

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

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 planning, managing fires, and post fire rehab. This guide doesn't develop new content, it provides references to the original direction (Forest Service Manual, Forest Service Handbook, Interagency Standards and Guide aka Red Book, etc.).

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.

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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 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
- 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.forestsandrangelands.gov/strategy/index.shtml>
- Wildland Fire Decision Support System http://wfdss.usgs.gov/wfdss/WFDSS_Home.shtml
- National Interagency Standards for Resource Mobilization <https://www.nifc.gov/nicc/logistics/reference-documents>

Agency Administrators should familiarize themselves with the following Manual Direction as it pertains to fire management as a system rather than a season. Specific directives can be found within each of the chapters highlighted below, we highlighted specific sections as it pertains to fire management.

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. Directives in this section specifically outline duties and requirements for line officers to adhere to too.

B. Fire Management- Wildfire Response- 5130 FSM

Agency Administrators (AA) are responsible for implementing an effective, efficient, risk-based wildfire response. Wildfire response includes but is not limited too: wildfire response, fiscal responsibilities, training, qualifications, mobilization, interagency coordination and providing safety to our personnel.

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

Agency Administers provide 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.

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

This Handbook provides requirements for position qualifications and certifications in fire and aviation management. There are certain guidelines for training oversight, qualifications and review committees at the Washington Office, Regional Office and the Supervisors Office. It is highly recommended to review this handbook on a yearly basis with regard to your position and oversight of a fire program – which includes training, qualifications, and certification of employees which includes AD's.

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

Chapter 5 of the Red Book is intended to be a program reference to document the standards for operational procedures and practices for the USDA Forest Service Fire and Aviation Management Program. These standards are based on current agency and interagency wildland fire management policy and are intended to provide guidance to ensure safe, consistent, efficient and effective fire and aviation operations. Line Officers should be familiar with all elements in Chapter 5 but specifically a review of the Risk Management Protocol and the section regarding Line Officer Responsibilities. Additionally, the Agency Certification program is outlined for all six of the certifications. For specific training and qualifications refer to the Federal Wildland Fire Qualifications Supplement at:

https://iqcsweb.nwcg.gov/sites/default/files/documents/Federal_WF_Supplement.pdf

F. Incident Management Response- Red Book Chapter 11

Chapter 11 provides guidance regarding management of a fire from the point of ignition to fire rehabilitation; guidance includes but is not limited to: determining incident risk, complexity and incident organization, guidance for wilderness fires, invasive species, post fire activities, incident business management, WFDSS. Wildfire complexity and organization are both focus areas for line officers and managers to assess throughout the management of a fire, short or long term.

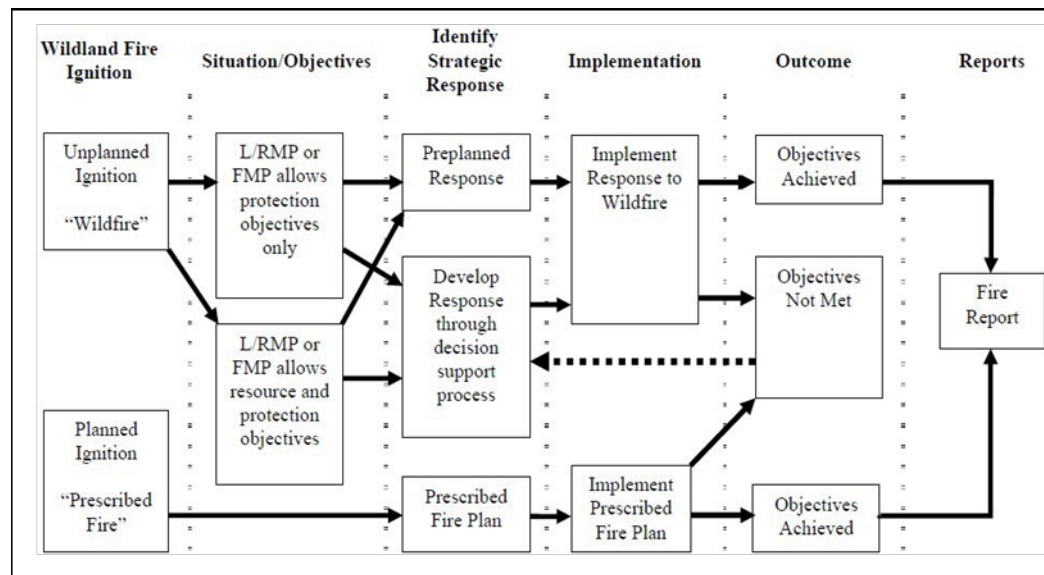
Wildfire Risk and Complexity Assessment (RCA) has been fully integrated to WFDSS Next Generation, the application integrated the same workflow to assess wildfire risk, complexity and the recommended organization to manage the fire. The RCA assists personnel with evaluating the situation, objectives, risks, and management considerations of an incident and recommends the appropriate organization necessary for incident management. The RCA also includes common indicators of incident complexity to assist firefighters and managers with

