution of each agency's incident business management program. Unit offices, geographic areas, or NWCG may issue supplements, as long as policy or conceptual data is not changed. The handbook is available here: <https://www.nwcg.gov/publications/pms902>

The handbook assists participating agencies of the NWCG to constructively work together to provide effective execution of each agency's incident management program by establishing procedures for:

- Uniform application of regulations on the use of human resources, including classification, payroll, commissary, injury compensation, and travel.
- Acquisition of necessary equipment and supplies from appropriate sources in accordance with applicable procurement regulations.
- Managing and tracking government property.
- Financial coordination with the protection agency and maintenance of finance, property, procurement, and personnel records and forms.
- Use and coordination of incident business management functions as they relate to sharing of resources among federal, state, and local agencies, including the military.
- Documentation and reporting of claims.
- Administrative processes for all-hazard incidents.

For clarification or interpretation of any items, contact the designated Unit Administrative Representative or the Incident Business Advisor (INBA).

## H. Turn Back Standards

Prior to close out with an IMT it is important to provide clear direction as to the desired turn back condition of the fire and fire area. Consider the resources the fire will be turned over to and their logistical and functional capacity to complete remaining tasks on the incident. Unnecessary risk to firefighters, as well as unnecessary cost is often incurred during the mop up stage of many fires based on mop up/turn back standards given to Incident Management Teams (IMT). This usually occurs when the mop up/turn back standards are arbitrary metrics (“100% mop up 300 feet in from the fire’s edge”)

designed to reduce the risk of a rekindle once the IMT is released. Though a distance standard is measurable and easy to describe, it can cause thousands of hours of firefighter exposure and associated costs to achieve, unnecessarily, while quite possibly increasing the chance of a rekindle due to the distances to cover, as opposed to focused mop up on areas with the greatest chance for rekindling.

The following examples are in alignment with a doctrinal approach and provide the resources on scene with the decision space to use their own professional judgment to accomplish the mission.

Example:

- Limit exposure and associated risk by confining mop up to the fire perimeter only. Mop up only to the distance which minimizes the potential for spread or spotting by considering fuel height, slope, and burn intensity (consumption).
- Fall only snags or trees which provide a source of fire spread, interfere with needed access, or pose an immediate risk to firefighters or the public. Trees which are felled should not be bucked or limbed unless they conflict with the above criteria.
- Example:
- Mop up to the degree necessary to make the likelihood of escape minimal based on professional experience, terrain, fuel types and fuel conditions, and current/predicted weather conditions.
- Example:
- Mop up to the extent necessary to minimize the risk of the fire rekindling (taking into consideration terrain, aspect, fuel type, predicted weather, etc...) while not transferring unnecessary risk to firefighters.

As we continue to learn and improve in risk management, we need to be mindful of transferring risk to firefighters when trying to reduce other types of risk, such as of a rekindle in this case. We're making great strides in assessing risk on where we put our firefighters during line construction and the containment phase based on the values to be protected, but we need to continue in that vein when we move to mop up and turn back.

Below is a list of additional items to consider when drafting turn back standards. Each fire is unique and may have unique turn back standards given the terrain, capacity of remaining resources, location, etc. Consider the entire fireline, camp locations, spike camps, staging areas, remote helispots, etc. Be sure to review these with the IMT well in advance of their close out date.

- All Spot Fires lined and out – identified on maps
- All controlled line is cold
- All Accountable Property Items identified/accounted for
- All Unnecessary Equipment demobed/returned to Regional Cache
- Cache Demobed
- Fireline rehab is complete
- All spike camps, helispots, helibases rehabbed
- All back haul completed

#### I. Post-Wildfire Activities

Chapter 11 of the Red Book provides direction regarding wildland fire management agency responsibilities for taking prompt action to determine the need for, and to prescribe and implement, emergency treatments to minimize threats to life or property or to stabilize and prevent unacceptable degradation to natural and cultural resources resulting from the effects of a fire on the lands they manage. Post-wildfire activities references can be found in USDA Forest Service Manual 2523 Emergency Stabilization – Burned Area Emergency Response (BAER).

#### J. IMT Performance Evaluations

Chapter 11 of the Red Book covers Team Evaluations.

At completion of assignment, Incident Commanders will receive a written performance evaluation from the Agency Administrator(s) prior to the teams' release from the incident. Certain elements of this evaluation may not be able to be completed at the closeout review. These include accountability and property control, completeness of claims investigation/documentation, and completeness of financial and payment documentation.

The final evaluation incorporating all of the above elements should be sent to the Incident Commander and the respective GACC within 60 days. See Appendix I of the Red Book for the IMT evaluation form.

The Delegation of Authority, the Published Decision in WFDSS, and other documented Agency Administrator's direction will serve as the primary standards against which the IMT is evaluated.

The Agency Administrator will provide a copy of the evaluation to the IC and the state/regional FMO and retain a copy for the final fire package.

The state/regional FMO will review all evaluations and will be responsible for providing a copy of evaluations documenting performance to the Geographic Area Coordinating Group or agency managing the IMT.

## K. Long Term Incidents

Incidents that will be managed over a long duration often have varying management needs over time. To support long duration fire decisions, a number of resources should be utilized to help meet desired objectives. Managers are urged to use the analytical tools from the Predictive Services Group and support personnel such as a Strategic Operations Planner (SOPL), Long Term Fire Analyst (LTAN), Fire Behavior Analyst (FBAN), Air Resource Advisor or agency air quality personnel, and other personnel skilled in assessing potential fire growth and behavior, smoke, and other resource impacts.

Strategic Operational Planners are skilled in applying risk assessment products to the development of long-term plans employing the full spectrum of fire management responses to meet land management objectives.

Some regions utilize long term planning teams or groups of individuals with skills in planning, fire behavior analysis, operations, GIS, risk management, etc. Consult Geographic Area and Regional sites for information regarding these teams.

Utilize the Risk and Complexity Assessment (RCA PMS 236), located in WFDSS as the Relative Risk and Organization Assessments as often as needed to gauge the management level necessary for your incident.

Always be sure the Course of Action in WFDSS accurately reflects the long term management approach. Consider adding any products used during long term planning in the decision content (ERC graphs, resource levels, seasonal/climate projections, fire behavior analysis, smoke dispersion predictions etc.)

Other considerations for long duration incidents include:

- Consulting with the Resource Advisor to locate suitable campsites. Scout thoroughly to avoid hazards (bee's nests, widowmakers, etc.).
- Plan for appropriate methods of:
  - Supply deliveries
  - Helispot locations
  - Trash back-haul
  - Disposal of human waste
- Minimize ground and vegetation disturbance when establishing sleeping areas.
- Use locally approved storage methods to animal proof food and trash.
- When abandoning camp, rehab impacts created by fire personnel.

## L. Resources Available to Line Officers

Indicators of need for additional resources (the following material was gathered from regional guides):

If several of the following occur, you should seriously consider calling for outside assistance:

- Consider if additional help is needed to both manage the incident and plan for the incident.
  - People are filling multiple management roles
  - Staff is not available to maintain area operations. Visitor services are significantly curtailed, or other major program areas are severely hampered.
  - Staff is working longer than 12 hour operational periods on a sustained basis and/or consistently working days off.
  - Essential staff is absent from area for extended period.

- Span of control exceeds acceptable limits.
- Staff not able to adequately respond to public and media demand for information.
- Staff is no longer able to maintain a clear picture or understanding of what is happening with incident(s).
- What is the likelihood that an incident will soon impact an adjacent agency/landowner?
- Rumors are running rampant.
- Inordinate time and effort are being expended on a single issue.
- Numerous people are dependent upon you incessantly for decisions on a variety of issue.
- Financial obligations are increasing rapidly.
- Information updates occur frequently.
- Accident frequency rate has increased.
- All of the field unit's communications are tied up with incident(s).
- Multiple incidents have occurred, or if another incident occurs, area resources cannot respond adequately.
- Current Control efforts are not meeting objectives.
- Fire weather forecast indicates potential for additional problems.
- Local cooperators are experiencing problems and/or are unable to provide assistance.
- Closures are occurring as a result of incident(s).
- Continuing threat to visitor safety.

#### M. Additional Decision Support Available to Line Officers

- Regional Forester Representatives (RFR), discussed below. Contact the regional forester's office or regional fire director.
- RMA – Risk Management Assistance: The role of RMA is to bolster the line officer and the Incident Management Team's ability to examine alternative strategies that better consider inherent tradeoffs of exposure, risk to highly valued assets, and opportunities for fire benefits. The intent is to bring enhanced capacity, apply existing and emerging decision support tools with risk management expertise, and improve the overall effectiveness and efficiency of our fire management response. Risk Management Assistance Dashboard [Risk Management Assistance \(RMA\) Dashboard \(arcgis.com\)](#)
- Decision Support Groups: Groups of individuals, who can gather and complete input requirements for a decision; work with your Geographic Area Editor for help with setting up a group. Expertise could include: LTAN, SOPL, FBAN, GISS, THSP.
- Predictive Services Centers: national and regional Predictive Service Centers provide decision support information needed to proactively anticipate significant fire activity and determining resource allocation needs. [National GACC Website Portal | Predictive Services Program \(nifc.gov\)](#)
- Resource Advisors (READ). Utilize local fire management contacts and adjoining units to determine personal and availability.
- Regional Air Quality Specialist
- Air Resource Advisors – individuals trained to monitor smoke production, also assists with disseminating this information to federal and public entities, may also be a position within a Decision Support Center. Contact your Geographic Area Editor to assist in coordination with the Air Resource Advisor program manager.
- Line Officer Coach. Contact regional forester's office or regional fire director.
- Safety Team. Contact Regional Safety Officer.
- Aviation Team. Contact Regional Aviation Officer.
- Strategic Operational Planner (SOPL). Order through IROC.
- National Incident Management Organization (NIMO). Ordered the same as CIMTs. Coordinate with regional office and fire director.
- In addition to these work with your Supervisor, Fire Staff Officer, and Regional Specialists (Fire Planning, Air Quality Specialist, Assistant Fire Directors etc.).

#### N. Resources You Can Expect on Large Incidents

- Incident Business Advisor (INBA): An Incident Business Advisor (INBA) must be assigned to any fire with costs of \$5 million or more. The complexity of the incident and the potential costs should be considered when assigning either an IBA1 or IBA2. If a qualified INBA is not available, the approving official will appoint a financial advisor to monitor expenditures. (Red Book Chapter 11)

- Wildland Fire Management Annual Report and Large Fire Cost Review (FS): The Washington Office, Director of Fire and Aviation Management, will select a subset of fires for review based on complexity and national significance, ensuring the selected fires provide a cross-sectional representation of cost, size, and oversight complexity. The reviews will be multi-tiered and foster a working environment that will improve the decision-making process and develop a capacity for organizational learning. If a site visit is required, the Washington Office, Deputy Chief, State and Private Forestry, will notify the regional forester. The national review process can include real time analysis of fire information, informal discussions with fire managers and regional personnel, and/or site visits by a cadre of specialists to individual incidents and or geographic areas. For more detail, see FSM 5139.2.

#### O. Interagency Coordination and Cooperation

Chapter 8 of the Red Book provides a section on Multi-Agency Coordination and Cooperation.

#### P. Geographic Area Multi-Agency Coordination Groups

Geographic area multi-agency coordination is overseen by GMAC Groups, which are comprised of geographic area (State, Region) lead administrators or fire managers from agencies that have jurisdictional or support responsibilities, or that may be significantly impacted by resource commitments. GMAC responsibilities include:

- Establish priorities for the geographic area.
- Acquire allocate and reallocate resources.
- Provide NMAC with National Ready Reserve (NRR) resources as required.
- Issue coordinated and collective situation status reports.

#### Q. National Multi-Agency Coordination

National multi-agency coordination is overseen by the National Multi-Agency Coordinating (NMAC) Group, which consists of one representative each from the following agencies: BLM, FWS, NPS, BIA, FS, NASF, and the USFA, who have been delegated authority by their respective agency directors to manage wildland fire operations on a national scale when fire management resource shortages are probable. The delegated authorities include:

- Provide oversight of general business practices between the NMAC group and the Geographic Area Multi-Agency Coordination groups.
- Establish priorities among geographic areas.
- Activate and maintain a ready reserve of national resources for assignment directly by NMAC as needed.
- The NMAC Operating Plan, NMAC Correspondence, and other resources and references are located at: <https://www.nifc.gov/nicc/administrative/nmac/index.html>.

#### R. Critical Incident

Chapter 7 of the Red Book covers Safety and Risk Management as well as provides information on Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM). A critical incident is defined as a fatality or other event that can have serious long-term effects on the agency, its employees and their families or the community. Such an event may warrant stress management assistance. The local Agency Administrator may choose to provide CISM for personnel that have been exposed to a traumatic event.

The NWCG has published the Agency Administrator's Guide to Critical Incident Management (PMS 926). This guide is designed as a working tool to assist Agency Administrators with the chronological steps in managing a critical incident. This document includes a series of checklists, which outline Agency Administrator's and other functional area's oversight and responsibilities. The guide is not intended to replace local emergency plans or other specific guidance that may be available, but should be used in conjunction with existing policy, line of duty death (LODD) handbooks, or other critical incident guidance. Local units should complete the guide, and review and update at least annually.

<https://www.nwcg.gov/sites/default/files/publications/pms926.pdf>

The availability of CISM teams and related resources (e.g. defusing teams) varies constantly. It is imperative that local units pre-identify CISM resources that can support local unit needs. Some Incident Management Teams include personnel trained in CISM who can provide assistance.

Serious accidents and fatalities are the most difficult events encountered. Agency policy requires assistance with the procedures for notification and respectfully dealing with serious accidents and fatalities. References include:

- FSM 6730- Accident Reporting and Investigation and FSM 5320- Investigation;
- NWCG PMS 926- Agency Administrator's Guide to Critical Incident Management (available at: <https://www.nwcg.gov/publications/pms926>)
- Forest Plans regarding disaster and fatality operations. Refer to regional coordination sites for specific regional directions on IMT operating plans in regards to serious incidents and fatalities.

There are many useful references and information available on the CISM website at <https://gacc.nifc.gov/cism>

## S. Presumptive Illness

The Federal Employees' Compensation Act (FECA) covers injury in the performance of duty; injury includes a disease proximately caused by federal employment. The U.S. Department of Labor's (DOL) Office of Workers' Compensation Programs (OWCP) Division of Federal Employees', Longshore and Harbor Workers' Compensation (DFELHWC) administers FECA. FECA provides to an employee injured while in the performance of duty the services, appliances, and supplies prescribed or recommended by a qualified physician, which OWCP considers "likely to cure, give relief, reduce the degree or the period of disability, or aid in lessening the amount of the monthly compensation." See 5 U.S.C. 8103. The FECA pays compensation for disability or death of an employee resulting from injury in the performance of duty.

