

# SUPERINTENDENT'S DESK REFERENCE FOR THE FIRE MANAGEMENT PROGRAM

Adapted for the National Park Service from a document produced by the USDA  
Wildland Fire Management RD&A

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# Superintendent's Desk Reference For The Fire Program Management

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## **PART 1. PRESEASON GUIDANCE**

### **I. FIRE POLICY**

The National Park Service's policy on wildland fire is expressed in this Reference Manual and the [https://www.nps.gov/policy/MP\\_2006.pdf](https://www.nps.gov/policy/MP_2006.pdf), and <https://www.nps.gov/subjects/fire/wildland-fire-plans-and-policy.htm>. Supplemental policy regarding coordination and responsibilities for wildland fire operations is found in the [https://www.nifc.gov/policies/pol\\_ref\\_redbook.html](https://www.nifc.gov/policies/pol_ref_redbook.html).

The "Guidance for the Implementation of Federal Wildland Fire Policy" issued February 13, 2009 ([http://www.nifc.gov/policies/policies\\_documents/GIFWFMP.pdf](http://www.nifc.gov/policies/policies_documents/GIFWFMP.pdf)) provides flexibility in the management of wildland fires. It also provides broad authorities in development and use of wildland fire objectives.

All fires burning in natural or landscaped vegetation will be considered wildland fires. Wildland fire is defined as any non-structure fire that occurs in the wildland. There are only two types of wildland fires: wildfires and prescribed fires.

As an important part of fulfilling its mission, the National Park Service manages wildland fire to protect the public; park communities and infrastructure; conserve natural and cultural resources; and maintain and restore natural ecosystems and processes. The risks and expenses associated with planning and implementing fire management activities require exceptional skill and attention to detail. The highest priority under all circumstances is firefighter and public safety. All plans, project implementation, and responses to wildland fire must demonstrate this commitment

#### **Links to other federal standards and guides documents:**

- National Wildland Fire Coordinating Group Website: <http://www.nwcg.gov/>
- Incident Response Pocket Guide (IRPG):  
<https://www.nwcg.gov/sites/default/files/publications/pms461.pdf>
- Wildland Fire Decision Support System (WFDSS):  
[https://wfdss.usgs.gov/wfdss/WFDSS\\_Home.shtml](https://wfdss.usgs.gov/wfdss/WFDSS_Home.shtml)

### **A. Fire Management Preparedness**

Fire management preparedness includes all fire management activities planned and accomplished in advance of wildland fire ignition to ensure safe, efficient, effective management action. Preparedness is a continuous process that includes developing and maintaining unit, state/regional, and national level firefighting infrastructure; predicting fire activity; preventing human-caused fires; hiring, training, equipping, and deploying firefighters; evaluating performance; correcting deficiencies; and improving overall operations. The preparedness process includes routine pre-season actions as well as incremental in-season actions conducted in response to increasing fire danger.

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## Park Superintendent's Responsibilities

Leaders shall communicate clear visions and goals ensuring they are shared and understood. All leaders shall express clear intent concerning roles and responsibilities to ensure wildfire response assignments are appropriate, risk informed and effective. All levels of leadership will be accountable for wildfire response accomplishments.

Every employee should participate in wildfire response in a manner that supports identified organizational needs, receive training and on the job experience to meet qualification requirements, and work within personal capabilities. As part of this responsibility Park Superintendents have a role in understanding policy and risk management.

1. Take necessary and prudent actions to ensure firefighter and public safety.
2. Ensures sufficient qualified fire and non-fire personnel are available each year to support fire operations at a level commensurate with the local and national fire situation. Ensures that all training and certification of fire and non-fire personnel is completed as required to support fire operations at the local and national level.
3. Ensure Fire Management Officers (FMOs) are fully qualified as identified in the Interagency Fire Program Management Qualification Standards.
4. Provide a written Delegation of Authority on an annual basis to individual(s) responsible for wildland fire management activities to ensure an adequate level of operational authority. Depending on park organizational structure, written delegations may be provided to the Chief Ranger, Natural Resource Specialist, FMO, designated Fire Coordinator, Park Group FMO, or to individuals from neighboring fire management organizations, provided a written agreement or memorandum of understanding is in-place. Where applicable, an Inter-park Agreement that specifies the reciprocal responsibilities of the Superintendent and Park Group FMO assigned Duty Officer, will be prepared. This Inter-park Agreement will be accompanied by an annual Delegation of Authority. Both the Delegation of Authority and Inter-Park Agreement will remain valid until rescinded by either party, updates are needed, or personnel changes necessitate a revision and update. As appropriate, the Delegation of Authority will specify multiagency coordination (MAC) group authorities.
5. Fire Management Plans do not expire. They are considered valid until superseded by a new or revised Superintendent approved plan. Ensure applicable park unit resource management objectives are included in the Fire Management Plan (FMP). The comprehensive 7-year review of the FMP is no longer required. Annual updates are required. Then newly established FMP Update Checklist must be completed, signed by the Superintendent and uploaded in the Integrated Resource Management Application (IRMA) under the established park unit name. The new checklist can be found at <https://irma.nps.gov/DataStore/Collection/Profile/3868>. Ensure the FMP annual update is completed in advance of the fire season. The regions will determine specific deadlines. If the annual review is not completed by your regional deadline, an interdisciplinary team may need to be assembled to determine if the FMP is still adequate to support the park unit fire management program.
6. Reviews and approves wildfire preparedness and fuels management funding based on an accurate and defensible readiness analysis. Ensure use of fire funds is in compliance with Department and Agency policies.
7. Develop fire management standards and constraints that are in compliance with agency fire policies.