determining organizational needs for incident management. Review the [NWCG Wildland Fire Risk and Complexity Assessment PMS 236](#) for more information.

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>

II. FIRE PLANNING AND ANNUAL PREPAREDNESS

A. Spatial Fire Planning and Fire Management Reporting System

Spatial Fire Planning has changed over the years, it was once considered a labor intensive process to pull together all of the data for the interagency fire management units Nationally, and have the unit leads provide this data to the WFM RD&A Data Manager. This process has been streamlined to improve efficiency, data useability and maintenance. The WFM RD&A data manager is no longer the focal point of incoming and outgoing data, instead the data is hosted as a service providing fields users the flexibility to update their data as needed when appropriate.

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. Response strategies for resources 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.

B. Chapter 9 – Red Book- Fire Management Planning

The purpose of fire management planning is to provide for firefighter and public safety, and outline fire management strategies and tactics that, when implemented, protect values, and meet resource goals and objectives of the land and resource management plan (L/RMP). Planning strategically allows for responses to fire commensurate with risk and movement towards desired conditions.

Fire planning products include a concise summary of information organized by fire management unit (FMU) or by other geospatially explicit representations of the landscape. These products should be updated as new information becomes available, as conditions on the ground necessitate updates, or when changes are made to the L/RMP.

C. Aviation Plans

For further direction, see, FSM 5700, FSH 5709, Interagency Redbook Chapter 16, and the [National Aviation Safety and Management Plan](#).

The FS has responsibility for all aspects of its aviation program, including aviation policy and budget development, aircraft acquisition, aircraft operations, aviation safety and risk management, budget, pilot standardization, and airworthiness. In addition, the FS has operational responsibility for functional oversight of aviation assets and facilities, operational coordination and utilization, accident investigation, and aircraft and pilot inspection.

The Assistant Director (AD), Aviation, is responsible to the Director of Fire and Aviation Management for the management and supervision of the national headquarters office in Washington, D.C., and the national office in Boise. The AD, Aviation provides leadership, support and coordination for national and regional aviation programs and operations. Refer to FSM 5704 for list of responsibilities.

The following websites provide valuable reference materials regarding aviation capabilities, safety, annual reports, aviation forms, agency and interagency specific direction, standards, guides and plans.

<https://www.fs.usda.gov/managing-land/fire/aviation> and <https://www.fs.usda.gov/managing-land/fire/aviation/publications>

D. Chapter 10 – Red Book- 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 planning.

USFS Preparedness and Readiness Review Checklists as required by national policy can be found at: <https://www.nifc.gov/standards/usfs-preparedness-review>. The checklists reflect the interagency standard for operations and performance in each area of review and are not arbitrary standards set by the review team. These checklists are to be used on all preparedness reviews to maintain a consistent level of review nationwide. Individual agencies and units can request individual items of interest be added to the checklists, but these additions must not undermine any established national policy requirements outlined in the standard checklist.