In December 2022, President Biden signed into law the Fiscal Year 2023 National Defense Authorization Act. Section 5305 titled "Fairness for Federal Firefighters," identifying that certain conditions will be "presumed" to be work-related for "federal employees in fire protection activities." The list of presumptive illnesses includes but is not limited to various cancers. Examples include:

- Esophageal Cancer
- Colorectal Cancer
- Prostate Cancer
- Testicular Cancer
- Multiple Myeloma
- Non-Hodgkin's Lymphoma
- Leukemia
- Kidney Cancer
- Bladder Cancer
- Brain Cancer
- Lung Cancer
- Mesothelioma
- Melanoma
- Thyroid Cancer
- A sudden cardiac event or stroke while, or not later than 24 hours after, engaging in the prevention, control, or extinguishment of fires or response to emergency situations where life, property, or the environment is at risk, including the prevention, control, suppression, or management of wildland fires
- Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD)

Pursuant to section 8143b(b)(3), OWCP will consider making additions to the list of conditions as supported by the best available scientific evidence. If it is determined that the weight of evidence warrants adding an illness or disease, any additions will be made through the rule-making process; any such rule will clearly identify that scientific evidence.

**Forest Service Human Resources Management:** HRM has a staff of HR Specialists who serve as liaisons to assist Forest Service employees with the U.S. DOL's Workers' Compensation Program. These HRM specialists help employees understand deadlines, letters received and share what information is needed to fill out forms. HRM is able to identify if a submitted claim is for a wildland firefighter, or from an incident, and annotate the case accordingly. When submitted, these types of claims are routed to U.S. DOL Workers' Compensation Program for review and action by a dedicated team.

### How to file a claim

Employees who want to file a Workers' Compensation claim for a presumptive illness will follow the normal process and submit their claims via eSafety or may call HRM's Contact Center at 1-877-372-7248, press 2 for assistance. Below are additional resources to provide detailed information.

Resources:

- [Wildland Fire Lessons Learned First Hand Account](#)
- [FS HRM Update about U.S. DOL Workers' compensation program](#)
- [2023 National Defense Authorization Act NDAA](#)
- [FECA Bulletin No. 23-05 Special Case Handling in Certain Firefighter FECA Claims Processing and Adjudication](#)

## T. Reviews and Investigations

Reviews and investigations are used by wildland fire and aviation managers to assess and improve the effectiveness and safety of organizational operations. Information (other than factual) derived from safety reviews and accident investigations should only be used by agencies for accident prevention and safety purposes.

It is important to learn from all unintended outcomes, which is why we have a system of reviews, analyses, and investigations to assist in identifying, preventing, and understanding factors that may prevent future accidents and injury. When an unintended outcome occurs, a determination needs to be made by the responsible Line Officer concerning what type and level of investigation or review is appropriate. It is important to select and apply the appropriate tool to meet desired objectives. There is a variety of accident investigation and analysis tools that could be used individually or concurrently for multiple investigations or reviews. Forest Service Manual Direction 5139.1 and 5139.2 and the Red Book, Chapter 18 identify different types of reviews, criteria for conducting them, and the Delegating or Authorizing Official required.

### *Forest Service Manual Direction 5139.1 Regional Fire Reviews*

The Regional Forester has the discretion to determine the need of a fire review. To determine the scope of a review, objectives identified above in sections 5139.01 and 5139.02 may be utilized. A review should be timely and should be a positive and constructive opportunity to examine opportunities for change in future actions. The Regional Forester may consult with the Washington Office, including the Director of Fire and Aviation Management to determine the need and extent of a review. This allows for improvement of program performance, operations, evaluation of costs, risk management and facilitates the application of focused improvements. A review may occur when an incident meets one or more of the following criteria:

- a. A Type 1 or Type 2 Incident Management Team is assigned to the incident.
- b. There are significant political, social, natural resource, or policy concerns.
- c. The affected Forest Supervisor requests a review team.

At a minimum, the following areas should be focused on in the review process:

- a. Long-term strategies and objectives identified within the Wildland Fire Decision Support System (WFDSS).
- b. Management decisions and their alignment with Agency policy and direction.
- c. Recommendations to management for incident-specific and programmatic process improvements.
- d. Clarity of communication of Chief's Intent and the effectiveness of implementation in the field.
- e. Effectiveness of pre-season planning activities

Results of the review process will be published annually describing lessons learned, systematic trends, significant factors that are influencing outcomes of response operations, and operational and systematic improvement recommendations. Findings will be sent to Regional Foresters, Deputy Chief, State and Private Forestry, Director of Fire and Aviation Management and appropriate wildland fire responders.

### *Forest Service Manual Direction 5139.2 National Fire Reviews*

The Washington Office, Director of Fire and Aviation Management, will select a subset of fires for review based on complexity and National significance ensuring the selected fires provide a cross sectional representation of cost, size, and oversight complexity. The reviews will be multi-tiered and foster a working environment that will improve the decision-making process and develop a capacity for organizational learning. If a site visit is required, the Washington Office, Deputy Chief, State and Private Forestry, will notify the Regional Forester. The National review process can include real time analysis of fire information, informal discussions with fire managers and Regional personnel, and/or site visits by a cadre of specialists to individual incidents and or geographic areas.

1. The Washington Office, Director of Fire and Aviation Management, will conduct a National review on any incidents that meet the following criteria:

Exceeds \$50 million in suppression costs and/or 100,000 thousand acres of Forest Service-managed land.

2. At the discretion of the Washington Office, Director of Fire and Aviation Management, a national review can be conducted on incidents that meets one or more of the following criteria:
  - a. A Type 1 or Type 2 incident command team is assigned to the incident.
  - b. There are significant political, social, natural resource, or policy concerns.
  - c. The affected Regional Forester requests a review team.

3. The purpose of the review process is to:

- a. Improve overall program performance and operational effectiveness through organizational learning while maintaining Agency oversight and accountability responsibilities.
- b. Establish if Chief's Intent was clearly communicated and effectively implemented in the field.

4. Reviews will be conducted by a team of subject matter experts selected by the Washington Office, Fire and Aviation Management staff. The team could include subject matter experts in wildfire management/operations, local/Regional issues, natural resource issues, budget, and risk management.

5. Results of the review process will be published annually describing lessons learned, systematic trends, significant factors that are influencing outcomes of response operations, and operational and systematic improvement recommendations. Findings will be sent to Regional Foresters, Deputy Chief, State and Private Forestry, Director of Fire and Aviation Management and appropriate wildland fire responders.

*Redbook Chapter 18*

Reviews are methodical examinations of system elements such as program management, safety, leadership, operations, preparedness, training, staffing, business practices, budget, cost containment, planning, and interagency or intra- agency cooperation and coordination. Reviews do not have to be associated with a specific incident. The purpose of a review is to ensure the effectiveness of the system element being reviewed, and to identify deficiencies and recommend specific corrective actions.

The table below summarizes Review Types and Requirements and is further discussed in Chapter 18 of the Red Book.

<b>Review Types and Requirements Type</b>	<b>When Conducted</b>	<b>Delegating or Authorizing Official</b>
Preparedness review	Annually, or management discretion	Local/state/region/ national
After action review	Management discretion	N/A
Fire and Aviation Safety Team review	As fire activity dictates	Geographic Area Coordinating Group
Safety Assistance Team visit	As fire activity dictates	Local/state/region/ national
Aviation Safety and Technical Assistance Team review	As aviation activity dictates	State/regional aviation manager or MACG
Wildland Fire Management Annual Report and Large Fire Review (FS)	Washington Office discretion	Washington Office
Significant wildland fire review (DOI)	Refer to Office of Wildland Fire (OWF) Policy <a href="#">Memorandum 2016-013</a>	Agency director, agency administrator, or individual bureau direction
Individual fire review	Management discretion	Local/state/region/ national
Lessons learned review • <i>NPS/FS – FLA may be used</i>	Management discretion	Local/state/region/ national

Rapid lesson sharing	Management discretion	N/A
Declared wildfire review	See <i>NWCG Standards for Prescribed Fire Planning and Implementation</i> (PMS 484, <a href="https://www.nwcg.gov/publications/pms484">https://www.nwcg.gov/publications/pms484</a> )	See <i>NWCG Standards for Prescribed Fire Planning and Implementation</i> ( <a href="#">PMS 484</a> )
Air Quality Exceedance Notice of Violation (NOV)	See <i>NWCG Standards for Prescribed Fire Planning and Implementation</i> ( <a href="#">PMS 484</a> )	<i>NWCG Standards for Prescribed Fire Planning and Implementation</i> ( <a href="#">PMS 484</a> )

Chapter 18 of the Red Book provides guidance on considerations for determining when and what type of review is needed.

### Investigations

Investigations are detailed and methodical efforts to collect and interpret facts related to an incident or accident, identify causes (organizational factors, local workplace factors, unsafe acts), and develop control measures to prevent recurrence. Chapter 18 of the Red Book covers Reviews and Investigations, including – Agency Administrator responsibilities, investigation processes, wildland fire serious accident investigation processes (team configuration, notifications, reports etc.) and fire cause determination and trespass investigation.

### Wildland Fire Incident and Accident Types and Definitions

- Serious Wildland Fire Accident - An unplanned event or series of events that resulted in death, injury, occupational illness, or damage to or loss of equipment or property. For wildland fire operations, a serious accident involves any of the following:
  - One or more job-related fatalities or imminently fatal injuries or illnesses to employees, volunteers, contractors, or the public;
  - The in-patient hospitalization of three or more employees, volunteers, or members of the public due to departmental operations;
  - Amputation(s) or loss of an eye(s);
  - Property damage (including site mitigation or cleanup) or operating loss of \$500,000 or more, or (6) accident, illness;
  - Incident that a Bureau DASHO judges to warrant further investigation using the serious accident investigation procedures.
- Wildland Fire Accident - An unplanned event or series of events that resulted in injury, occupational illness, or damage to or loss of equipment or property to a lesser degree than defined in “Serious Wildland Fire Accident”.
- Near-miss - An unplanned event or series of events that could have resulted in death; injury; occupational illness; or damage to or loss of equipment or property but did not.
- Entrapment - A situation where personnel are unexpectedly caught in a fire behavior related, life- threatening position where planned escape routes or safety zones are absent, inadequate, or compromised. Entrapment may or may not include deployment of a fire shelter for its intended purpose. Entrapment may result in a serious wildland fire accident, a wildland fire accident, or a near-miss.
- Burnover- An event in which a fire moves through a location or overtakes personnel or equipment where there is no opportunity to utilize escape routes and safety zones, often resulting in personal injury or equipment damage.
- Fire Shelter Deployment - The removing of a fire shelter from its case and unfolding it to use as protection against heat, smoke and burning embers.
- Fire Trespass - The occurrence of unauthorized fire on agency-protected lands where the source of ignition is tied to some type of human activity.

Chapter 18 of the Red Book provides guidance on considerations for determining when and what type of investigation is needed.

The following table summarizes Investigation Types and Requirements and is further discussed in Chapter 18 of the Red Book.

<b>Investigation and Review Types and Requirements Wildland Fire Event</b>	<b>Investigation or Review Type</b>	<b>Management Level Requiring Notification<sup>1</sup></b>	<b>Management level that determines review type and authorizes review<sup>2</sup></b>
Serious wildland fire accident	SAI <i>FS –FLA process or the CRP for FS employee fatality events.</i>	National	National
Wildland fire accident	SAI, AI, LLR, RLS, depending on severity. This is in addition to agency-specific accident report (e.g., SMIS/eSafety) <i>NPS/FS – FLA may be used</i>	<b>BLM/NPS–National FS/FWS – Management discretion</b>	Region/state/local
Entrapment/ burnover	SAI, AI, LLR, RLS depending on severity	National	National/regional/ state
Fire shelter deployment	SAI, AI, LLR, RLS depending on severity	National	National/regional/ state
Near-miss	LLR, AAR, RLS	Management discretion	Region/state/local
Fire trespass	Fire cause determination and trespass investigation	Local	Local

<sup>1</sup>In the event that a wildland fire entrapment or fatality occurs, immediate notification to NICC is required. A Wildland Fire Fatality and Entrapment Initial Report (PMS 405-1, <https://www.nwcg.gov/publications/405-1>) should be submitted to NICC within 24 hours. Submit this report even if some data is missing.

<sup>2</sup>Higher level management may exercise their authority to determine the type of review or investigation.

- FS – FS line officers are the deciding officials regarding what type of AI or analysis method is to be used for accidents or near misses occurring under FS jurisdiction.

Refer to the following websites and Policy Documents for more specific direction related to incident and accident investigations.

- NIFC, Reports and Investigations, Accident Investigation Resources. <https://www.nifc.gov/programs/safety>
- FSH-6709.11 – Safety, FSM-5100 and FSH-6709.11, FSM 5720 (Aviation), FSM 5130 (Ground Operations), FSM 6730 (Specific policy), FSH 6709.12 Chapter 30 (General guidance).
- Appendix J and L of the Red Book provide sample delegation letters for a Lesson Learned Review and a Fire and Aviation Safety Team (FAST).

### *Burn Injuries*

Chapter 7 of the Red Book provides information on the Required Treatment for Burn Injuries. For additional NWCG incident emergency medical information see: <https://www.nwcg.gov/committee/emergency-medical-committee>

## Part 3: Post Fire Activities

### I. AFTER ACTION REVIEWS

An After Action Review (AAR) is a learning tool intended for the evaluation of an incident or project in order to improve performance by sustaining strength and correcting weaknesses. AARs should be performed as soon as possible after an event. All participants should be encouraged to provide input. The focus areas 1) What was planned, 2) What actually happened, 3) Why it happened, and 4) What can be done the same or different next time.

The Wildland Fire Leadership Development Program has some great resources for information regarding After Action Reviews <https://www.nwcg.gov/wfldp/toolbox/aars> The Leadership Committee in conjunction with the Lessons Learned Center can provide an AAR training package. Supplemental documents and other resources are also available from the website.

### II. BURNED AREA EMERGENCY RESPONSE (BAER) TEAMS

Chapter 11 of the Red Book provides guidance on BAER Teams. BAER teams are a standing or ad hoc group of technical specialists (e.g., hydrologists, biologists, soil scientists, etc.) that develop and may implement portions of the Burned Area Emergency Response Plans. They will meet the requirements for unescorted personnel found in Red Book Chapter 7 under “Visitors to the Fireline” when working within the perimeter of an uncontrolled wildfire. The team’s skills and size should be commensurate with the size and complexity of the wildfire.