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8. Ensure compliance with the collection, storing, and aggregation of Wildland Fire Program Core geospatial data (<http://share.nps.gov/firegis>).
9. Management teams will 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 team transfers of command, periods of multiple fire activity and Red Flag Warnings.
10. Review safety policies, procedures, and concerns with field fire and fire aviation personnel. Discussions should include issues that could compromise safety and effectiveness during the upcoming season.
11. Ensure timely follow-up actions to program reviews, fire preparedness reviews, fire and fire aviation safety reviews, fire critiques and post-season reviews.
12. Ensure fire and fire aviation preparedness reviews are conducted in all units each year. Parks must complete checklists applicable to their specific program scope and complexity and include appropriate program elements, such as prescribed fire. A summary of the preparedness review findings including standards exceeded or needing improvement will be submitted to the Regional FMO before the fire season.
13. Ensure an approved burn plan is followed for each prescribed fire project; technical review, Prescribed Fire Go/No-Go Checklist (PMS 486), and Agency Administrator Ignition Authorization (PMS 484-1, Element 2A) are completed; follow-up monitoring and documentation to ensure management objectives are met.
14. Ensure Air Quality Exceedance Reviews are completed in cooperation with NPS Air Resource Division.
15. Meet annually with major cooperators and review interagency agreements to ensure their continued effectiveness and efficiency (may be delegated).
16. Ensure post fire reviews are conducted on all fires that escape initial attack or are managed as long term incidents. Participate in all reviews that require management by any type of Incident Management Team.
17. Provide management oversight by personally visiting wildland and prescribed fires each year.
18. Provide incident management objectives, written delegations of authority and Agency Administrator briefings to Incident Management Teams.
19. Monitor wildfire potential and provide oversight during periods of critical fire activity/situations.
20. Ensures that resource advisors are identified, trained, available, and appropriately assigned to wildland fire incidents.
21. Convene and participate in annual pre- and post-season fire meetings.
22. Ensure Park superintendents who have potential wildland fire response in their park, their designated acting superintendents, and supervisors of fire management officers (FMOs) attain and maintain the Agency Administrator (AADM) qualification in the Incident Qualifications and Certification System (IQCS). The qualification must be attained within two years of appointment to the positions listed above.
23. Ensure appropriate investigations are conducted for accidents (as defined in Chapter 18), entrapments, shelter deployments, and related events.
24. For all unplanned human-caused fires where liability can be determined, ensure actions are initiated to recover cost of suppression activities, land rehabilitation, and damages to the resource and improvements.

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25. For all fires identified as requiring a WFDSS decision in Chapter 11, ensure local unit staff specialists are involved in the development and that all decisions are consistent with the objectives and requirements contained in the Park's Fire Management Plan.
26. Ensure there is adequate direction in fire management plans to identify fire danger awareness with escalating fire potential.
27. NPS Superintendents or other designated approving officials will maintain WFDSS user profiles (as appropriate), allowing them to approve wildfire decisions in WFDSS.
28. Ensure compliance with Departmental and agency policy, as well as Regional Office direction for prescribed fire activities and ensure that periodic reviews and inspections of the prescribed fire program are completed.

Risk Management - There is great uncertainty in today's wildland fire environment where inherent risks can take lives and harm values. Dealing with uncertainty and intrinsic hazards demands a focused and intentional approach to risk management approach. Therefore, to insure success, we must make risk informed wildland fire decisions that include discussions with our stakeholders. Success depends on making the right response in the right way.

It is important for Park Superintendents to provide annual fire season expectations and clear leader's intent to fire managers.

Long Duration Wildfire - Oversight roles include ensuring an understanding of the inherent risk and uncertainty in managing wildfires for any duration; it is essential:

- Make risk assessments of potential undesirable outcomes;
- Develop suppression strategies for protection of life and property from low probability/high consequence events;
- Complete up-to-date decision analyses and document using the Wildland Fire Decision Support System (WFDSS);
- Identify hazards and risk assessments to inform decisions;
- Coordinate with partners and potentially affected parties (including smoke impacts and park closures);
- Implement unified command early if necessary;
- Determine resource capacity and availability to meet realistic expectations;
- Manage smoke impacts to maintain social support for using wildfire to meet resource objectives.
- Communicate clear leader's intent to incident personnel including roles, responsibilities and desired outcomes.

This oversight role should address concerns of the states, cooperators, and the public including air quality impacts from multiple wildfires.

Documentation and Analysis – WFDSS will be used for decision support documentation for all wildland fires.

Safety Reviews, Analysis, and Investigation Guidance - As risk managers we provide leader's intent and manage risk to limit unnecessary and ineffective exposure of firefighters. Serious accidents and fatalities are the most difficult events we encounter. We have agency policies and requirements to assist us with the procedures for notification and respectfully dealing with serious accidents and fatalities. Policy for



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conducting reviews can be found in the *Interagency Standards for Fire and Fire Aviation Operations* in Chapter 18.