E. WFDSS (Wildland Fire Decision Support System)

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 strategic assessment, strategic course of action, incident complexity, organization assessment and incorporate the decision rational from the line officer.

WFDSS Classic has been retired it was officially replaced with Next Generation of WFDSS in March of 2025. The look and feel of the system is different from WFDSS Classic, the updates and functionality upgrades were results of ongoing feedback received from field users while WFDSS Classic was operational.

Specific information regarding Next Generation WFDSS can be found within the Help documentation - <https://wfdss.firenet.gov/help/Content/Home.htm>. As a new user start your review with the WFDSS User Guide, additionally the home page hosts several help videos to help users become oriented and up to speed on the application.

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. Interagency Coordination and Agreements

Review FSM 1580, 5106, RSH 5109.11 chapter 90, FSH 6509.11g chapter 50 and Chapter 8 of the Interagency Redbook for more information regarding Cooperative Agreements.

Agency representatives should meet annually with cooperators to review interagency agreements, state coop agreements and other guiding documentation to ensure 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

The Interagency Incident Business Management Handbook Chapter 50 - Interagency Cooperative Relations provides information and guidelines relating to interagency agreements, cooperative agreements, Presidential emergency, or disaster declarations through FEMA, declarations under the FEMA Fire Management Assistance Grant program and use of the military for domestic response <https://www.nwcg.gov/publications/pms902>.

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.)
- WFDSS Help: <https://wfdss.firenet.gov/help/Content/Home.htm>
- Risk Management Assistance Dashboard: <https://experience.arcgis.com/experience/f9d7f7f920494c3db43a23a8dffe4664>
- Incident Strategic Alignment Process (ISAP): <https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/7e0b757bc6a4480cad008218d6448212>
- The WFM RD&A Agency Administrator Toolbox page: <https://wfmrda.nwcg.gov/interagency-agency-administrator-toolbox>
 - Forest Service Agency Administrator Qualifications
 - Delegation of Authority, Leaders Intent and Briefing Package Template
 - Agency Administrator Refresher content

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 WFDSS.

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

A. 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/>

B. 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, develop Strategic Assessments, Strategic Course of Actions, evaluate Relative Risk, evaluate incident Complexity 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.

Additional information can be found in the Redbook Chapter 11 and WFDSS Help

<https://wfdss.firenet.gov/help/Content/Home.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.

The decision support application was developed for the Agency Administrators, providing a platform of information in one space to guide the decision process and to provide decision makers with the best available information to make informed decisions. 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 documentation for AA approval. It is recommended the AA be involved in all elements of the decision process, engaging in the discussion of strategic assessments, strategic course of actions, risk, organization and complexity assessment and the decision rationale. Although there are times when the AA may not have the ability to engage in all elements of the decision documentation, at the very least they must review and ensure the decision provides: clear leader's intent, alignment with the LRMP, strategic assessments and strategic course of actions are relatively few in number and do not conflict, indicate the "what, when, where, why" and the rationale outlining your decision with regard to values, external influences, duration of the fire season etc.

C. WFDSS Decision and the Incident Management Team

The Agency Administrator has the overall responsibility for completing the incident decision documentation 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 strategic course of actions. 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.

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.
- Cost estimates
- Coordinating the Incident Strategic Alignment Process (ISAP) to integrate and tier to the WFDSS decision.

D. 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), WFDSS Next Generation has fully integrated PMS 236 into the decision process. 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).

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 timelines 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 Expectations

a. 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 E 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.

b. 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 E 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.

c. 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 strategic assessments 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, it is necessary to ensure 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.

d. 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.
- Identify special safety awareness concerns and expectations.

E. Public Information throughout an Incident

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.

A. 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 provides a briefing to the incoming team, a new 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 to minimize confusion and maintain operational control.
- Transfer 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.

B. AA Role with IMT/CIMT throughout the Incident

General Guidelines:

After assigning the Incident Management Team to a wildland fire on your unit, the AA should allow those with delegated authority and responsibility to manage the situation and assigned resources. The 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. The AA 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.