It is the Agency Administrator’s responsibility to designate an interdisciplinary BAER team. However, BAER teams must coordinate closely with IC and Incident Management Teams to work safely and efficiently. The Agency Administrator is responsible for submitting the Emergency Stabilization BAER plan to the Regional Office for review and approval within the timeframes established by each Agency. Coordination should occur with the Regional BAER Coordinator. If needed, extensions can be negotiated with those having the appropriate level of approval authority.

See FSM 2523 and FSH 2509.13 for agency specific policy and direction for BAER teams. Reference FSH 2509.13 Burned Area Emergency Rehabilitation Handbook.

Reference NIFC’s BAER Website: <https://www.nifc.gov/programs/post-fire-recovery>

## Part 4: Prescribed Fire Management

Links for established policies and procedures for prescribed fire planning and implementation:

- [FSM 5140 Hazardous Fuels and Prescribed Fire](#)
- [2023 National Prescribed Fire Program Review](#)
- [NWCG PMS-484 Standards for Prescribed Fire Planning and Implementation](#)
- [NWCG PMS 484-1 Prescribed Fire Plan Template](#)
- [NWCG PMS 424 Prescribed Fire Complexity Rating System Guide](#)
- [NWCG PMS 424-1 Prescribed Fire Complexity Worksheet](#)

### I. FUELS POLICY AND FOREST SERVICE DIRECTIVES

#### A. Hazardous Fuels Management and Prescribed Fire Planning – 5141 FSM

1. Overall direction for hazardous fuels management and prescribed fire is provided by the Land/Resource Management Plan. The LRMP serves as the document to initiate, analyze, and provide the basis for implementing hazardous fuels management and prescribed fire projects to meet resource management objectives.
2. The broad direction for implementing the hazardous fuels management and prescribed fire program is documented in the Fire Management Reference System (see the Fire Management Planning Guide, <http://fsweb.wo.fs.fed.us/fire/fmp>).
3. Resource objectives for specific hazardous fuels management and prescribed fire projects are derived from the NEPA analysis. The entire project area must be analyzed under NEPA. Environmental Impact Statements (EIS), Environmental Assessments (EA), and Categorical Exclusion (CE) will be used to identify objectives and analyze the effects of hazardous fuels management and prescribed fire projects.

#### B. Prescribed Fire – 5142 FSM

##### *5142.41- Deputy Chief, State and Private Forestry*

The Deputy Chief must ensure coordination with the State Foresters, relevant State, Federal and Tribal agencies, cooperators and partners to communicate the goals and objectives of the prescribed fire program.

##### *5142.42- Washington Office, Director, Fire and Aviation Management*

The Director, Fire and Aviation Management must:

1. Advise Regions of national conditions (for example, asset constraints, broad scale weather patterns, wildland fire activity, and so forth) that may compromise the ability to support prescribed fire activities.
2. Develop and support training to qualify personnel to implement prescribed fire programs.
3. Ensure collection and analysis of Regional, Unit, and project Prescribed Fire Reviews to improve policy and implementation practices.
4. Collect documentation from all Regions of all Regional Forester approved prescribed fires ignited for the fiscal year when National Fire Danger Rating System adjective rating for the county or contiguous county(s) where the project is located was forecasted as “extreme”.

##### *5142.43- Regional Foresters*

Regional Foresters must:

1. Certify all Forest Supervisors, District Rangers, other Line Officers and delegated “acting’s” to approve Prescribed Fire Burn Plans on Forests and Grasslands in accordance with the Interagency Standards for Fire and Fire Aviation Operations (NFES 2724, Chapter 5).
2. Establish guidance for approval of prescribed fire initiation based on regional conditions and resource capability; and approve or disapprove new prescribed fires or continue existing prescribed fire at National Preparedness Levels IV and V.

3. Establish a process for Forest Supervisors and District Rangers to request Regional approval for the ignition of prescribed fires when National Fire Danger Rating System forecasted adjective rating for the county or contiguous county(s) where the project is located is “extreme”. Approval may only be granted after coordination with applicable State government and local fire officials has occurred.
4. Conduct reviews (and report review results to the Chief within 90 days) of all prescribed fires resulting in serious or multiple personal injuries; that are converted to wildfire status and result in significant cost or social impacts, particularly private or other agency lands; or result in the issuance of an air quality regularity Notice-of-Violation from the State, air pollution control district, and/county.

*5142.44- Regional Directors, Fire and Aviation Management*

Regional Directors, Fire and Aviation Management must:

1. Provide oversight to ensure that Forests and Grasslands apply prescribed fire safely and cost effectively to achieve Land and Resource Management Plans objectives.
2. Provide recommendations to the Regional Forester to establish guidance for approval of prescribed fire initiation based on regional conditions and resource capability; and whether to approve or disapprove new prescribed fires or continue existing prescribed fire at National Preparedness Levels IV and V or when National Fire Danger Rating System adjective rating is “extreme” in the county or contiguous county for which the prescribed fire project is located.
3. Monitor conditions and advise Forests and Grasslands of conditions which may compromise successful implementation of prescribed fire activities.
4. Provide recommendations to the Regional Forester on the qualifications and certification of Forest Supervisors, District Rangers, other Line Officers or their delegated “acting’s” to make prescribed fire decisions on forests and grasslands. See sec. 5142.5.
5. Ensure forests complete a fuel treatment effectiveness assessment (see 5144) (and enter assessment results in the Fuel Treatment Effectiveness Monitoring database within 90 days of control of the fire) on all wildfires which start in or burn into a fuel treatment that has been completed within the last 10 years (within the last 3 years in the Southern Region or in portions of other regions designated by the Regional Forester).
6. Monitor prescribed fire activity and ensure accurate and timely reporting (tabular and spatial) of all Forest or Grassland prescribed fire activity.
7. Ensure that all prescribed fire ignitions authorized by the Regional Forester when National Fire Danger Rating System forecasted adjective rating is “extreme”, are documented and reported to the Washington Office, Director, Fire and Aviation Management.

*5142.45- Forest Supervisors*

Forest Supervisors must:

1. Approve Prescribed Fire Plans as qualified and certified to do so by the Regional Forester; ensure that Prescribed Fire Plans are designed to achieve Land and Resource Management Plan objectives, and meet service-wide and Regional requirements found in FSM 5140 and the Interagency Prescribed Fire Planning and Implementation Procedures Guide (PMS 484).
2. Authorize the ignition of new prescribed fire according to procedures found in the Interagency Prescribed Fire Planning and Implementation Procedures Guide (PMS 484) and the Interagency Standards for Fire and Fire Aviation Operations (NFES 2724, Chapter 5.)
3. Request Regional Forester approval for new prescribed fire as required by Regional direction, or National direction for Preparedness Levels IV and V or when National Fire Danger Rating System forecasted adjective rating is “extreme” for the county(s) or contiguous county(s) in which the prescribed fire is to be conducted; ensure that coordination with applicable State and local officials has occurred prior to requesting Regional Forester approval.

4. Ensure and document the relevant training and experience that demonstrate that personnel implementing Prescribed Fire Burn plans meet service-wide and regional requirements found in FSM 5140 and the Interagency Prescribed Fire Planning and Implementation Procedures Guide (PMS 484).
5. Ensure accurate and timely reporting of all Forest or Grassland prescribed fire activity and report all wildfires resulting from prescribed fire actions to the Regional Forester within 12 hours of the wildfire declaration. Report exceedances of the National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS) to the Regional Forester as soon as practicable.
6. Conduct reviews of all prescribed fires that are converted to wildfire status that do not meet criteria for a Regional Forester review (sec. 5142.42). Report the results of the review to the Regional Forester within 60 days after the wildfire declaration.
7. Ensure that prescribed fire personnel are trained in the After Action Review (AAR) process and that they routinely complete AARs after prescribed fire operations.
8. Conduct an administrative review or facilitated learning analysis on causes of any exceedances of the NAAQS associated with prescribed fire within three months of notification.

#### *5142.46- District Rangers*

District Rangers must:

1. Approve Prescribed Fire Plans as qualified and certified to do so by the Regional Forester; ensure that Prescribed Fire Plans are designed to achieve Land and Resource Management Plan objectives, and meet service-wide and Regional requirements found in FSM 5140 and the Interagency Prescribed Fire Planning and Implementation Procedures Guide (PMS 484).
2. Authorize ignition of new prescribed fire according to procedures found in the Interagency Prescribed Fire Planning and Implementation Procedures Guide (PMS 484; PMS 484-1) and the Interagency Standards for Fire and Fire Aviation Operations (NFES 2724, Chapter 5).
3. Request Regional Forester approval for new prescribed fire as required by Regional direction, or National direction for Preparedness Levels IV and V or when National Fire Danger Rating System forecasted adjective rating is “extreme” for the county(s) or contiguous county(s) in which the prescribed fire is to be conducted; ensure that coordination with applicable State and local fire officials has occurred prior to requesting Regional Forester approval
4. Ensure that personnel implementing Prescribed Fire Plans meet service-wide and Regional qualifications (sec. 5142.5) and the Interagency Prescribed Fire Planning and Implementation Procedures Guide).
5. Ensure adequate oversight and status reporting of all prescribed fires at the district level; reporting all wildfires resulting from prescribed fire actions to the Forest Supervisor within 4 hours.
6. Report potential and actual exceedances of the National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS) as soon as practicable.

#### C. Interagency Prescribed Fire Planning and Implementation Procedures Guide –May 2022

<https://www.nwccg.gov/publications/pms484>

The Agency Administrator is the line officer (or designee) of the agency or jurisdiction that has been delegated or assigned the authority and responsibility for the prescribed fire. These usually include the NPS park superintendent, BIA agency superintendent, tribal administrator, USFS forest supervisor or district ranger, BLM district of field office manager, or USFWS project leader or refuge manager.

##### *1. Agency Administrator responsibilities:*

- Review and approve the final complexity rating.
- Approve prescribed fire plans, and understand the risks and benefits associated with it.
- Agency Administrator’s approval signature (Element 1, Signature Page, Prescribed Fire Plan) indicates that the prescribed fire plan meets agency policy, reflects the conditions specified in the project’s NEPA decision and necessary agreements are in place.

- Ensure that only trained and qualified personnel participate in the implementation portion of the prescribed fire.
- Ensure that projects are monitored, evaluated, and documented in the project file.
- Discuss the conditions under which the prescribed fire is to be conducted with the burn boss and sign, date and establish an implementation time period on the Element 2: A. Agency Administrator Ignition Authorization, Prescribed Fire Plan.
- Ensure that coordination with neighbors, cooperators and air quality regulators has occurred.
- Ensure that all prescribed fires are conducted in accordance with the approved implementation plan and established standards and guidelines.
- Ensure that periodic reviews and inspections of the prescribed fire program are completed. Specify when the Agency Administrator is to be notified that contingency actions are being taken.
- Report all wildfires resulting from prescribed fires through the chain of command.
- Provide for the timely declaration of prescribed fire as wildfire.
- Ensure that prescribed fires declared as wildfires are reviewed according to established guidelines.
- Ensure that prescribed fires which receive a National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS) Notice of Violation (NOV) are reviewed according to established guidelines.

2. *NWCG Prescribed Fire Plan Template – Dec 2021, Replace with Forest Service Prescribed Fire Plan Template*  
<https://www.nwcg.gov/publications/pms484-1>

Note, as a result of the 2023 [National Prescribed Fire Program Review](#) elements of the Agency Administrator Ignition Authorization and Prescribed Fire Go/No-Go Checklist MUST be updated. See the National Prescribed Fire Program Review Appendix B for specifics.

Appendix C of the [National Prescribed Fire Program Review](#) contains the Forest Service Prescribed Fire Plan Template that meets or exceeds the NWCG 484-1.

D. [National Prescribed Fire Program Review – Sept. 2023](#)

[https://www.frames.gov/documents/usfs/USFS\\_20220908\\_National-Prescribed-Fire-Program-Review.pdf](https://www.frames.gov/documents/usfs/USFS_20220908_National-Prescribed-Fire-Program-Review.pdf)

In the spring of 2022, wildfires caused by escaped prescribed fires compelled Chief Randy Moore of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service to call for a 90-day pause in the agency’s prescribed fire program pending a program review. A review team led by Forest Service personnel—with partner representation from municipalities, counties, States, and nongovernmental organizations from across the country—identified themes and findings to form the recommendations in this report. The Agency Co-Team Leaders made final recommendations to the Chief for immediate implementation to lift the program pause. The recommendations are tactical approaches the Forest Service can use to account for multiple factors affecting practitioners’ ability to carry out prescribed burns in a safe and effective manner. These tactical recommendations are as follows:

1. Each Forest Service unit will review all prescribed fire plans and associated complexity analyses to ensure they reflect current conditions, prior to implementation. Prescribed fire plans and complexity analyses will be implemented only after receiving an updated approval by a technical reviewer and being certified by the appropriate agency administrator that they accurately reflect current conditions.
2. Ignition authorization briefings will be standardized to ensure consistent communication and collective mutual understanding on key points.
3. Instead of providing a window of authorized time for a planned prescribed fire, agency administrators will authorize ignitions only for the Operational Period (24 hours) for the day of the burn. For prescribed fires requiring multi-day ignitions, agency administrators will authorize ignitions on each day. Agency administrators will document all elements required for ignition authorization.

4. Prior to ignition onsite, the burn boss will document whether all elements within the agency administrator's authorization are still valid based on site conditions. The burn boss will also assess human factors, including the pressures, fatigue, and experience of the prescribed fire implementers.
5. Nationwide, approving agency administrators will be present on the unit for all high-complexity burns; unit line officers (or a line officer from another unit familiar with the burn unit) will be on unit for 30-40% of moderate complexity burns.
6. After the pause has been lifted, units will not resume their prescribed burning programs until forest supervisors go over the findings and recommendations in this review report with all employees involved in prescribed fire activities. Forest supervisors will certify that this has been done.
7. The Chief will designate a specific Forest Service point of contact at the national level to oversee and report on the implementation of these recommendations and on the progress made in carrying out other recommendations and considerations raised in this review report.

Additional information relating to the seven recommendations with specifics can be found in the body of report.

*Appendix B of the National Prescribed Fire Program Review*

Contains required updates to multiple elements of the Agency Administrator Ignition Authorization and Prescribed Fire Go/No-Go Checklist

*Appendix C of the National Prescribed Fire Program Review- Forest Service Prescribed Fire Plan Template*

This Forest Service Prescribed Fire Plan Template meets or exceeds the minimum requirements found in the NWCG Standards for Prescribed Fire Planning and Implementation (PMS 484), as well as the Prescribed Fire Plan Template (PMS 484-1). Its primary purpose is to add context and importance for those elements where the 90- Day Review Team's recommendations asked for additional emphasis to be placed. This template is provided as a supplement to the recommendations from the 90-Day review team as a tool to help forests complete the required review and update of their prescribed fire plans according to the teams' recommendations. The NWCG Prescribed Fire Plan Template (PMS 484-1) is the established minimum standard by Forest Service policy, however, this template meets or exceeds that standard with the added benefit of helping prescribed fire planners meet the required emphasis areas in the planning process as highlighted by the 90-Day review team's recommendations.