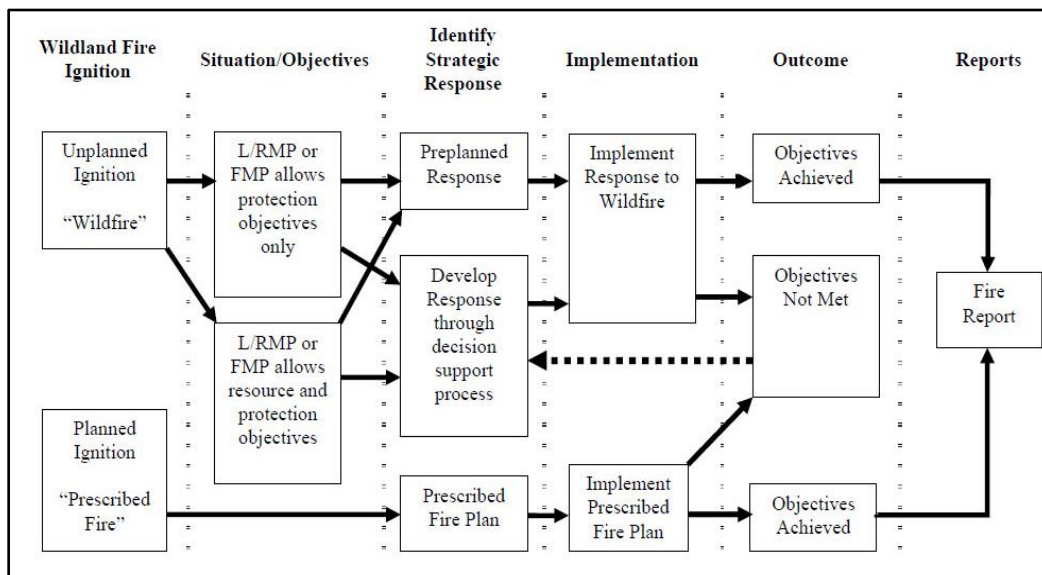
Collaboration and Planning - Prior to and throughout fire season, discuss wildfire response with interagency partners and potentially affected landowners and communities.

## B. 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 Fire Management Plan for an area. The chart is generally applicable to most NPS fire management programs. However, specific exceptions may exist.

"Guidance for Implementation of Federal Wildland Fire Management Policy"

Figure 1. Flow Chart of Decision Process



## II. FIRE PLANNING AND ANNUAL PREPAREDNESS

### A. Fire Management Plans

Fire Management Plans (FMPs) are required for all parks with burnable vegetation. FMPs summarize elements of law, policy and requirements from higher level park planning efforts, and relate those elements to planned fire management actions. (NPS RM-18, Chapter 4)

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## B. Preparedness Plans

Preparedness is the result of activities that are planned and implemented prior to wildland fire ignitions to ensure safe, efficient, and effective management action. Preparedness planning is the foundation of an effective fire management program. Thorough planning enables managers to easily and efficiently meet other fire management objectives. The preparedness process includes routine pre-season actions as well as incremental in-season actions conducted in response to increasing fire danger.

Preparedness actions are based on operational plans including but not limited to the following:

- Fire Danger Operating Plans
- Preparedness Level/Step-up Plans
- Seasonal Risk Analysis
- Fire Severity Funding
- Fire Danger Pocket Cards for Firefighter Safety
- Preparedness Plans
- Initial Response Plans
- Fire Prevention and Mitigation

Chapter 10 of the Interagency Standards for Fire and Fire Aviation Operations (Red Book) provides more detailed information regarding preparedness.

## C. Aviation Plans

Each park unit that utilizes aviation resources will have a current Aviation Management Plan approved by the Superintendent and reviewed annually. (RM-60, Chapter 10 – Flight Operations)

## D. Preparedness Review Checklists

Ensure fire and aviation preparedness reviews are conducted each year.

The checklists are located on the NIFC website at:

[http://www.nifc.gov/policies/pol\\_ref\\_intgncy\\_prepcheck\\_NPS.html](http://www.nifc.gov/policies/pol_ref_intgncy_prepcheck_NPS.html)

The standards reflected in the checklists are established national policy requirements. 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. (Revision date: 2014)

- Agency Administrator (required to be completed with the FMO and Park Superintendent) \*
- Fire Management Administrator (a yearly review of the FMO and readiness for the upcoming season) \*
- Geographic Area Coordination Center
- Aviation Management
- Safety Officer
- Training
- Aviation Base Review
- Individual Firefighter\*
- Dispatch

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- Engines
- Interagency Hotshot Crew

\*Bullets marked with an asterisk (\*) are required to be completed annually before the fire season; the remaining lists are required if those resources are a part of your fire management program.

## E. Preseason Delegation Letters

Chapter 3 of the Red Book states that agency administrators have the responsibility to provide a written Delegation of Authority to FMOs that provides an adequate level of operational authority at the unit level. Include Multi- Agency Coordinating (MAC) Group authority, as appropriate.

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

### 1. Overview

WFDSS is a web-based decision support system that provides a single dynamic documentation platform for all federal wildfires. The system is designed for use beginning at the time of discovery and concluding when the fire is declared out. It can be scaled and modified as the incident duration and complexity changes. WFDSS allows the Agency Administrator and fire managers to describe and assess the fire Situation, develop Incident Objectives and Requirements, develop a Course of Action, evaluate Relative Risk, complete an Organization Assessment, document the Rationale, publish a Decision, and periodically Review the decision. WFDSS utilizes geospatial data, unit-level strategic objectives and management requirements, fire behavior and growth analysis, and economic assessment to inform decisions.

### 2. Publishing Decision Documents in WFDSS

A Published Decision in WFDSS establishes objectives, a course of action and rationale for incidents with varying duration, spread potential, costs, or other considerations. Decisions in WFDSS are approved and published by the Park Superintendent. It is imperative that a decision be reviewed carefully as once approved and published, a decision becomes a system of record and all WFDSS users can view the information. Additionally, the action CANNOT be undone. If there is an error in the information, or new information is added for documentation or update (i.e. fire behavior, Management Action Points) a new decision must be created and approved to permanently update the record.