The 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, 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 Assessment and Rationale outlined in the WFDSS decision documentation. 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.

E. 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 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 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.

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>

1. *Minimum Impact Suppression Tactics (MIST)*

Refer to NWCG PMS 313 and Incident Response Pocket Guide (IRPG) for specific MIST guidance, and where desired should be included in the strategic assessment, decision rationale and other associated documents.

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:

F. Cost Management

Incident Cost Management is outlined within the Redbook Chapter 11, Large Fire Cost Review Chapter 18, and refer to the NWCG Standards for Interagency Incident Business Management PMS 902.

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. Redbook Chapter 11.

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 by all parties. Review local, state or regional operating plans to determine specific guidance for cost share agreements and implementation on a specific unit to manage a fire. Refer to Chapter 8 of the Redbook and the NWCG Standards for Interagency Incident Business Management PMS 902 for more guidance.

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

Refer to FSM 2523 Emergency Stabilization – Burned Area Response BAER and Chapter 11 of the Red Book for additional information. Chapter 11 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.

J. IMT Performance Evaluations

Refer to Chapter 11 of the Red Book for 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.

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.

K. Long Term Incidents

Incidents that will be managed over a long duration often have varying management needs over time. 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.

Always be sure the strategic 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.)

L. Additional 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. Decision Support Resources Available to Line Officers

- 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 \(arcgis.com\)](https://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 \(nifc.gov\)](https://nifc.gov)
- Safety Team. Contact Regional Safety Officer.
- Aviation Team. Contact Regional Aviation Officer.

N. Interagency Coordination and Cooperation

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

O. 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.

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>.

P. Critical Incident

Refer the Redbook Chapter 7, FSM 6730 Accident Reporting and Investigation, FSM 5320 Investigation and Agency Administrator's Guide to Critical Incident Management (PMS 926) for additional information.

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.

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/publications/pms926>

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. FSM 6730- Accident Reporting and Investigation and FSM 5320- Investigation.

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

Q. 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](#)

R. Reviews and Investigations

Refer to Forest Service Manual Direction 5139.1 and 5139.2 and Chapter 18 of the Red Book, for additional information.

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.

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.

1. Regional Fire Review Forest Service Manual Direction 5139.1

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.

2. National Fire Reviews Forest Service Manual Direction 5139.2

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.

Chapter 18 of the Red Book covers 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. 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.

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.

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 L of the Red Book provides a sample delegation letter for a Fire and Aviation Safety Team (FAST).

3. 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

Provide direction and oversight to field units for prescribed fire, prescribed fire reviews, policy improvements and implementation practices. Develop and implement guidance to complete fuel mitigation activities, ensure units complete fuel treatment effectiveness. Engage with operational personnel as needed for prescribed fire planning, implementation and after-action reviews.

C. Interagency Prescribed Fire Planning and Implementation Procedures Guide –May 2022 <https://www.nwcg.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 or field office manager, or USFWS project leader or refuge manager. Review the Prescribed Fire Planning and Implementation Procedures Guide for Agency Administrator responsibilities in addition to other responsibilities that must be completed and reviewed for safe implementation of burning activities.

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

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. Review Appendix B for specific information.

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 the Forest Service Prescribed Fire Plan Template.

D. Fuels Management- Chapter 17 of the Red Book,

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

The FS, along with other federal, state, Tribal, and local partners, will work to ensure effective fuels management 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
- 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.

E. Prescribed Burning- Red Book Chapter 5

Refer to FSM 5100, FSM 5140 for policy direction, the goals as outlined within the National Cohesive Wildland Fire Strategy and PMS 484 NWCG Standards for Prescribed Fire Planning and Implementation for specific information and guidance. The PMS 484 guide outlines specific Agency Administrator responsibilities for prescribed burn plan review and implementation.