E. Chapter 17 of the Red Book, Fuels Management

The purpose of the fuels management programs within the Department of the Interior (DOI) and the Forest Service is to reduce hazardous fuels (HF) and risks to human communities and improve the health of the land by creating fire-resilient landscapes and restoring fire-adapted ecosystems.

The DOI and FS, along with other federal, state, Tribal, and local partners, will work to ensure effective FM efforts are collectively planned and implemented. These efforts will be consistent with the direction provided in:

- Guidance for Implementation of Federal Wildland Fire Management Policy (February 13, 2009) [https://www.frames.gov/documents/c5/files/Guidance\\_implementation\\_fed\\_fire\\_2009.pdf](https://www.frames.gov/documents/c5/files/Guidance_implementation_fed_fire_2009.pdf)
- Review and Update of the 1995 Federal Wildland Fire Management Policy (January 2001) <https://www.nifc.gov/sites/default/files/polices/FederalWildlandFireManagementPolicy.pdf>

The federal fire agencies use the Interagency Prescribed Fire Planning and Implementation Procedures Guide (<https://www.nwcg.gov/publications/484>) to guide prescribed fire activities. This guide provides standardized procedures specifically associated with the planning and implementation of prescribed fire.

## F. Red Book Chapter 5, USDA Forest Service Wildland Fire and Aviation Program Organization and Responsibilities (Fuels Management)

### 1. *Specific Line Officer Responsibilities for Fire and Aviation at the Field Level*

#### Responsibilities:

- Line Officers are responsible for all aspects of fire management.
- Integrate fire and fuels management across all functional areas.
- Implement fire management strategies and integrate natural resource concerns into collaborative community protection and ecosystem restoration strategies on the unit.
- Manage a budget that includes fire preparedness, prevention, suppression, and hazardous fuels in an annual program of work for the unit.
- Perform duties of Agency Administrator and maintain those qualifications.
- Provide a fully staffed, highly qualified, and diverse workforce in a “safety first” environment.
- Support and participate in wildfire prevention.
- Ensure operational fire management responsibilities remain separated from Agency Administrator responsibilities in order to avoid collateral duty conflicts.

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

#### *Fuels*

- Plan and implement a hazardous fuels management and prescribed fire program applying principles and policy elements described in FSM 5100 and 5140 ([https://www.fs.usda.gov/cgi-bin/Directives/get\\_dirs/fsm?5100](https://www.fs.usda.gov/cgi-bin/Directives/get_dirs/fsm?5100)) and guided by the goals described in the National Cohesive Wildland Fire Strategy.
- Complete a fuels treatment effectiveness assessment on all wildfires which start in or burn into a fuel treatment area.
- Enter results of the assessment into the Fuels Treatment Effectiveness Monitoring (FTEM) database within 90 days of control of a fire. The FTEM database is located within the Interagency Fuels Treatment Decision Support System (IFTDSS, [https://iftdss.firenet.gov/landing\\_page/](https://iftdss.firenet.gov/landing_page/)). Links to optional reporting templates and other information related to the FTEM reporting requirement can be found on the FAM website (<https://fswb.wo.fs.fed.us/fire/fam/fuels/hazardous.html>).
- Use the IFTDSS to assist with fuels planning, prescribed burn development, risk analysis, etc.

#### *Prescribed Fire*

- Provide program leadership by visiting prescribed fire treatment projects and providing leader’s intent to prescribed fire personnel.
- Ensure compliance with national and regional office policy and direction for prescribed fire activities and ensure that periodic reviews and inspections of the prescribed fire program are completed.
- Coordinate prescribed fire program activities with regional air quality specialists and Federal, State, Tribal, air pollution control district or county regulatory authorities to ensure compliance with their regulations supported by the Clean Air Act.
- When multiple wildland fire events are occurring within an airshed, or any airshed is impacted by ongoing wildland fire events, fire managers will consider the cumulative impact to air quality. Initiation of new prescribed fire must be in compliance with air quality regulations and standards.
- All prescribed fires should be conducted using basic smoke management practices. USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service and Forest Service Technical Note (2011, <https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/conservation-basics/natural-resource-concerns/air>).

- Ensure a prescribed fire plan is written and approved for each project prior to implementation in accordance with the NWCG Standards for Prescribed Fire Planning and Implementation (PMS 484, <https://www.nwcg.gov/publications/484>).
- Review and approve prescribed fire plans and ignitions.
  - Engage in the development of the complexity analysis; review and approve the final complexity rating.
  - Ensure that the prescribed fire plan has been reviewed and recommended by a qualified technical reviewer.
  - Ensure that prescribed fire plans are designed to achieve desired conditions as described in L/RMPs and project-specific NEPA decision documents.
  - Approve prescribed fire plan amendments and determine the need for additional technical review of proposed plan amendments prior to approval.
  - If more than one year has elapsed since a prescribed fire plan was last approved, the plan will be reviewed, updated as necessary, and re-approved before implementation.
  - Authorize ignition of prescribed fire as delegated and adhere to procedures as described in FSM 5140 for regional- and/or national-level approvals for initiation of new and continued prescribed fire activities at national preparedness levels 4 and 5 or when forecast National Fire Danger Rating System (NFDRS) adjective ratings are at “extreme” category.
- Use analytical tools, such as IFTDSS (Interagency Fuels Treatment Decision Support System), to assist with treatment options, fire behavior potential, prescribed burning prescriptions, and values at risk to help inform fuels planning efforts and implementation options.
- Report all instances of prescribed fires resulting in a wildfire declaration and/or air quality notice-of-violation as required in FSM 5140.

## 2. *Agency Administrator Qualifications for Prescribed Fire*

Details of the qualification process can be found in Chapter 5 of the Red Book. Core competencies that must be demonstrated by Agency Administrators exercising decision-making authority for wildfires or prescribed fires include:

### *Agency Administrator Core Competencies*

Core competencies that must be demonstrated by agency administrators exercising decision-making authority for wildfires or prescribed fires include:

- Risk-informed decision-making
- Wildfire response and incident management processes
- WFDSS/IFTDSS and other decision support tools
- Fuels management and prescribed fire processes
- Fire prevention, mitigation, and education processes
- Social, political, economic, and environmental impacts of wildland and prescribed fire management activities
- Collaboration with partners and stakeholders
- Fiscal management

These core competencies form the basis for the agency administrator position task book which is used to document that an individual has indeed demonstrated these competencies while working toward certification. For access to the position task book, Wildfire Pathways Diagram, and additional information on the Forest Service agency administrator fire qualification programs, visit the Agency Administrator Toolbox (<https://wfmrda.nwcg.gov>).

### *Agency Administrator Prescribed Fire Qualification*

The following principles will guide qualification of AAs for prescribed fire:

- Regional foresters are accountable for annual certification of AAs to approve and authorize prescribed fire.
- AA evaluation includes standards for training, background and experience, and demonstrated ability, which will result in a qualitative evaluation of readiness by the regional forester.
- When the complexity level of a prescribed fire exceeds an AA's qualification, an appropriately qualified AA will be assigned and must approve the complexity analysis and the burn plan along with the AA being mentored/coached.
- The authorization to ignite a prescribed fire must be approved by an appropriately qualified AA; however, the line officer with authority over their assigned unit will also retain authority to prohibit the ignition based on their judgement regardless of their qualification level.
- Care should be taken when assigning acting AAs to ensure operational fire management responsibilities remain separate from agency administrator responsibilities in order to avoid collateral-duty conflicts.
- The coach/shadow functions, to be administered by each region, is an integral part of this qualification program.

AAs will be evaluated in three basic areas:

- Training;
- Experience; and
- Demonstrated understanding of concepts and principles.

This qualification program is a multi-level process where AAs demonstrate competence in one of three levels of prescribed fire qualifications: RXA3, RXA2, RXA1.

#### Guidelines

In consideration of the appropriate qualification level (low, moderate, or high) to certify qualifications of an AA, the regional forester should consider the following guidelines:

#### Prescribed Fire Agency Administrator Type 3 (RXA3)

The RXA3 can review, approve, authorize, and provide oversight for the management of low-complexity prescribed fires. The RXA3 trainee must meet the following in order to be qualified as an RXA3:

- Required training and experience: Refer to the Federal Wildland Fire Qualifications Supplement ([https://iqcsweb.nwcg.gov/sites/default/files/inline-files/FedSupplement\\_2024.pdf](https://iqcsweb.nwcg.gov/sites/default/files/inline-files/FedSupplement_2024.pdf)).
- Other background, experience, and training that supports:
  - Applicable experience in prescribed fire, wildfire, all-hazards, or other incident or project oversight may also be considered in addition to other guidelines.
  - Management oversight of a low-complexity fire program.
- Demonstrated ability: Successful evaluation by a coach (including feedback from FMO/fire staff/director) that the candidate has demonstrated understanding and application of the responsibilities of an RXA3 on smaller, low-complexity prescribed fires with a basic understanding of the elements of the core competencies. Use the RXA3 position task book to document.

#### Prescribed Fire Agency Administrator Type 2 (RXA2)

The RXA2 can review, approve, authorize, and provide oversight for the management of moderate-complexity prescribed fires.

- Required training and experience: Refer to the Federal Wildland Fire Qualifications Supplement ([https://iqcsweb.nwcg.gov/sites/default/files/inline-files/FedSupplement\\_2024.pdf](https://iqcsweb.nwcg.gov/sites/default/files/inline-files/FedSupplement_2024.pdf)).
- Other background, experience, and training that supports:
  - Applicable experience in wildfire, all-hazards, or other incident oversight may also be considered in lieu of other guidelines.

- Management oversight of a moderately-complex prescribed fire program, providing for a workforce with appropriate training and equipment, NEPA compliance and project planning, social/political considerations, smoke management, public information, etc.
- Demonstrated ability: Successful evaluation by a supervisor or coach (including feedback from FMO/fire staff/director) that the candidate has demonstrated understanding and application of the responsibilities of an

RXA2 on moderate-complexity prescribed fires with an understanding of the core competencies and other elements that may be relevant. Use the RXA2 position task book to document.

#### Prescribed Fire Agency Administrator Type 1 (RXA1)

The RXA1 can review, approve, authorize, and provide oversight for the management of high-complexity prescribed fires.

- Required training and experience: Refer to the Federal Wildland Fire Qualifications Supplement ([https://iqcsweb.nwcg.gov/sites/default/files/inline-files/FedSupplement\\_2024.pdf](https://iqcsweb.nwcg.gov/sites/default/files/inline-files/FedSupplement_2024.pdf)).
- Other background, experience, and training that supports:
  - Applicable experience in prescribed fire, wildfire, all-hazards, or other incident oversight may also be considered in lieu of other guidelines.
  - Management oversight of a moderate- to high-complexity prescribed fire program, providing for a workforce with appropriate training and equipment, NEPA compliance and project planning, social/political considerations, smoke management, public information, etc.
- Demonstrated ability: Successful evaluation by an RXA1 or coach (including feedback from FMO/fire staff/director) that the candidate has demonstrated understanding and application of the responsibilities of an RXA1 on large complex fires in the core competencies, and other elements that may be relevant. Use the agency administrator position task book to document.

#### Evaluation Process

- Every trainee will receive an evaluation from a qualified AA or coach using the AA position task book.
- Individuals involved in a shadow assignment should receive creditable experience through documentation.

Training opportunities to achieve and maintain core competencies:

- Upper levels of fire leadership and fire management courses;
- Function as the agency administrator during sand table exercises and training simulations;
- Participate in prescribed fire and fire management training, such as RX-410 and RX-510;
- Act as a member or leader for a team assigned to review a declared wildfire or violation of air quality standards;
- Attendance/participation in Prescribed Fire Burn Boss Refresher training, RT-300;
- Participate in prescribed fires and/or attend prescribed fire training; and
- Participate in other leadership and/or decision-making training.

#### Currency

The requirement to perform satisfactorily in a specified position within the last five years in order to maintain qualification for the position.

#### Certifying Officials

The certifying official for all Agency Administrator qualifications will be at the Regional Forester level and shall not be delegated to Forest Supervisors or Regional Fire Directors.

#### Incident Qualification Card

Incident qualification cards for any responder with Agency Administrator qualifications will be signed by the Regional Forester and shall not be delegated to Forest Supervisors or Regional Fire Directors regardless if they have other qualifications or not. An electronic incident qualification card utilizing the IQCS portable document format (PDF) is authorized.

#### G. Guidance for Implementation of Federal Wildland Fire Management Policy

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

The Fire Management Planning Guide (7/2017)

[http://fsweb.wo.fs.fed.us/fire/fmp/Fire\\_Mgt\\_Planning\\_Guide\\_2017FINAL.pdf](http://fsweb.wo.fs.fed.us/fire/fmp/Fire_Mgt_Planning_Guide_2017FINAL.pdf) introduces the Fire Management Reference System (FMRS) and Spatial Fire Planning (SFP) concepts as a replacement for Fire Management Plans (FMP) reference in the Guidance for Implementation of Federal Wildland Fire Management Policy, February 2009, and previous policy issuance. The SFP and the FMRS, when prepared according to this guide [The Fire Management Planning Guide 7/2017]), will meet the intent of the Federal Wildland Fire Policy requiring an FMP for each acre of burnable vegetation.

#### H. Prescribed Fire Plan and Elements

A description of the plan elements and a Prescribed Fire Plan Template are available in the Interagency Prescribed Fire Planning and Implementation Procedures Guide: <https://www.nwcg.gov/publications/484>

#### I. Fire Planning and Fuels Portal

The Fire Planning and Fuels Portal <https://www.wildfire.gov/fire-planning-fuels> provides links and information about IFTDSS and NFPORS. IFTDSS is the Interagency Fuels Treatment Decision Support System, a web-based application designed for planning fuels treatments and much more. The National Fire Plan Operations and Reporting System is an inter-departmental, interagency data management system.

#### J. Smoke Planning and Management

Managers must comply with local and state air quality standards and regulations. Refer to local, state, and regional guidelines to meet planning and notification requirements.