Additional information can be found in the Appendices, Chapter 3, 11 and Appendix N of the Red Book, and at WFDSS Help ([http://wfdss.usgs.gov/wfdss\\_help/index.htm](http://wfdss.usgs.gov/wfdss_help/index.htm)).

#### Decision Triggers

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 considerations for determining that a decision may be needed include:

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- 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 NPS unit);
- 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; and
- The Relative Risk Assessment indicates the need for additional evaluation and development of best management practices for achieving land and resource objectives.

A new decision is required when:

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

Considerations for determining when a new decision may be needed:

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

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

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

- Ensure Park Superintendents and managers have accounts and the necessary WFDSS User Roles to accomplish work. See the WFDSS Help Topic *My Home*, subsection *User Profile*, section *User Roles*, [http://wfdss.usgs.gov/wfdss\\_help/index.htm](http://wfdss.usgs.gov/wfdss_help/index.htm). See Appendix 5 for more information.
- Ensure WFDSS password is up to date. Passwords expire every 60 days. For more information see the WFDSS Help Topic *My Home*, subsection *User Profile* from the online WFDSS Help [http://wfdss.usgs.gov/wfdss\\_help/index.htm](http://wfdss.usgs.gov/wfdss_help/index.htm). The *User Profile* section contains topics on *Finding Your Username*, *Changing Your Password*, and *Requesting Password Reset*.

## **G. Cooperative Fire Coordination and Agreements**

Fire management should meet annually, prior to the start of the fire season, with cooperators and review interagency agreements to ensure their continued effectiveness and efficiency. An end of season After Action Review (AAR) is encouraged between fire management and cooperators.

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

- Cooperative agreements
- National Wildland Fire Management Structure
- Multi-Agency Management and Coordination
- National Dispatch/Coordination Systems
- Local and Geographic Area Drawdown
- National Ready Reserve
- National Interagency Mobilization Guide

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

Elements of an agreement should address:

- The authorities appropriate for each party to enter in an agreement.
- The roles and responsibilities of each agency signing the agreement.
- An element addressing the cooperative roles of each participant in prevention, pre-suppression, suppression, fuels, and prescribed fire management operations.
- Reimbursements/Compensation - All 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.
- Appropriation Limitations - Parties to this agreement are not obligated to make expenditures of funds or reimbursements of expenditures under terms of this agreement unless the Congress of the United States of America appropriates such funds for that purpose by the Counties of \_\_\_\_\_, by the Cities of \_\_\_\_\_, and/or the Governing Board of Fire Commissioners of \_\_\_\_\_.
- Liabilities/Waivers - Each party waives all claims against every other party for compensation for any loss, damage, personal injury, or death occurring as a consequence of the performance of this agreement unless gross negligence on any part of any party is determined.
- Termination Procedure - The agreement shall identify the duration of the agreement and cancellation procedures.
- A signature page identifying the names of the responsible officials shall be included in the agreement.

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

Although not all inclusive, the references listed below may assist a Park Superintendent 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
- Land and/or Resource Management Plan; General Management Plan/Foundation Document
- Fire Management Plan and associated Operational Plans
- Fire Danger Operating and Preparedness Plans
- National Park Service Director Order 18 and Reference Manual 18
- 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.

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- 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 content: [http://wfdss.usgs.gov/wfdss\\_help/index.htm](http://wfdss.usgs.gov/wfdss_help/index.htm)

## PART 2. FIRES ON YOUR LOCAL UNIT

### I. WILDFIRES

Wildfires are unplanned ignitions or prescribed fires that are declared wildfires. Response to a wildfire will be coordinated with all affected agencies/cooperators regardless of the jurisdiction at the ignition point. The response is based on ecological, social, and legal consequences of the fire. The appropriate response to the fire is dictated by:

- The circumstances under which the fire occurs;
- The likely consequences to firefighter/public safety and welfare; and
- The natural/cultural resources to be protected.

All wildfires will receive an initial response as identified in the fire management plan. Initial response is defined as the assessment of the current fire situation taking into account ongoing events and additional factors, developing, and implementing an initial plan of action (RM-18). A wildfire is considered an extended attack incident once it exceeds the capability of the initial attack resources and/or organization to successfully manage the incident to conclusion.

#### A. Visiting the Fire

As a Park Superintendent you should be familiar with the operations of a wildfire on your unit. Visiting the fire and seeing firsthand the operations and issues in person will provide better insight and understanding of the incident. Appendix A in the Red Book provides a list of Sample Questions for Fire Site Visits by Park Superintendents. Categories cover: Management Direction, Safety, Fire Suppression Operations, Administration, and Dispatch Office.

#### B. Fire Information Guidance

On fires on National Park Service lands, Public Information Officers (PIOs) work for the National Park Service, even if they are not regular National Park Service employees. PIOs on incidents can respond to questions from all news media, including national news media, **about the incident only**. A PIO should be ordered for any incident that exceeds the local unit's capabilities or if no local staff are familiar with managing information for a wildfire event.

Additional guidance can be found: [http://www.nifc.gov/PIO\\_bb/fs.html](http://www.nifc.gov/PIO_bb/fs.html)

The local unit is responsible for the content of fire communications during and after a fire. PIOs must coordinate continually with the local NPS Public Affairs Officer (PAO) and/or Park Superintendent.

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Delegations of Authority will stress the importance of Park Superintendent responsibility for all fire communications, regardless of medium.