1. *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 qualifications can be found within the Federal Wildland Fire Qualification Supplement https://iqcsweb.nwcg.gov/sites/default/files/documents/Federal_WF_Supplement.pdf additional information can be found on the WFM RD&A Agency Administrator Resources website <https://wfmrda.nwcg.gov/interagency-agency-administrator-toolbox/interagency-agency-administrator-resources>.

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.

F. 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>

G. 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.

H. 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>
- The Risk Management Assistance Dashboard hosts a link to the Fire and Smoke Map for monitoring airquality including smoke particulates. <https://fire.airnow.gov/#6/41/-98>
- 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 \(usda.gov\)](#))

2. *Assessing and Reporting Hazardous Fuels Treatment Effectiveness*

Refer to FSM 5144 - 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 part of the Interagency Fuel Treatment Decision Support System (IFTDSS) and can be found at the following website: 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>

I. *Prescribed Fire After Action Reviews*

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?

J. *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>, Red Book Chapter 18, and FSM 5140.

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. Use the PMS 484 guide the formal review process and associated documentation supporting the events leading up to the escape.

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.

For federal agencies a copy of the final report will be submitted to the respective agency's national fuels program lead. The agency's national fuels program lead should provide a copy to the LLC, llcdocsubmit@gmail.com

K. 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>

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/

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. Wildfire Risk to Communities

Wildfire Risk to Communities is a free, easy-to-use website with interactive maps, charts, and resources to help communities understand, explore, and reduce wildfire risk. It was created by the USDA Forest Service under the direction of Congress and is designed to help community leaders, such as elected officials, community planners, and fire managers. It was first launched in 2020 and completely updated in May of 2024. <https://wildfirerisk.org/>

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>

Appendix 2: WFDSS

The content from this Appendix is now hosted within the WFDSS help documentation. This Appendix is going to be sunset in 2026, the intent is to point users to the Help documentation to streamline content and minimize the potential for errors by continuing to maintain multiple references for the same topics. Specific areas within WFDSS where an AA needs to be engaged or aware of specific content includes but isn't necessarily limited to the following topics:

- User Roles – Line Officers will need to have Incident Editor as their primary role to engage in WFDSS function, additionally the Line Officers will need to 'Self Certify' their Approver roles. This action completed from the User Profile tab allows the individual to be added to incidents as the Approver.
- Analysis – Identify which analysis will answer the question you are requesting information about, as of spring 2025, WFDSS is being updated on a regular basis – FSPPro is the only analysis available, but desk top applications can be used to help with specific questions. This information can be imported into the decision documentation.
- Map Layers within the WFDSS – become familiar with the data that is automatically loaded within WFDSS, the Line Officer should refer to these different layers, and articulate within the Relative Risk, Rationale sections potential impacts to values, or other considerations for the duration of the incident.
- Relative Risk – Assess Values, Hazards and Probabilities to determine the Relative Risk an incident may have to cause impacts to these elements.
- Strategic Assessment – is the combination of what was once the Incident Objectives and Incident Requirements in WFDSS Classic, pulling in spatial fire planning direction and shapes. The Strategic Assessment can be used to document critical values as risk and intersects with the ISAP Process.
- Strategic Coarse of Action – Similar to Course of action in Classic WFDSS but allows for a spatial display for difference courses of action in different parts of the planning area.
- Organization and Complexity – This section is built directly from the PMS-236, use the Help as needed to walk through each section.
- Decision Approval and Assessment – Providing an evaluation of alternatives if this is applicable, reference any outside resources or reference materials used to inform your decision – RMA dashboard, ISAP elements and discussion points, Predictive Service tools or references etc.
 - WFDSS is the documentation or record for your decisions, this is the information that will be stored for legal purposes if it is included within the decision documentation it will be retained, if it is not referenced or included within the decision documentation it will not be retained.
- Periodic Assessment – Set the assessment dates to reevaluate the incident and associated documentation, a new decision will be published during this reassessment. Updates for the time being should be included in the Rationale section until the application is updated to include notes within the Periodic Assessment section.