##### 1. Resources:

- NWCG Smoke Management Guide for Prescribed Fire, PMS 420-3: <https://www.nwcg.gov/publications/420-3> (November 2020). This guide contains information on prescribed fire smoke management techniques, air quality regulations, smoke monitoring, modeling, communication, public perception of prescribed fire and smoke, climate change, practical meteorological approaches, and smoke tools.
- The national smoke management website (<https://www.nifc.gov/programs/smoke-management>) provides information from the Interagency Smoke Committee (SmoC). SmoC is chartered by the National Wildfire Coordinating Group (NWCG) to provide leadership, coordination and integration of air resources and fire management objectives. The site provides information on tools, regulations and policy, emissions, training, and publications. The website provides fire managers with information necessary for understanding the legal and operational aspects of smoke management.
- The emissions and smoke portal <https://www.frames.gov/smoke/home> brings together information, documents, websites and training materials on smoke management and air quality. The information provided here reflects the efforts of the NWCG Smoke Committee to provide interagency leadership, coordination, and integration of air resources and fire management objectives to support overall land

management goals. It also reflects efforts of the University of Idaho to provide the best available science and information for land management professionals to apply in their work.

- Regulations and policies apply to smoke emissions from wildland fire. All land managers must manage smoke in accordance with the Clean Air Act and the regulations and policies of the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). Land managers must additionally comply with state-level regulations and policies for smoke emissions occurring on lands within state borders. Federal land managers must abide by interagency smoke management policies, as well as separate regulations and policies established by their respective agencies. The Forest Service Air Pollution website provides Forest Service Air Management responsibilities: <https://www.fs.fed.usda.gov/air/index.htm>

2. *FSM 5142.8 Smoke Management*

- Coordinate prescribed fire program activities with Regional air quality specialists and Federal, State, Tribal, air pollution control district or county regulatory authorities to ensure compliance with their regulations which are supported by the Clean Air Act.
- When multiple wildland fire events are occurring within an airshed, or any airshed is impacted by ongoing wildland fire events, fire managers will consider the cumulative impact to air quality which their management actions might cause and implement prescribed fire only if compliance with air quality regulations can be maintained.
- All prescribed fires should be conducted using Basic Smoke Management Practices (see Basic Smoke Management Practices. USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service and Forest Service Technical Note. Basic Smoke Management Practices | [TN AQ07 CPS338-BasicSmokeManagement 11-16.pdf \(usda.gov\)](#))

3. *FSM 5144 – Assessing and Reporting Hazardous Fuels Treatment Effectiveness*

All wildfires which start in or burn into a fuel treatment that has been completed within the last ten years (within the last three years in the Southern Region) must have a fuel treatment effectiveness assessment conducted and results entered into the Fuel Treatment Effectiveness Monitoring (FTEM) database. All fuel treatment effectiveness assessments must be entered into the FTEM database within 90 days of control of the fire. Individual forests have the option of documenting interactions between wildfire and fuel treatments that are older than the ten years (three in Southern Region), where applicable.

Qualifying fuel treatments include all activities reported as fuels accomplishments in the Forest Activity Tracking System (FACTS). This includes management implemented activities (prescribed fire, mechanical thinning, and so forth) as well as unplanned events (such as wildfires, or portions of wildfires that were reported as accomplishment). Optional documentation such as written reports, photos, video, and such, may also be entered for archive in the database.

The Fuel Treatment Effectiveness Monitoring (FTEM) database is now part of the Interagency Fuel Treatment Decision Support System (IFTDSS) and can be found at the following website:

[https://iftdss.firenet.gov/landing\\_page](https://iftdss.firenet.gov/landing_page).

Links to optional reporting templates and other information related to the FTEM reporting requirement can be found at: <http://fsweb.wo.fs.fed.us/fire/fam/fuels/hazardous.html>

K. Planning Tools

See Appendix 1.

II. REVIEWS

A. After Action Reviews – Interagency Prescribed Fire Planning and Procedures Guide

Each operational shift on a prescribed fire should have an informal After Action Review (AAR). Certain events or a culmination of events that may affect future prescribed fire implementation and/or policy should be submitted to the Lessons Learned Center through the Rapid Lesson Sharing process at Submit a Lesson | Wildland Fire Lessons Learned Center (wildfire.gov) <https://lessons.fs2c.usda.gov/submit-a-lesson>

The standard questions to answer in conducting an AAR are:

1. What did we set out to do (what was planned)?
2. What actually happened?
3. Why did it happen that way?
4. What should be sustained? What can be improved?

## B. Declared Wildfire Review

Every prescribed fire resulting in a wildfire declaration will receive an outcome review. Declared wildfire outcome review direction is found in agency documents: <https://www.nwcg.gov/publications/pms484> and Red Book Chapter 18 (Identifies documents pertinent to each agency).

Every prescribed fire resulting in a wildfire declaration will receive an outcome review. Declared wildfire outcome review direction is found in these agency documents:

- NWCG Standards for Prescribed Fire Planning and Implementation (PMS 484, <https://www.nwcg.gov/publications/484> )
- BLM – Refer to Fuels Management Manual 9214 and Handbook 9214-1, chapter 5.
- NPS – Refer to RM-18, chapter 7 and 17.
- FWS – Refer to Fire Management Handbook, chapter 17.
- FS – Refer to FSM 5140.
- BIA – Refer to Bureau of Indian Affairs Fuels Management Program Supplement to the NWCG Standards for Prescribed Fire Planning and Implementation (May 2022), chapter 3.

Declared wildfire reviews will be submitted to the LLC by the agency fuels program lead. Submissions should be sent to [kelly\\_woods@nps.gov](mailto:kelly_woods@nps.gov).

The Agency Administrator will be notified of a declared wildfire. The Agency Administrator is required to make the proper notifications in accordance with agency policy.

The declared wildfire review process will be initiated by the appropriate Agency Administrator. Although other types of reviews may be required by agency policy, the minimum requirement of the declared wildfire review is to help prevent future wildfire declarations. This will be accomplished by analyzing key prescribed fire plan and implementation interactions and gathering knowledge and insight from the local participants for improvement of their own prescribed fire planning and implementation. The analysis and lessons learned are then disseminated for the benefit of the broader prescribed fire community.

Following the wildfire declaration, the burn boss should document the incident, including all actions prior to and after the declaration. To assist and prepare for the review team, a new file should be set up that includes the project file and other pertinent information.

The new file should include:

- Chronology of events
- Prescribed fire report
- Unit logs and individual statements
- Weather observations taken on site
- Remote Automated Weather Station (RAWS)

- National Fire Danger Rating System (NFDRS) data for the day of the wildfire declaration from the nearest station(s)
- Photos
- Other pertinent information not contained in the project file

In addition to the common outcome review elements, the declared wildfire review must include the following analysis and may be addressed in a separate review:

- An analysis of the seasonal severity, weather events, and on-site conditions leading up to the wildfire declaration.
- An analysis of the prescribed fire plan for consistency with agency policy and guidance related to prescribed fire planning and implementation.
- An analysis of prescribed fire implementation for consistency with the prescription, actions, and procedures in the prescribed fire plan.
- The approving Agency Administrator's qualifications, experience, and involvement.
- The qualifications and experience of key personnel involved.

When addressing these topics, it is recommended to clearly separate the analysis from the lessons learned process. The analysis of these topics can usually be accomplished through review of documentation.

An independent, peer-based review team is recommended for conducting a declared wildfire review. The number of individuals assigned to the team and their functional expertise should be commensurate with the scope and focus of the review and the intended products. Interagency participation is highly recommended for declared wildfire reviews.

### C. Air Quality Notice of Violation (NOV) Review

An Air Quality Exceedance Notice of Violation (NOV) review supports understanding of the planning, decisions, and actions taken that contributed to the NOV. Refer to PMS 484, <https://www.nwcg.gov/publications/484>.

An Air Quality NOV Review would follow direction in "Declared Wildfire Reviews" that support understanding of the planning, decisions, and actions taken that contributed to the NOV. In addition, the elements below, which are unique to smoke incidents affecting air quality, must be addressed. The review may use the Guidance for After Action Review of Smoke Impacts, <https://www.nifc.gov/programs/smoke-management>

At a minimum the NOV review will include:

- A discussion of the smoke-sensitive receptors, estimated smoke effects including modeling, identified in the prescribed fire plan, and any actual smoke monitoring observations and effects related to the prescribed fire project.
- A discussion of predicted versus actual ambient air quality using best on-site fuels information available (for example, fuel conditions, fire behavior, fuel consumption), emissions production (quantity and duration) and weather.
- If needed, a comparison between pre-prescribed fire smoke dispersion modeling and post-prescribed fire modeling using best on-site information available.
- Discussion of the smoke management practices used for the prescribed fire and the role of cumulative smoke impacts from other prescribed fire activities regarding how they affected the issuance of the NOV.
- A separate review of all or some of the following items may be required by agency or local policy:
- An assessment of the smoke management training of personnel,
- Policies for smoke management,
- Performance of the smoke management elements of the prescribed fire plan for the prescribed fire under review.

## Appendix 1: Planning Tools

Many individual tools and programs exist to aid specialists and managers in fuels treatment planning. Below are some (not all) of the programs and tools that have been used by agency personnel to plan and model effects of fuels treatments on fuel loading, hazards, soil effect, smoke, etc.

### 1. IFTDSS

[https://iftdss.firenet.gov/landing\\_page/](https://iftdss.firenet.gov/landing_page/)

The IFTDSS online application is designed to make the fuels planning, analysis and management process more efficient by:

- Providing a web-based platform for users to develop, store, edit and access fuels planning projects, landscapes, data and analyses, from any computer, anywhere.
- Integrating many common fire behavior and fire effects models in a single user interface.
- Linking to common reporting databases to access, view, and submit fuels planning information more easily.
- Enabling users to develop fuels planning scenarios and comparisons and export results, reports, tables, and files for use in fuels planning documentation or use for further analysis and collaboration.

IFTDSS hosts a complete set of reference data available for the entire US including LANDFIRE fuels information, SILVIS Wildland Urban Interface, Agency Ownership, as well as modern map interface allowing users to create or upload their own data.

### 2. Fuel and Fire Tools (FFT)

Fuel and Fire Tools (FFT) is a software application (<https://www.frames.gov/catalog/17633>) that integrates several fire management tools, including the Fuel Characteristics Classification System (FCCS - version 3.0), Consume (version 4.2), Fire Emission Production Simulator (FEPS - version 2.0; under active development at this time), Pile Calculator, and Digital Photo Series into a single user interface.

### 3. Smoke Modeling Tools

Many smoke and air quality monitoring modeling tools exist to assist fire managers in planning and implementation of prescribed fire.

- The NWCG Smoke Management Guide for Prescribed Fire (11/2020) <https://www.nwcg.gov/publications/pms/420-3> provides information on smoke management tools.
- The Wildland Fire Air Quality Response Program (WFAQRP) - AirFire site has multiple tools for visualizing and monitoring air quality and smoke impacts. AirFire Tools <https://tools.airfire.org> The tools include:
  - Aggregated ground monitoring information for PM 2.5
  - BlueSky Daily Run Viewer (Websky)- provides visualization of results from multiple smoke model prediction runs.
  - Ensemble Trajectories- Customized Trajectory Modeling
  - BlueSky Playground- Customized Emissions, and Smoke Modeling
  - Arctic Transport Potential Forecast
  - Simple Smoke Model <http://fireweather.fdacs.gov/Simple-Smoke>
- The VSmoke-GIS model uses many of same calculation as VSmoke (Lavdas 1996), but the output is displayed in the ArcMap or the ArcView software, developed by Environmental Systems Research Institute® (ESRI). The VSmoke-GIS model predicts the maximum downwind distance a PM2.5 (fine particle) concentration is predicted to occur. The user of VSmoke-GIS can enter up to 10 fine particle concentrations to evaluate, or choose the 5 fine particle concentration that relate to the EPA's air quality index (AQI). <https://webcam.srs.fs.usda.gov/tools/vsmoke/index.shtml>

## Appendix 2: WFDSS

The following provides guidance on utilizing WFDSS from the Agency Administrator perspective.

### A. COMMON WFDSS LINE OFFICER QUESTIONS

#### 1. *Who Should be Involved in Developing the Decision?*

As the Planning Area is developed for a fire and affected land and resources are determined, it is imperative that other experts and specialists get involved in developing a decision. If the fire will affect other agency lands, they too would likely become a signatory/approver for a decision.

- Cooperators (Agency and Non-Agency)
- Resource Management Specialists
- Cultural Resource Specialists
- Is the fire being managed under unified command? If so has the unified command been involved with developing and publishing a decision?

#### 2. *What User Roles Do I Need within WFDSS?*

At a minimum the Approver will need to have the WFDSS “Viewer” role. This role is automatically granted when a user creates an account. The Viewer role allows individuals to view incident information for all incidents and view completed analyses and published decisions and reports.

As a Viewer you can be granted either “Approver” or “Reviewer” privileges for specific incidents by the Incident Owner(s). For each specific incident, the Incident Owner must identify the appropriate Approver and/or Reviewer. Incident Approvers are by default granted editing privileges for an incident but edit privileges can be removed by Incident Owners if desired.

### **Decision Reviewer**

Reviewers are responsible for examining the documentation related to an incident decision and indicating whether their review is complete or if the decision needs to be returned for edits. Use of Reviewers is optional; Approvers can approve a decision even if Reviewers have not had a chance to review.

- If a decision is rejected, the Reviewer needs to include comments in the box provided as to why it was rejected. A rejected decision goes back into editable status and can be edited.
- Marking a decision as Reviewed, does not mean that it is approved. A decision can only be approved by the Approver(s).
- Reviewers must meet the following criteria:
- Have the authority and knowledge to adequately review an incident decision within the Geographical Area where the incident is located.
- Understand the decision process and budgetary requirements for an incident.
- Have an active WFDSS account with any user role.

While a Reviewer can also be an Editor, he/she cannot be an Approver for that incident. Incident Owners can grant the Reviewer privilege to specialists who might have specific input on a decision, but do not have the fiscal authority to approve a decision.

### **Decision Approver**

Approvers are responsible for examining the documentation related to an incident decision, and indicating whether they approve or reject a decision.

- Approving a decision adds it to the system of record for the incident. Once a decision is approved, it can't be altered.

- If there is more than one designated Approver for an incident, all must approve a decision before it becomes published and part of the system of record.
- Approvers should ensure all review is complete prior to approving a decision. Decision Approvers must have the financial authority to sign-off on an incident decision.

### 3. *How Do I Request a WFDSS Account or Add User Roles?*

To establish the “Viewer” user role (basic role needed to be granted an incident privilege) to track, review, or approve incidents the applicant must request access through the Wildland Fire Application Portal (FAMAUTH <https://famauth.wildfire.gov/index.html> ). Users can either access WFDSS using a Public Partners account or a Government account with a PIV card. If there are issues, the IIA Help Desk (<https://iiahelpdesk.nwcg.gov/> or 1-866-224-7677) can assist the end user. Once an account is set up, the user has access to both the Production and the Training applications using the Wildland Fire Application Portal.

Once an account has been established, user can request user roles from within WFDSS by selecting the My Home tab and User Roles from the menu on the left.