The National Park Service's Wildland Fire Communication Plan provides tools for effective communication about National Park Service wildland fire management. The Wildland Fire Communication Plan can be found at: [https://www.nifc.gov/PIO\\_bb/Agencies/NPS/2016-wildland-fire-communication-plan.pdf](https://www.nifc.gov/PIO_bb/Agencies/NPS/2016-wildland-fire-communication-plan.pdf)

## **1. Media Interview Reminders**

Guidelines to conducting yourself during an interview are as follows:

- Ensure the appropriate Public Information Officer or the local Public Affairs Office is aware of media visits and interviews.
- Be prepared. Know the facts. Develop a few key messages and deliver them. Prepare responses to potential tough questions. If possible, talk to reporter beforehand to get an idea of subjects, direction, and slant of the interview.
- Be concise with simple answers. If you are unsatisfied with your response, simply ask to start again.
- Be honest, personable, professional, and presentable in uniform. Remove sunglasses.
- Look at the reporter, not the camera.
- Ensure media are escorted and wearing PPE when going to the fireline or hazardous sites.
- Remember, you are never considered "off the record" and should always act professionally in the presence of any media.
- Do not guess, speculate or say "no comment." Either explain why you can't answer the question or offer to track down the answer. It is the responsibility of any Superintendent to be familiar with what information may, or may not, be released. This is especially important in the instance of an injury, fatality or loss of structures.
- Do not disagree with the reporter. Instead, tactfully and immediately clarify and correct the information.
- Do not speak for other agencies or offices.
- Do not use jargon or acronyms.
- Superintendents are expected to be responsive to the media but shall not be expected to initiate contact on any event. Such notification shall be the responsibility of the Public Information Officer.
- Keep Regional and National Offices of Communication informed and updated on any potential issues that might rise to a higher level

## **2. Social Media Management**

- Social media management should be handled through the Public Information Officer.
- Insure that messages released on social media do not contain sensitive information, particularly in the use of pictures on social media.
- Messages released on social media should not make promises in regards to actions the fire resources can accomplish.

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## 3. InciWeb- Incident Website

InciWeb (short for Incident Website), is an interagency all-risk incident information management system. Inciweb provides the public a single source of incident related information and a standardized reporting tool for the Public Affairs community with information about fires of interest to the news media, elected officials, senior National Park Service and Department of the Interior leadership, and other important stakeholders.

## C. Incident Business Management

All federal agencies have adopted the NWCG Standards for Interagency Incident Business Management 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 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.
- Investigation and reporting of accidents.
- Investigating, documenting, and reporting claims.
- Documenting costs and implementing cost-effective criteria for managing incident resources.
- Non-fire incidents administrative processes.

The Incident Business Management Handbook is located at:  
<http://www.nwcg.gov/pms/pubs/large.html#iibmh>

For clarification or interpretation of any items, contact the designated Park Administrative Representative or the Incident Business Advisor (IBA). Agency specific direction is located in the Redbook.

## D. Cost Management

The primary criteria for choosing suppression strategies are to minimize costs without compromising safety. Planned and actual suppression costs must be commensurate with the values to be protected. They must be included and displayed in the Wildland Fire Decision Support System (WFDSS) Published Decision. Indirect containment strategies are appropriate only if they are the safest or least costly option. Selection of these strategies must be carefully scrutinized when fire danger trends are rising. Long duration wildfires need to be closely evaluated to ensure that operations are not occurring beyond the point of diminishing returns.



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

For further information refer to Chapter 11 of the Interagency Standards for Fire and Fire Aviation Operations.

## **1. Cost Share**

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

Red Book Chapter 8, Annual Operating Plans should address:

- The cost-sharing methodologies that will be utilized should wildfire spread to a neighboring jurisdiction in a location where fire is not wanted.
- The cost-share methodologies that will be used should a jurisdiction accept or receive a wildland fire and manage it to create benefit.

Any distinctions in what cost-share methodology will be used if the reason the fire spreads to another jurisdiction is attributed to a strategic decision, versus environmental conditions (weather, fuels, and fire behavior), or tactical considerations (firefighter safety, resource availability) that preclude stopping the fire at jurisdictional boundaries. Examples of cost-sharing methodologies may include, but are not limited to, the following:

- When a wildland fire that is being managed for benefit spreads to a neighboring jurisdiction because of strategic decisions, and in a location where fire is not wanted, the managing jurisdiction shall be responsible for wildfire suppression costs.
- In those situations where weather, fuels, or fire behavior of the wildland fire precludes stopping at jurisdiction boundaries cost-share methodologies may include, but are not limited to:
  - Each jurisdiction pays for its own resources – fire suppression efforts are primarily on jurisdictional responsibility lands,
  - Each jurisdiction pays for its own resources – services rendered approximate the percentage of jurisdictional responsibility, but not necessarily performed on those lands
  - Cost share by percentage of ownership
  - Cost is apportioned by geographic division. Examples of geographic divisions are: Divisions A and B (using a map as an attachment); privately owned property with structures; or specific locations such as campgrounds,
  - Reconciliation of daily estimates (for larger, multi-day incidents). This method relies upon daily agreed to cost estimates, using Incident Action Plans or other means to determine multi-Agency contributions. Reimbursements can be made upon estimates instead of actual bill receipts.

Consult Geographic and Regional sites for more localized cost share guidance and templates. See Appendix 3 for a cost share template.

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For further information, refer to *NWCG Memorandum #009-2009 Revisions to the Annual Operating Plans for Master Cooperative Fire and Stafford Act Agreements due to Implementation of Revised Guidance for the Implementation of Federal Wildland Fire Management Policy, April 13, 2009.*

### **E. Long-Term Incidents**

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

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

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

Utilize the Organizational Needs Assessment (available in WFDSS) as often as needed to gauge the management level necessary for your incident.

Always be sure your Courses of Action in WFDSS accurately reflect your long-term management approach. Consider adding any products you used in long-term planning in the decision content (ERC graphs, resource levels, seasonal/climate projections, fire behavior analysis, etc.)

### **F. Resource Advisors**

When a wildland fire is managed by an incident management team, the Park Superintendent should assign a resource advisor (READ) to work with the team to represent your direction for meeting land and resource objectives during fire suppression. Depending on the size and complexity of the incident, additional READs may be needed, especially when resources are varied (natural vs. cultural). The READ is responsible for identifying and evaluating potential impacts of fire operations on natural and cultural resources, as well as to the social and political atmosphere affecting the unit. The READ will use their local understanding and familiarity to integrate these issues and concerns into the fire management strategy and tactics and assist the IMT in developing mitigations which satisfy the mutual objectives of wildland fire suppression and resource protection.

The decision to appoint a resource advisor should be made early in the decision process for managing a large wildland fire incident. Ideally, the READ is appointed and briefed by the Park Superintendent 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 Park Superintendent's briefing to the IMT. That person should be made available to the team on as near a full

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time basis during the team's management of the incident as possible. Consequently, the Park Superintendent should take necessary steps to alleviate the READ of other routine responsibilities to the extent possible.

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

For further information on Resource Advisors refer to Chapter 11 of the interagency Standards for Fire and Fire Aviation Operations.

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, NFES 1831, Jan 2004)*, available here: [http://www.nwcg.gov/pms/pubs/RAguide\\_2004.pdf](http://www.nwcg.gov/pms/pubs/RAguide_2004.pdf)

### **G. Minimum Impact Strategy and Tactics**

Minimum Impact Strategy and Tactics (MIST) is the policy of the National Park Service. The intent of MIST 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.

For further information refer to Chapter 2, Managing Wildland Fire, of RM-18 and the Incident Response Pocket Guide (IRPG).

### **H. Fire Rehabilitation**

The effects on resources and property caused by the tactical actions of fire suppression may be rehabilitated as part of the on-going implementation of incident objectives being managed by the IMT and funded from the emergency suppression account established for the fire. Ground disturbance from fireline construction, road and trail damage from equipment use, site disturbance at incident bases, fences damaged for fire suppression access, etc. are examples of the types of fire suppression effects which may be rehabilitated in this manner.

Standards for fire suppression effects rehab must be established by the Park Superintendent, usually through the resource advisor, and clearly communicated to the IMT in a time frame which allows the team to effectively incorporate this work into overall incident objectives and daily operations. Any such rehabilitation work which is not completed by the team and will be carried on by the home unit after the team has been released, must be completed promptly.

For further direction regarding the Park Superintendent's responsibilities for rehabilitation from suppression actions, emergency stabilization, rehabilitation and restoration refer to Chapter 11 of the Interagency Standards for Fire and Fire Aviation or Chapter 18 in Reference Manual 18: <https://sites.google.com/a/nps.gov/nps-burned-area-emergency-response/home>

## I. Resources Available to Park Superintendents

### 1. Indicators of need for additional resources

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

- A newly appointed Park Superintendent that has never experienced a significant fire event in your career. Alternatively if the Park Superintendent has never experienced a large fire event, nor served in a park with a history of fire, a mentor should be requested to assist through the event.
- Additional help is needed to both manage the incident and plan for the incident.
- Staff 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. Follow the Red Book guidance on required work/rest ratios and 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.
- 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.
- Current control efforts are not meeting objectives.

These policies and guidance on the aforementioned bullets are addressed in the Red Book and RM-18.

### Resources available to Park Superintendents include:

- Regional Director's Representatives (Regional Fire Management Officer) or designee.
- Decision Support Groups: Groups of individuals, who can gather and complete input requirements for decision support tools, work with the local unit to verify model outputs, and assist in documenting decision support information and processes used.
- 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. <http://www.predictiveservices.nifc.gov/predictive.htm>

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## 2. Regional Representatives

The Regional Director's Fire Management Staff will work closely with the local Park Superintendent and staff to review the incident planning process, applicable documentation, current and predicted fire situation, and offer any advice and counsel in areas that could assist the local unit in improving management efficiency. Roles and responsibilities include, but are not limited to:

- Provide regional and national perspective to the local Park Superintendent concerning the fire and others that may develop within the region during this time.
- Review incident planning documents with the local Park Superintendent.
- Utilize a Long Term Fire Analyst (LTAN)n and/or Strategic Operational Planner (SOPL) on the incident to gather additional decision support information.
- Review the delegation of authority from the Park Superintendent to the IMT with focus on the stated objectives, operational constraints, special concerns, public information, and cost management.
- Provide an outside review of the WFDSS decision and offer recommendations as appropriate regarding: selected suppression strategy and tactics and consistency with values at risk, resource availability, and probability of success; projected suppression costs; and resource allocation issues.
- Review incident management activities which would include both the Incident Management Team (IMT) and Park Superintendent functions.
- Review inter-park aspects of incident management, such as communication, coordination, etc., if applicable.
- Review decision support group products and promote proper inclusion of data in the decision making process if appropriate.
- Maintain close communications with the regional office and provide the regional office a daily progress report.
- Help provide additional resource for key management positions such as (but not limited to) Duty Officer, Agency Administrator and Resource Advisors.