### 4. *How are Incident Specific Objectives and Requirements Developed?*

Incident Objectives and Requirements are specific to the incident. Incident Objectives and Requirements are entered into WFDSS after the incident is created and a Planning Area is established. Incident Objectives and Requirements should define what the leader’s intent is for the incident as well as indicate any restrictions on managing the fire. All objectives and requirements must be in line with unit planning documents, such as Fire Management Plans and Land and Resource Management Plans.

- Be sure Incident Objectives apply specifically to the current fire. Often Incident Objectives are overwhelmingly generic and could be applied to any fire in the country. Do not restate broad policy, core values and doctrine, or make general resource protection or restoration statements.
- Be cognizant of how many objectives are developed. Too many (often greater than five) may be difficult for an IMT to successfully achieve.
- Ensure Incident Objectives are written in a way that they are applicable to specific fire incidents.
- When logical prioritize Incident Objectives. Prioritizing helps IMTs have a clear understanding of the Line Officer’s intent for the incident and where his/her priorities lie when resources are scarce.
- Ensure Incident Objectives (along with the rest of the published WFDSS decision) are available to the IMT at the earliest possible time so that they can be incorporated into the Team’s management from the beginning.

### 5. *How Does the Relative Risk Assessment Inform a Decision?*

The Relative Risk Assessment is required before publishing a decision. Its purpose is to assist with planning, assessing, and managing an incident. The Relative Risk Assessment is comprised of three separate assessments: Hazard, Values, and Probability. By assessing the risk in these three areas and assigning a Potential Fire Duration a cumulative Relative Risk value will be assigned. WFDSS will provide a list of recommendations, and if they exist, inconsistencies in the assessment. Managers should review the recommendations and clarify any inconsistencies. Managers should utilize the ‘Notes’ sections next to each chart to document their thought process. The information included in the Notes sections are by default included in decision content in the Validation section. The Relative Risk Assessment can be updated at anytime throughout the life of the fire.

For instruction on completing the Relative Risk Assessment view the Wildland Fire Relative Risk Assessment Topic from the WFDSS help [https://wfdss.usgs.gov/wfdss\\_help/4035.htm](https://wfdss.usgs.gov/wfdss_help/4035.htm), which contains sections on Three Risk Components, Value Assessment, Hazard Assessment and Probability Assessment.

The Relative Risk Assessment provides text space and Relative Risk charts to aid in determining and documenting firefighter risk and exposure. Intelligence gathered from the Situation map may also provide insight into firefighter risk, such as terrain, estimated ground evacuation time, topography, barriers to spread such as bodies of water or past fire scars, weather forecasts, etc.

#### 6. *How is the Course of Action Developed?*

The Course of Action is developed by strategically thinking about actions that will support achievement of the Incident Objectives and Requirements. The COA should provide guidance for overall management of an incident and direction to incident personnel to assist with tactical decision-making.

Be sure to include the overall fire strategy to give clear guidance to the IMT. A Strategy slider box can be used to indicate the overall fire strategy on a continuum from monitor to full suppression. A comment box is available to provide further detail regarding the strategy for the incident.

The Course of Action should inform the IC of the true leader's intent on how aggressively the Agency Administrator wants the fire managed. Make sure that the COA and the Incident Objectives are in alignment.

For more information on completing, editing, deleting, and validating a Course of Action view the Course of Action topics in the WFDSS Help, [https://wfdss.usgs.gov/wfdss\\_help/4365.htm](https://wfdss.usgs.gov/wfdss_help/4365.htm).

#### 7. *What Cost Estimate Tools are Available?*

Multiple tools are available in WFDSS to estimate the final cost of a proposed Course of Action.

- **SCI:** The Stratified Cost Index (SCI) tool (available under the Cost tab) can be used to estimate federal wildland fire costs in the continental U.S. Cost estimates are based on 5-10 years of historical fire costs. It isn't valid for fires less than 300 acres in size. See the Stratified Cost Index Topic from the WFDSS Help [https://wfdss.usgs.gov/wfdss\\_help/WFDSS\\_Help\\_SCI.html](https://wfdss.usgs.gov/wfdss_help/WFDSS_Help_SCI.html).
- **Historic Costs:** If historical fire costs for a unit are known, those cost estimates can be used.
- **e-ISuite Projection:** The e-ISuite application consists of Resource, Cost, Time, Incident Action Plan, and Supply Units, supporting an incident. This information can be used as "real" time information for the management of an incident, or it can be used to help build a historical financial database for a specific unit.
- **Cost Spreadsheet:** A cost spread sheet can be downloaded from the Cost tab. The spreadsheet contains estimated costs for teams, crews, equipment, aircraft etc. and can be used to estimate potential final costs.

#### 8. *How Much Information Should be Included in a Decision?*

Decision content should contain any and all relevant information used to determine and support the Course of Action and Action Items. This can include weather and fire behavior forecasts, map screen captures of values at risk or the Planning Area, economic assessments, images of fuel conditions or M.A.P.'s, and much more. Decision content does not need to include tactical direction which would be better suited for an Incident Action Plan (IAP). If the fire is being managed for the long term consider including long term predictive information.

#### 9. *How are Potential Smoke Impacts Included in a Decision?*

A seven-day Smoke Dispersion Forecast is available by selecting Smoke Dispersion from the sub-tab Info on the Situation tab. It provides projections of mixing height, transport winds, ventilation rates, Haines indices, and PM2.5 values.

- Smoke and air quality tools are available from the "Fire Related Links" (left hand menu).

- Other analysis or air quality information that was used to inform a decision can be entered into decision content from the Decisions tab. View the topic on WFDSS Decision from the WFDSS Help for information regarding editing and adding content to a decision, [https://wfdss.usgs.gov/wfdss\\_help/5054.htm](https://wfdss.usgs.gov/wfdss_help/5054.htm).
- Air quality impacts from a wildfire need to be considered in three specific risk areas for the anticipated duration of the incident: public health impacts, public as well as fire personnel exposure, and transportation safety. A seven-day Smoke dispersion forecast and other links in WFDSS can aid in assessing public health impacts. Risks to transportation corridors used by the public and/or fire personnel need to be assessed in combination with the IMT coordinating with local personnel. Fire personnel exposure may change over the duration of the incident but should include smoke impacts to spike camps, aviation assets, ICP and base camps, arduous worker exposure and non-arduous worker exposure. (NWCG June 12, 2012 Monitoring and Mitigating Exposure to Carbon Monoxide and Particulates at Incident Base Camps)

Smoke impacts and resources can be used to help justify Course of Actions, or to help weigh out the various alternatives and potential impacts to adjacent populations.

#### *10. How can Alternatives be Compared within a Decision?*

WFDSS decision content sections provide an 'open slate' for decision makers to document comparisons of any nature. Text can be copied and pasted into decision content sections or users can type comparative information directly into decision content. Tables can be screen captured and uploaded into decisions as images or created using the custom Risk Table feature. Fire behavior requests can be initiated to evaluate different scenarios for a variety of possible actions.

## B. DOCUMENTING A DECISION

Incident Owners and Editors use the Decision Editors to create and edit decision content, which tells the story of the incident by incorporating Incident Information, Weather, Modeling, Risk, Benefits, Objectives, Courses of Action, Cost, and Rationale. Approvers are by default Editors of an incident and in this capacity, can assist with the documentation process. Once a decision is documented Incident Owners submit it for Review/Approval. The section below describes the components of a decision and discusses items to think about while creating/editing decision content.

### *1. Using the Decision Editor*

In order to view and/or edit content included in the WFDSS decision, a draft decision must be created via the Decision tab. From the Decision tab, editing a decision can be accomplished using either the Default or Advanced Decision Editors which are both accessible on the Decisions tab.

Default Decision Editor editing is accomplished in each individual section and uploaded images and content are quickly accessible for insertion. This editing option provides a simplified approach to creating a decision that is intuitive and meets the needs of most incidents, regardless of complexity.

Advanced Decision Editor editing is accomplished via the Text Editor; content is added from the Incident Content Tree (all incident content) to the Decision Content Tree (current pending decisions content).

This editor provides advanced editing features not available in the Default Decision Editor and may be useful for complex decision documents with extensive text, tables and images.

The interface for editing a decision is different for each editor, however the editable sections of a decision remain the same. Determine early on which editor will be used to edit an incident decision. You can change from the Default Decision Editor to the Advanced Decision editor but once you've edited content, you can't switch back.

Both decision editors allow multiple Owners or Editors to work on a decision simultaneously. This strategy is more efficient and helps a unit produce a decision document more quickly than if multiple users work together in one WFDSS account. Users can check out and edit a portion of the decision and check it back in when they are finished. Checked out portions of a decision can only be edited by the user that check it out, to eliminate the risk of multiple editors 'walking' on each other. A decision consists of nine parts and you can select/check out the full pending decision for editing or just a section. Typically, it is best to just edit one section of a document at a time. This enables other users to edit other sections of the decision at the same time. When a decision or its sections show as Available in the status column, the decision and its parts are available for editing and are not checked out by Incident Owners or Editor.

## 2. *Risk*

The Risk section is to document support and describe the risk assessment. The Relative Risk and Organization Assessment are required, with charts, inputs and accompanying notes auto-populating in the decision. Optional content can be included in a decision by selecting a check box. Additional information to consider including:

- Customized Risk Tables
- Point of Origin Values Inventory
- Current Fire Perimeter Values Inventory
- FSPRO Values at Risk
- Additional text and or/uploaded images

## 3. *Incident Information*

This section is auto-populated with a summary of the incident information as well as the incident map. Add content here to enhance the basic incident information including but not limited to:

- Cooperators
- Unified Command
- Individuals involved in developing the Decision Documentation
- Maps or pictures depicting important features of the fire area

## 4. *Weather*

The Weather section contains the current weather forecast for the planning area. Additional information to consider adding includes:

- Spot weather forecasts
- Incident Meteorologist forecasts
- Long-term fire weather assessment
- Drought Assessment
- Include images, text, data or analyses

## 5. *Modeling*

The Modeling section is intended for analysis products produced inside or outside WFDSS. In the Default Decision Editor one can choose from a drop-down menu the current and accepted as 'complete' WFDSS-generated analyses to include within the decision. Modeled outputs generated outside of WFDSS, such as for smoke, can be screen captured, uploaded and added as images.

Consider including additional information to help support the decision documentation, potential items to include:

- Long term assessment information from local experts or fire behavior personnel
- Fire Behavior Assessments (Short, Near and/or Long Term)
- Additional Risk Assessment information

- Other analysis products produced inside or outside of the application e.g., smoke modeling, or predictive services information
- Contingency planning or Contingency assessments

#### 6. *Benefits*

The Benefits section of a decision contains a Benefits slider bar to show the amount of benefit expected from a fire and an associated comment box to document and describe the natural resource, intrinsic and or other benefits of the fires.

These tools are available from the Benefits vertical tab if using the default decision editor or they can be accessed from the Assessment tab of the incident if you are using the advanced decision editor for decision editing.

The Benefits slider and comment box are optional.

#### 7. *Incident Objectives and Incident Requirements*

This section includes the Fire Management Units or Strategic Objectives shapes within the Planning Area and the associated Strategic Objectives & Management Requirements as well as Incident Objectives and Incident Requirements.

Strategic Objectives and Management Requirements come from the Fire Management Plans and the Land/Resource plans. They are then tiered down to specific Incident Objectives and Incident Requirements for the Planning Area. For example, a units Strategic Objective for a given area provides the desired condition, standard, guideline or objective relating to management of the land; the Incident Objectives and Requirements should directly relate to what that guidance means for the current fire at hand under the current and expected conditions.

When Incident Objectives are written in a specific manner with context, it increases the likelihood that they are understood and can be achieved. Additionally, they should include content that is specific to the location, conditions, and time of the fire. They include context on the intent and reasoning behind the objective statement. When the intent and reasoning (the “why”) behind an Incident Objective is included in concise form, it increases the ability of all persons involved in a fire to understand and make site- and time-specific decisions about actions to take.

Ensure Incident Objectives and Requirements are included and excluded appropriately between past and pending decisions; modifications can be made from the Objectives tab. Ensure that all Incident Objectives are documented and achievable. If necessary, add content to this section to document the issues/concerns/mediations.

For more information see the Topic on Incident Objectives and Requirements

[https://wfdss.usgs.gov/wfdss\\_help/4368.htm](https://wfdss.usgs.gov/wfdss_help/4368.htm)

#### 8. *Course of Actions*

The Course of Action (COA) is comprised of one or more Action Items that an Incident Owner or Editor develops to accomplish Incident Objectives and/or Requirement and a Strategy slider bar. Use this section to clearly define the strategy and actions to the IMT. An Action Item can be edited until it is included in a pending decision that has been submitted for review. As you are developing Action Items make sure they will accomplish the Incident Objectives or Requirements, and if they won't; the Action Item(s) should be modified or make a determination that they will achieve an Incident Objective or Requirement that hasn't yet been created. Creating a COA can help you identify gaps in your Incident Objectives and Requirements.

Create Action Items in a way that an individual Action Item can be easily excluded from a pending decision if it's no longer applicable. If the planning area is modified or new Incident Objectives and Requirements are added to a pending decision, the proposed COA should be modified, as needed, to ensure that it will accomplish Incident Objectives and Requirements and address recent changes. A new COA, and a new decision is warranted if the

current, published COA no longer accomplishes Incident Objectives and Requirements. Review maps, images or photos that were uploaded to help clarify the situation.

If you choose, use the Strategy slider bar to communicate the overall strategy for the fire (its use is optional). Add comments as necessary to clarify the Course of Action and/or identify priorities.

Consider the following:

- What type of actions will meet unit(s) Strategic Objectives and Management Requirements?
- Are local resources available, or are additional resources needed for incident management, and are they available?
- Does the incident have potential to spread to adjoining land ownerships?
- Are fiscal authorities a concern?
- Are there environmental/political concerns that will influence the management of the incident (smoke, area closures, agreements with other parties, time of year etc.).

For more information see the Topic on Course of Actions from the WFDSS Help,

[https://wfdss.usgs.gov/wfdss\\_help/WFDSS\\_Help\\_about\\_decisions\\_coa.html](https://wfdss.usgs.gov/wfdss_help/WFDSS_Help_about_decisions_coa.html)

Are more images needed for supporting documentation? View the WFDSS Help sections Uploading Images and Capturing Map Images from the Maps and Shapes Topic,

[https://wfdss.usgs.gov/wfdss\\_help/WFDSSHelp\\_map\\_shapes.html](https://wfdss.usgs.gov/wfdss_help/WFDSSHelp_map_shapes.html)

#### 9. *Cost*

Use this section to provide the estimated final cost of for the incident based on the Course of Action(s). Select the method used to estimate the cost from the options available: the cost estimator spreadsheet, Stratified Cost Index, Historic costs, ICRS, or other. In order to update the cost a new decision will need to be created and published.