## 3. Resources you can expect on large incidents

- Incident Business Advisor (IBA). An Incident Business Advisor (IBA) must be assigned to any fire with costs of \$5 million or more. The complexity of the incident and the potential costs should be considered when assigning either an IBA1 or IBA2. If a qualified IBA is not available, the approving official will appoint a financial advisor to monitor expenditures. – Red Book Chapter 11.
- Significant Wildland Fire Review Team for a single incident or complex when an incident has or is expected to exceed \$15 million in suppression costs and 50% or more of the burned acres are on DOI lands predicted to exceed 21 days; or incidents with significant political, social, natural resource, or policy concerns; incidents with significant and complicated cost-share or multi-jurisdictional issues; or incidents where the affected agency requests a review. - Red Book Chapter 18 (OWF Policy Memorandum 2016-013).
- National Park Service National Office Wildland Fire Representative for fires of national significance

## II. USE OF INCIDENT MANAGEMENT TEAMS

When the decision has been made to order a Type 1 or Type 2 incident management team to take over management of a wildland fire, the following process must be accomplished by the responsible Park Superintendent with jurisdictional and/or protection authority for the area on which the incident occurs.

### A. Ordering an Incident Management Organization

#### 1. Requesting a National or Geographic Area Incident Management Team

The responsible Park Superintendent will:

- Place the request for an incident management team with your Dispatch Center as soon as that need has been identified and verified by Operational Needs Assessment for the incident. Identify the type of team needed, place for the team to report to for the Park Superintendent's briefing, and time to report at that location.
- Be sure your ordered time lines are reasonable, consider the time necessary to assemble and transport the team, avoidance of night mobilization when possible, and most likely time to effect transition from the current incident management organization to the national or geographic area team. Dispatch will provide notification when a team is ordered and their ETA, the timeline may need to be adjusted depending on availability and travel times for teams.

***Do not plan a transition during an operational period.***

#### 2. Prior to meeting the Team

The responsible Park Superintendent, with assistance from appropriate staff will:

- Prepare and document a Decision within WFDSS and Park Superintendent's briefing package.
- Prepare the Delegation of Authority.
- Appoint a resource advisor and Agency Representative 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 advice for 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, or whenever a Type 1 incident management team is to be assigned.
- 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.

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## 3. Managing the Team

The responsible Park Superintendent 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 overall relationship with the host unit, cooperators, and incident support organization.

Remember, the team is working for you. You have the same obligation to them as you would to any other member of your regular organization to support their needs to get the job done. When the team arrives to manage the incident, find out if they are at full strength, with all key positions staffed or enroute. If not, help the team get the qualified personnel they need by exercising your influence through proper channels. Find out what other specific needs the team may have or anticipate, and help make those resources available to them.

The responsible Park Superintendent, or a delegated representative (such as an Agency Representative) should be available to the incident commander for quick consultation and decision making on an arranged basis through established communications contact points and times and scheduled meetings.

## 4. Transfer of Command – Team Transition

The following guidelines will assist in the transfer of incident command responsibilities from the local unit to incoming Type 1 or 2 Incident Management Team and back to the local unit. Refer to the Red Book Chapter 11 for additional information.

- The local team or organization already in place remains in charge until the local representative briefs their counterparts on the incoming team, a Delegation of Authority has been signed, and a mutually agreed time for transfer of command has been established.
- The ordering unit will specify times of arrival and transfer of command, and discuss these timeframes with both the incoming and outgoing command structures.
- Clear lines of authority must be maintained in order to minimize confusion and maintain operational control.
- Transfers of command should occur at the beginning of an operational period, whenever possible.
- All operational personnel will be notified on incident command frequencies when transfer of command occurs.

***Do not plan a transition during an operational period.***

## B. Delegation of Authority Letter

Chapter 11 of the Red Book provides direction on delegations of authority. If there are multiple jurisdictions involved, a single joint delegation of authority is strongly recommended. Agency Administrators must issue written delegations of authority to Incident Commanders.

Agency Administrators must approve and publish decisions in WFDSS (and subsequent Courses of Action) and issue delegations of authority to the incident commander.

The delegation should:

- State specific and measurable objectives, priorities, expectations, Agency Administrator's intent, constraints, and other required direction.



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- Establish the specific time for transfer of command.
- Assign clear responsibilities for initial attack.
- Define your role in the management of the incident.
- Conduct during action reviews with the IC.
- Assign a resource advisor(s) to the IMT.
- Define public information responsibilities.
- If necessary, assign a local government liaison to the IMT.
- Assign an Incident Business Advisor (IBA) to provide incident business management oversight commensurate with complexity.
- Direct IMT to address rehabilitation of areas affected by suppression activities.

Appendix G of the Red Book provides an example Delegation of Authority to IMT letter.

## **C. IMT BRIEFING CHECKLIST**

The Park Superintendent'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 Park Superintendent's briefing will provide information, guidance, and direction, including constraints, necessary for the successful management of the incident.

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

### **1. Purpose of the Park Superintendent's briefing**

The purpose of the Park Superintendent's briefing is to:

- Provide a common understanding between the Park Superintendent and the incident management team of the environmental, social, political, economic, 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, 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 Park Superintendent to the Incident Commander.
- Identify key agency personnel who will be involved with the IMT, including the Park Superintendent's Representative (Agency Representative), Resource Advisor, and Incident Business Advisor.