For more information see the Topic on Estimating Final Cost for an Incident from the WFDSS Help,

[https://wfdss.usgs.gov/wfdss\\_help/WFDSSHelp\\_Est\\_Cost\\_Incident\\_1.html](https://wfdss.usgs.gov/wfdss_help/WFDSSHelp_Est_Cost_Incident_1.html)

#### 10. *Rationale*

This section documents why a decision was made to implement the Course of Action. Consider the following:

- What influenced managers to make this decision?
- What caused managers to choose the Course of Action?
- What are the causes and influences on the incident?
- What are the social and political concerns/pressures?
- What does the Relative Risk tell the user?
- Are there air quality and smoke concerns?
- What fire behavior models informed your decision?
- Was the qualitative and quantitative decision support documented elsewhere? For more information see the Topic on About Decisions: Rationale in the WFDSS Help, [https://wfdss.usgs.gov/wfdss\\_help/WFDSSHelp\\_About\\_Rationale.html](https://wfdss.usgs.gov/wfdss_help/WFDSSHelp_About_Rationale.html)

### C. APPROVING/REJECTING AND PUBLISHING A DECISION

#### 1. *How Does the Approver Know When to Approve a Decision?*

If you are designated as a decision Approver (or Reviewer), you will receive an email when a decision is ready for Review and Approval. This email is automatically generated in WFDSS when an Incident Owner clicks the Begin Review/Approval Process button (there may be slight delay before you receive it). To go directly to the decision that needs approval, click the link provided in the email. After prompting you to log in to WFDSS this link will take you directly to Decisions tab where you can Review and Approve decisions. If the email has been lost or is inaccessible

the approver can access the information by logging into WFDSS > Incident tab > select the Incident to work on > then click the Decisions tab.

If an incident Reviewer(s) has been designated in WFDSS, care must be given to ensure their review has been completed prior to approving a decision. To check if a decision has been reviewed, you can select a decision and then click the View Info option on the Decisions tab. If multiple reviewers or approvers are being used, this coordination is critical, as an Approver has the ability to approve a decision regardless of whether incident Reviewers have completed their review. If you want to ensure Reviewers have looked at a decision prior to your decision approval you need to coordinate with them.

## *2. Approving or Rejecting a Decision*

From the Decisions tab, select the Review/Approve Decision button. The following screen provides decision content in a content tree in the left pane. View each portion of a decision by opening the folders and pages in the content tree.

As an Approver, consider the following questions prior to approving a decision:

- Do the Strategic Objectives and Management Requirements support the Land and Resource Management Plan/Fire Management Plan?
- Have the short-term issues, or potential issues been addressed ie: coordination with appropriate specialists, partners/cooperators, current and predicted weather, fire behavior (current and predicted) etc?
- Are there long-term issues that may influence future management of the incident that should be considered ie: time of year, seasonality, climatic events, planning levels etc. Is it adequately addressed?
- Has the fire made significant runs? Are similar patterns expected with the predicted weather, unburned fuels and topography? Does the plan address this fire behavior or plan for it?
- Are there enough resources available to implement the Course of Action?

Remember that once a decision is in the Review/Approval Process it cannot be edited. Therefore, if edits are needed after a decision is in the Review/Approval Process, the decision should be rejected. Incident Owners and Editors can make needed adjustments and resubmit the decision for review and approval.

If an Approver selects “Reject Decision” a comment box will appear on the screen. It is expected that comments will be provided as to why a decision was rejected.

If the “Approve Decision” button is selected the final Approver must complete further steps to Publish a decision on the following screen.

## *3. Publishing an Approved Decision*

Once the final Approver approves a decision by selecting “Approve Decision” a new screen will prompt them to select a time frame for the Periodic Assessment and to Publish the decision. The final Approver must select the Publish button to officially Publish a decision. When a decision is published, it will be listed as Published. No additional edits or information can be added once a decision is published.

For further information view the WFDSS Help section on Approving and Publishing a Decision

[https://wfdss.usgs.gov/wfdss\\_help/WFDSSHelp\\_Approve\\_Decision.html](https://wfdss.usgs.gov/wfdss_help/WFDSSHelp_Approve_Decision.html)

## **D. PERIODIC ASSESSMENT**

The Periodic Assessment tab provides space for Line Officers to document their Periodic Assessment of a fire. This assessment documents whether or not the current decision is still valid and if the Courses of Action and Objectives and Requirements can still be met. Once a decision is approved, the final Approver needs to set the Periodic

Assessment timeframe. All incident Approvers can conduct Periodic Assessments throughout the life of the fire. Notes should be captured in the Periodic Assessment to document why the Approver thinks a decision is still valid.

### 1. *Set Up*

Once the final Approver approves a decision by selecting “Approve Decision” a new screen will prompt them to select a time frame for the Periodic Assessment. The final Approver can select the number of days between required Periodic Assessments, from 1 up to 14 days using the drop-down arrow. The Approver can also check the box that reads “Send me an email reminder the morning the next assessment is due” if they would like to receive an email reminder that a required Periodic Assessment is due. The email reminder will contain a link that leads directly to the Periodic Assessment tab after prompting the user to log into WFDSS.

To determine the length of time between required Periodic Assessments consider:

- A need to re-evaluate Courses of Action, Objectives and Requirements, or adjust Management Action Points due to fire growth, political/environmental concerns, resource concerns etc.
- Time of year, beginning/end of fire season
- Anticipated changes in Geographic and National Planning Levels
- Changes in Regional prioritizations
- Current and expected fire behavior
- Local/regional resource capabilities
- Anticipated changes in weather, fuel conditions, or seasonal ERC conditions

The time interval between required Periodic Assessments can be changed at any time. To change the duration between required Periodic Assessments use the Periodic Assessment tab to adjust the days between assessments.

### 2. *Completing*

If the Periodic Assessment is not completed on time, the decision is not valid and out of compliance. Incident Approvers do not need to wait until a required Periodic Assessment is due to complete an assessment, it can be completed any time and as often as they deem necessary.

The Periodic Assessment is accessed from the Periodic Assessment Tab. To refresh your knowledge, review the current decision content. Consider whether the Relative Risk has changed since the beginning of the incident. Does this warrant a new decision? Approvers may also want to re-visit the Situation tab for a visual display of the incident specific Planning Area, fire perimeters, M.A.P.s, Points of Interest, Fire Behavior Analysis, Fire-Related data, Boundaries, Designated Areas, Infrastructure, Natural & Cultural Resources, and any unit specific layers that were loaded.

The Approver should determine whether the current decision is still valid. Consider some of the following questions when evaluating an assessment.

### 3. *Is the fire expected to remain within the Planning Area?*

- Is the actual cost of the fire in line with the estimated planned costs in the current published decision?
- Has there been any unexpected fire growth since the last Periodic Assessment?
- Have additional values been threatened since the decision was published?
- Have significant resources not identified in the Courses of Action been requested?

### 4. *Creating a new decision*

If it is determined that the current decision is not valid a new decision should be created. Incident Owners/Editors can use the Decisions Tab to create a new decision.

As needed the Incident Owners/Editors can update or change some or all of the following in the next decision:

- Redraw the Planning Area from the Situation tab.

- Create new Incident Objectives and Requirements from the Objectives tab or Include or Exclude Objectives and Requirements that already exist.
- Create new versions of Management Action Points (M.A.P.s) for small changes or Include and Exclude M.A.P.s from the current list or create new M.A.P.s all together.
- Include, Exclude, or create new Strategic Direction from the Courses of Action tab or update the Estimated Cost.
- Include desired content into appropriate content sections, such as fire behavior analysis and associated Values at Risk (VAR) and Values Inventory (VI), map captures, air quality concerns, threatened and endangered species habitat assessments, etc.
- Update the Relative Risk Assessment and Organization Assessment. If you just want to modify the Relative Risk Assessment and doing so does not change your decision, you do not have to create and publish a new decision. You can modify the Relative Risk Assessment without creating a new decision. However, if an updated Relative Risk Assessment then warrants a new Course of Action or other portions of a decision to be adjusted then a new decision should be created and approved.
- Improve or change Rationale section of a decision.

## E. DECISION SUPPORT TOOLS

There are several Decision Support Tools available for supporting fire management decisions. Tools are described in three categories: Non-WFDSS Tools, WFDSS Fire Behavior Tools, and WFDSS Fire Economic Tools. A brief explanation is provided here. This section also contains WFDSS Help reference Topics for WFDSS tools.

### 1. *WFDSS Fire Behavior Tools*

WFDSS has incorporated several fire behavior tools that provide deterministic and probabilistic fire spread projections. Most of these have been adapted from existing desktop fire behavior tools. All of the fire behavior tools in WFDSS are geospatial, utilizing maps of elevation, slope, aspect, fuel models, canopy cover, canopy base height, canopy height, and canopy bulk density represented on a grid. The data includes LANDFIRE and a California dataset.

Confidence in outputs from these tools is heavily influenced by the quality and calibration of modeling inputs. These tools require a representative landscape file. Local calibration of data is essential to receiving quality outputs. This calibration can be done in the pre-season or at the time of analysis, as long as local in-depth knowledge of the actual conditions of the landscape is available to the analyst. Additionally, quality weather and wind data require local RAWS stations to be maintained. Without daily RAWS observations, it is difficult to use many of the fire behavior tools available in WFDSS. The importance of quality inputs and an analyst experienced in fire behavior predictions cannot be overstated. These tools use models which are useful to inform decision, but results should never be regarded as exact. Results may drastically depart from reality if an analysis has poor input data, the modeler is inexperienced, or conditions violate model parameters (e.g. it is not possible to model plume-dominated fires or influences of merging fires on one another).

- Basic Fire Behavior (BFB)

BFB is often described as a “spatial Behave Plus,” predicting fire behavior for one point in time over a

landscape. BFB is a spatial fire behavior tool that gives simple fire behavior outputs such as flame lengths and rates of spread from initial fuel moistures and a single wind-speed/direction input by the user. BFB uses the inputs to calculate gridded winds and fuel moistures that vary spatially across the landscape.

Although the map output shows variations in fire behavior, each pixel is the result of an independent calculation for fire behavior prediction. BFB provides outputs as if each pixel has its own custom BehavePlus run. For more information about BFB, what the outputs mean, potential uses, and assumptions and limitations see the WFDSS

Help Topics Automated Basic Fire Behavior and WFDSS Analyst-Assisted Basic Fire Behavior  
[https://wfdss.usgs.gov/wfdss\\_help/WFDSSHelp\\_Fire\\_Behavior\\_Ref.html](https://wfdss.usgs.gov/wfdss_help/WFDSSHelp_Fire_Behavior_Ref.html)

- Short-Term Fire Behavior (STFB)

Short-term fire behavior predicts fire growth for a set of constant conditions in time over a landscape. It predicts fire growth using FlamMap's Minimum Travel Time (MTT). In addition to the similar outputs of BFB, STFB also generates outputs of fire arrival time and major travel paths. Although the visual output of STFB is similar in appearance to FARSITE and Near Term Fire Behavior, it is not modeled in the same way. Rather, it is more similar to the manual vectoring and plotting of fire growth using tabular Behave Plus outputs. It is merely Rate of Spread x time (burn period) plotted in the direction of maximum spread for each point of calculation along the perimeter of the ignition file or subsequent modeled fire perimeters. It is important to remember that the arrival time output in STFB is based on static weather like BFB. The Major flow-paths output is similar to a hydrologic map for fire on the landscape. Based on the fuels, topography, and weather inputs major flow paths are projected based on direction of maximum spread and the influence each cell has every other cell within the time of arrival grid. For more information about STFB, what the outputs mean, potential uses, and assumptions and limitations see the WFDSS Help Topic WFDSS Short-Term Fire Behavior

[https://wfdss.usgs.gov/wfdss\\_help/WFDSSHelp\\_Fire\\_Behavior\\_Ref.html](https://wfdss.usgs.gov/wfdss_help/WFDSSHelp_Fire_Behavior_Ref.html)

- Near-Term Fire Behavior (NTFB)

NTFB predicts fire growth over changes in time and space. When spotting is disabled, NTFB is deterministic; with the same inputs every simulation will produce identical outputs. A fire progression is modeled using forecasted wind and weather information for 1-7 days. This tool incorporates hourly changes in weather/wind, daily changes in burn periods or several burn periods per day, and deal fuel moisture conditioning adjusted to shading, elevation, and aspect. It is similar to the desktop version of FARSITE, but many user-features are simplified for use in WFDSS. NTFB differs from STFB in that it incorporates more detailed information. Outputs from NTFB usually show spotting in more detail than STFB, but to not model gridded winds. For more information about NTFB, what the outputs mean, potential uses, and assumptions and limitations see the WFDSS Help Topic WFDSS Near-Term Fire Behavior Analysis [https://wfdss.usgs.gov/wfdss\\_help/WFDSSHelp\\_Fire\\_Behavior\\_Ref.html](https://wfdss.usgs.gov/wfdss_help/WFDSSHelp_Fire_Behavior_Ref.html)

- Fire Spread Probability (FSPro)

Fire Spread Probability (FSPro) is a spatial fire spread probability tool that uses current forecasted and historical weather as well as the landscape information used by the aforementioned tools. The resulting output does not show fire sizes or perimeters, but the probability that fire will burn a particular cell. It is not possible to extract fire behavior or fire growth information from FSPro output, nor is there a way to tell what type of fire burned an area (e.g. surface fire, crown fire). FSPro will produce numerous weather scenarios for the specified modeling period (7-30 days). Using these scenarios and the landscape information, 1000-4000 fires are modeled. Greater numbers of simulated fires increases the probability that FSPro will model a rare spread event. FSPro uses the final arrival time perimeters and overlays them to generate output showing the probability any specific location will burn during the simulated time.

Because historic climatology plays such an important role in this tool it is important to make sure representative RAWS are selected for wind and weather. Having an analyst familiar with fire behavior modeling and how to calibrate the model(s) to the fire of interest is very important in obtaining quality outputs. FSPro output is easily misinterpreted, it is imperative to properly interpret the results if it is to be used properly. For more information about FSPro, what the outputs mean, potential uses, and assumptions and limitations see the WFDSS Help Topic FSPro Overview, and associated FSPro related topics

[https://wfdss.usgs.gov/wfdss\\_help/WFDSSHelp\\_Fire\\_Behavior\\_Ref.html](https://wfdss.usgs.gov/wfdss_help/WFDSSHelp_Fire_Behavior_Ref.html)

- Fire Behavior Modeling Assumptions and Limitations

Most of these tools are not best-utilized straight “out of the box” and its important that you receive assistance from a skilled analyst when determining the best products to inform your decision-making. While it’s important to have a general understanding of the major assumptions and limitations imposed by the various modeling tools, it’s more important that you work with a skilled analyst that understands the models and related assumptions and limitations, and can communicate this information to you. The analyst should document the reasoning for their inputs within the analysis notes, to provide a written record to assist future analysts and contribute to improved analysis quality over time. The WFDSS Help provides assumptions and limitation for each tool.

### Choosing the Right Fire Behavior Decision Support Tools

Before deciding which tool you need, ask these questions:

Do you need fire behavior modeling outputs to make a decision (use of these tools is not required), or has a decision essentially been made?

- Is your question about fire spread, fire behavior, or values at risk?
- Do you want information for a specific time period such as “the next 24 hours” or “the next 14 days”?
- How much time do you have before the product is needed?

The following table can guide your choice of the best WFDSS Fire Behavior Tool to answer your specific question. The “\*” indicates a tool available as desktop software outside of WFDSS.

Table 1. Fire Behavior Tools

<b>Tools</b>	<b>Basic Fire Behavior (BFB)</b>	<b>FlamMap* or Short-Term Fire Behavior (STFB)</b>	<b>FARSITE* or Near-Term Fire Behavior (NTFB)</b>	<b>Fire Spread Probability (FSPro)</b>
<b>Type of Tool</b>	Spatial, only in WFDSS	Spatial, desktop and WFDSS	Spatial, desktop and WFDSS	Spatial, only in WFDSS
<b>General Time Frames</b>	For current burn period	For Next 1-3 Days	For Next 1-7 Days	For 7-30 Days in Future
<b>Fire Behavior Questions</b>	<b>Basic Fire Behavior (BFB)</b>	<b>FlamMap* or Short-Term Fire Behavior (STFB)</b>	<b>FARSITE* or Near-Term Fire Behavior (NTFB)</b>	<b>Fire Spread Probability (FSPro)</b>
How and where will the fire spread with the forecast weather?		Using <i>unchanging</i> weather, wind and fuel moistures provides map of fire spread over next 1-3 days. Identifies fastest fire travel routes.	Using <i>variable</i> (e.g. hourly, diurnal) weather, and fuel moisture, provides a map of fire spread over the next 1-7 days.	
What fire behavior (e.g. flame length, rates of spread, spotting) is expected with known weather and fuel conditions?	Using <i>static</i> weather/wind input and varying fuel models/terrain, provides fire behavior outputs within a “box” drawn around the fire area.	Using <i>static</i> weather/wind input and varying fuel models/terrain, provides output of fire behavior for a “box” around the fire; fire size, and time of arrival also given.	Using <i>variable</i> weather/wind inputs and varying fuel models/terrain, provides output of fire behavior, fire size, and time of arrival. Used with next 1-7 days of forecast weather.	
If a fire reaches a point of concern, what fire behavior can I expect at that location?	Fire behavior outputs are available within a “box” drawn	Fire Behavior outputs and fastest fire travel routes are available for a “box” around the fire;	Mapped Fire Behavior outputs are only available if the modeled fire actually reaches the	

	around the point of concern; uses static weather scenario.	uses one static weather scenario.	point of concern, if so it is for the weather conditions modeled when the fire reaches that point	
What is the <i>probability</i> the fire may reach a point of concern in the next 1-7 days? In 8 or more days?				Uses forecast weather and climatological probabilities for a probabilistic fire spread output. Outputs best used after calibrating the landscape and tool.
There is a major wind event in the forecast—how far might the fire travel? What is the potential fire behavior?		A single windspeed and direction (static or gridded) input can show fire growth and behavior in complex fuels/terrain.	Multiple windspeeds and directions per day can show fire growth and behavior in complex fuels/terrain.	

## 2. WFDSS Fire Economic Tools

Several economic tools have been added to WFDSS to assist in assessment of not only the economic values at risk in the fire area but also to compare the cost of a fire to other fires of historically similar size and location for your agency. Tools are described as WFDSS Values Inventory (VI), WFDSS Values at Risk (VAR), and Stratified Cost Index (SCI). It is important to remember that the economic values associated with these tools are only estimates to support decisions they are not definite values.

- WFDSS Values Inventory

WFDSS Values Inventory (VI) provides a table of values within a given area (a Planning Area or the fire projection path from either Short-Term or Near Term Fire Behavior). The table provides information on the value quantity (acres, miles, count, etc.) data source, currency, and coverage. Users can view a map display of the queried area from the Situation tab to help users visualize data geographically and can be included as a map capture into the incident content or decision content. There are numerous national and interagency geospatial values layers in WFDSS. Local data can be loaded pre-season as Unit Shapes, see the WFDSS Help Topic on Unit Shapes [https://wfdss.usgs.gov/wfdss\\_help/WFDSSHelp\\_unit\\_shapes.html](https://wfdss.usgs.gov/wfdss_help/WFDSSHelp_unit_shapes.html). WFDSS Values Inventory includes geospatial data such as Class I Airsheds and national infrastructure to quantify the values within the given area. This is intended as a strategic tool and is the fastest method to see and quantify values within the fire planning or fire projection area. For more information see the WFDSS Help topic Obtaining a Values Inventory, [https://wfdss.usgs.gov/wfdss\\_help/WFDSSHelp\\_Obtain\\_VI.html](https://wfdss.usgs.gov/wfdss_help/WFDSSHelp_Obtain_VI.html)

- WFDSS Values at Risk

WFDSS Values at Risk (VAR) combines FSPRO output with WFDSS and preloaded local value data to quantify the specific values within each probability contour (acres, miles, count, etc.). Similar to Values Inventory (VI), VAR provides the values information in a table and a map of the inventory area is available from the Situation map. The map capture feature can be used to add an image to the incident and decision content. Like VI, VAR is also intended as a strategic tool and provides a quick method to quantify values within an FSPRO projection area. For more information see the WFDSS Help topic Values at Risk Information, [https://wfdss.usgs.gov/wfdss\\_help/WFDSSHelp\\_values\\_at\\_risk\\_info.html](https://wfdss.usgs.gov/wfdss_help/WFDSSHelp_values_at_risk_info.html).

- Stratified Cost Index (SCI)

SCI is intended as a self-assessment tool for cost per acre for on fires larger than 300 acres and is not dependent on any spatial information except the latitude and longitude of the fire. The SCI tool is based on historical suppression costs based on fire size, location (inside or outside wilderness and distance to town), ERC percentile, fuel model, and the agency of jurisdiction. There are six separate models: including one for the Department of Interior (BIA, NPS, and BLM) and USDA Forest Service for the eastern and western U.S. The user can put up to 4 fire sizes into the tool. The result is a matrix of fire sizes and percentage of fires in comparison. The results are also color coded, anything less than the 50th percentile is green to indicate near or below average costs, yellow means costs are high and should be monitored and documented closely, red means you are in the upper 10% of similar fires and that you should carefully document your costs and decisions as a your costs are high and for some fires a cost review may be possible. See the WFDSS Help Topic on Stratified Cost Index for subsections on Creating a Stratified Cost Index, Editing and Accepting an SCI, and more, [https://wfdss.usgs.gov/wfdss\\_help/WFDSS\\_Help\\_SCI.html](https://wfdss.usgs.gov/wfdss_help/WFDSS_Help_SCI.html).

Table: 2 Comparing the Three Economic Tools Currently Available

Tools	Values Inventory (VI)	Values at Risk (VAR)	Stratified Cost Index (SCI)
Time Period of Interest (must be same as analysis period)	1 – 7 days	Next 7 – 30 days	Immediate and cumulative
Time Needed to Complete Analysis	Less than one minute upon completion of STFB and NTFB, immediate upon drawing planning area	Completed with FSPro simulation	A few minutes
Analysis Type	Automated	Automated	Manual
What are the Values at Risk near this fire?	Lists the number of values by specific type within a planning area or STFB/NTFB Arrival Time footprint.	Lists the number of values by specific type and their probability of being affected by fire.	
How do costs on this fire compare to similar fires?			SCI is a table that compares costs of similar fires based on jurisdiction fuel model at point of ignition, and fire size.

What values are in the predicted fire movement over the next day or two?	X		
What is the probability and count of values being affected in the next week or two?		X	
Most values in FMUs are included. Primarily values related to land management agencies	X	X	
Buildings on federal land	X	X	
Local values data preloaded as Unit Shapes in the fire's vicinity such as species of concern, no dipping areas, specific habitat etc, provided the data manager selected to have the data populate in the values tables.	X	X	
Partial county building cluster data	X	X	

### Choosing the Right WFDSS Economics Support Tools

Before deciding which tool you need, ask these questions:

- Do you actually need fire behavior modeling outputs to make a decision (use of these tools is not required), or has a decision essentially been made?
- Is your question about values at risk or relative costs?
- Do you want information for a specific time period such as “the next 24 hours” or “the next 14 days?”
- How much time do you have before the product is needed.

### 3. *Non-WFDSS Fire Behavior and Fire Danger Tools*

- Fire Danger Rating Pocket Cards

The Fire Danger Rating Pocket Card is produced by local fire management agencies on an annual or bi-annual basis. It was developed to aid firefighters in situational awareness by allowing them to interpret the National Fire Danger Rating elements of Energy Release Component (ERC) or Burning Index (BI) or Spread Component (SC) for any local area. Values associated with Fire Danger Rating elements are only useful when displayed and interpreted relative to local data. For example, an “ERC of 65” will mean different things to a firefighter in Florida or Montana or Arizona. A pocket card can tell you the trend and status of this year’s fire season, compare this season to previous and historical maximum years, and give fire danger values related to past extreme fires. The card is meant as a supplement to experienced firefighters to interpret daily and seasonal fire conditions. It does not help predict fire behavior for an incident, but does give fire behavior thresholds for the area, such as “extreme fire behavior potential when 1000-hour fuel moistures are less than 12%”.

Pocket cards are often created by Dispatch Centers, or pocket cards for many areas across the US are available at [https://famit.nwgc.gov/applications/WIMS/PocketCards/PocketCards?field\\_gacc\\_value%5B%5D=Alaska](https://famit.nwgc.gov/applications/WIMS/PocketCards/PocketCards?field_gacc_value%5B%5D=Alaska)

- Behave Plus

The BehavePlus Fire Modeling System is a desktop program with a collection of models that describe fire behavior, fire effects, and the fire environment for a uniform set of conditions. It can produce tables, graphs, and simple diagrams for fire management applications. Modules are available for surface fire, crown fire, safety zone size, size of a point-source fire, containment success, spotting distance, crown scorch height, tree mortality, and probability of ignition of a firebrand. Fire behavior modelers use BehavePlus to understand basic mathematical concepts before moving to the spatial modeling systems and can use it to answer basic fire behavior questions for one point in time and place. BehavePlus is available here: <https://www.frames.gov/behaveplus/home>.

- Term Report (Fire Family Plus)

The Term Report in Fire Family Plus is used to analyze historical season-ending or season-slowng weather events. The user determines dates when past seasons ended and then a distribution graph is calculated to show probabilities of a season ending event by date. This graph can be produced annually at the end of each fire season for a District or Unit as it only requires one date per year. It can be used to answer, “When may the fire season end?” or, “How long could we potentially be managing this fire?” Tabular and graphic outputs tell the user, “Based on recent history, there is a 50% chance of a season ending event by August 31, and a 75% chance of a season-ending event by September20.”

FireFamilyPlus is available here: <https://www.firelab.org/project/firefamilyplus>.

## F. AIR QUALITY TOOLS

WFDSS pulls smoke dispersion information from the National FCAMMS Point Forecast Product <https://cefa.dri.edu/FCAMMS/National%20FCAMMS%20forecast%20guidance%20documentation.pdf>. This information is updated every three hours and can be accessed for an incident, an analysis, or for any location from the Intelligence map. Refer to the WFDSS Help topic Viewing Smoke Dispersion Information, [https://wfdss.usgs.gov/wfdss\\_help/WFDSSHelp\\_Viewing\\_Smoke\\_Info.html](https://wfdss.usgs.gov/wfdss_help/WFDSSHelp_Viewing_Smoke_Info.html) for more information.

## G. OBTAINING ADDITIONAL WFDSS SUPPORT

Local expertise may exist on your unit or surrounding units, consider checking locally for assistance when needed. Non-local WFDSS assistance includes 1) the WFDSS Help and Helpdesk, 2) Geographic Area Editors and 3) The Wildland Fire Management Research Development and Application staff.

- WFDSS Help and Helpdesk

Consider your first line of WFDSS assistance the WFDSS Help: [https://wfdss.usgs.gov/wfdss\\_help/index.htm](https://wfdss.usgs.gov/wfdss_help/index.htm) The Help content is up to date and provides detailed information about all aspects of WFDSS. The WFDSS Helpdesk can be reached at: <https://iiahelpdesk.nwcg.gov/> or 1-866-244-7677.

- Geographic Area Editors (GA Editor)

Geographic Area Editors (GA Editor) have been identified for each region and can often provide assistance with decisions, aid in analysis, or at a minimum assist the unit in finding resources who can assist. The GA Editor role is a regionally designated individual who has editor privileges and oversight of incidents throughout a region. This user role can grant privileges requested by various users throughout a region. As a GA Editor they are the main communication link between the Wildland Fire Management Research Development & Application (WFM RD&A) team and field units. All fire behavior requests are coordinated through the GAEs.

They participate in monthly GA Editor conference calls with the WFM RD&A in which they receive new information regarding WFDSS, data requests or updates. The WFM RD&A receives feedback from the field through the GA Editors. If you have feedback you would like to relay, please provide it to your GA Editor.

GA Editors provide oversight to requests submitted through the system and assist local units as needed with their Incident Objectives, and requirements along with various fire behavior requests. You can determine your regional GA Editors using the filter tools in WFDSS. For steps on how to do this refer to the WFDSS Help section Finding Your Geographic Area Editor, [https://wfdss.usgs.gov/wfdss\\_help/WFDSSHelp\\_Find\\_GA\\_Editor.html](https://wfdss.usgs.gov/wfdss_help/WFDSSHelp_Find_GA_Editor.html).

- WFM RD&A

The Wildland Fire Management Research Development and Application (WFM RD&A) program has staff who work on WFDSS development and application as well as decision support. The WFM RD&A works to develop and deliver existing and new wildland fire applications to assist with and improve fire management programs. <https://wfmrda.nwccg.gov> or 1-208-387-5253.

The WFM RD&A consists of fire application and management specialists. The primary goal of this group is to assist with decision support to the field for large and long duration fire events, providing analysts as needed to assist with fire behavior analyses, interpretation of the results and to mentor/train field units with the use of current tools in WFDSS.

Personnel at the WFM RD&A are set up to assist field units remotely and, depending on the complexity of the incident, the WFM RD&A can provide support on site.