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- Establish procedures and schedules for communication between the Park Superintendent 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 incidents
- Establish the disposition of local park suppression resources and local participation on the incident.
- Establish understanding for the use of trainees on the incident.
- Establish Park and incident policy on compensable meal breaks, work / rest, rest and recuperation, and open vs closed camps.
- Establish standards for return of the incident to local management, including mop-up and fire suppression rehabilitation expectations. Refer to section L for more information.
- Identify special safety awareness concerns and expectations.

### **2. Conducting the Park Superintendent's briefing**

The briefing should be planned for a comfortable setting away from distractions, where the incoming incident management team and all required representatives of the host agency can assemble. It should take place as soon as the incoming team is assembled. It is essential the Park Superintendent ensure notification of the briefing time and location to the incident commander, usually through the dispatch network.

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

The agenda for the Park Superintendent's briefing should include:

<b>Agenda Item</b>	<b>Presenter</b>
<b>Welcome and introductions</b>	Park Superintendent / IC
<b>Incident history</b>	FMO/Current IC if a team is transitioning
<b>Background of other activity or issues on the Park or that may influence this incident</b>	FMO / Park Superintendent
<b>Overview of WFDSS selected Course of Action, strategy and direction</b>	FMO
<b>Presentation of the Park Superintendent's briefing package (discussion of each element)</b>	FMO
<b>Presentation of delegation of authority to the IC</b>	Park Superintendent
<b>Emphasis on safety</b>	Park Superintendent
<b>Questions and answers</b>	IC / Park Superintendent / FMO
<b>Concluding remarks</b>	Park Superintendent

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### **3. Who should participate**

#### From the Park:

- Park Superintendents (both the Chief Ranger, Chief of Resources and Park Superintendent and/or their representatives)
- Park PIO and/or Chief of Interpretation
- Park FMO
- Resource Advisor(s)
- Incident Business Advisor or Administrative Officer
- current incident commander
- dispatch Center Manager
- incident support organization coordinator
- buying team leader
- necessary staff specialists

#### From the incident management team:

- the entire IMT if possible, but the command and general staff at a minimum

#### Others:

- involved cooperator's representatives

Do not make the Park Superintendent's briefing a public meeting and do not include the press.

### **4. Park Superintendent briefing format**

- Appendix D of the Red Book contains an Agency Administrators Briefing to IMT template
- Consult Geographic Area and Regional site for localized specific information regarding briefings

## **D. SUPERINTENDENT'S ROLE WITH IMT THROUGHOUT THE INCIDENT**

#### General Guidelines

After assigning the incident management team to a wildland fire on your unit, the Park Superintendent should allow those with delegated authority and responsibility to manage the situation and resources assigned to it. The Park Superintendent 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 following are suggestions for the Park Superintendent to help keep focused during a large fire incident:.

- Recognize that every fire has potential.
- Expect the unexpected, plan for multiple options and what-if scenarios.
- Be available and be involved, but do not micro-manage the incident.
- Order more support if needed.

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- Use experienced advisors, coaches, or deputies to better manage the situation of increased volume and complexity of business during this period.
- Make a presence at the daily briefings and speak to the resources in briefings to show your support and engagement.
- Review daily Incident Action Plans and ensure that tactics and other direction are compatible with the strategic objectives provided for the incident. Firefighter and public safety must be given visible and sincere emphasis.
- Provide oversight and direction to the Resource Advisor(s) and Agency Representative.
- Ensure that park welfare and caretaking is on-going. Local personnel can become overwhelmed by the events, activities, and organization related to a large fire. Keep staff 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 key publics and local government officials informed and involved.
- Understand the big picture; increasingly, one large fire is not the only game in town, and the conventional wisdom of fire suppression may not apply.
- Know what is going on, stay ahead of the power curve.
- Do not hesitate to bring in help to increase the park's depth and situational management capability.
- In fire suppression, more often than not, that which must be done eventually should be done immediately.
- Communication can not be overstated. Maintain open and consistent communication.

### **E. Incident Business Management**

Incident Business Advisor (IBA) must be assigned to any fire with costs of \$5 million or more. The complexity of the incident and the potential costs should be considered when assigning either an IBA1 or IBA2. If a qualified IBA is not available, the approving official will appoint a financial advisor to monitor expenditures. For further information refer to Chapter 11 of the Interagency Standards for Fire and Fire Aviation Operations.

The IBA works under the direct supervision of the Agency Administrator and in coordination with the IMT. The primary duty of the IBA 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. An IBA Field Reference can be found on the NWCG Incident Business Committee web page found at: <https://www.nwcg.gov/committees/incident-business-committee>.

### **F. WFDSS DECISION AND THE INCIDENT MANAGEMENT TEAM**

The Unit Park Superintendent has the overall responsibility for the incident and publishing Decision(s) in WFDSS. However, when an IMT has been delegated authority to manage an incident it is important that the team and the local unit work together to outline the Course of Action to be taken to successfully manage that incident. If the incident is multi-jurisdictional, the issue of responsibility could be further compounded between agencies. On some incidents, the Park Superintendent(s) may choose to delegate

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some WFDSS tasks to the IMT. For more specific guidance review NWCG memo 005-2012 "Wildland Fire Decision Support System and the Role of Incident Management".

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

The Park Superintendent 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 Park Superintendent 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 Park Superintendent'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 Park Superintendent, who is responsible to ensure the Decision published in WFDSS is still representative of the actions being taken on the fire, but the IMT should provide input for the Park Superintendent's consideration.
- Updating strategic tactical responses to the incident such as MAP development and revision, outlining and modifying the Course of Action, estimates and updates of incident costs.

## **2. Park Superintendent responsibilities regarding Decisions**

All decision documentation functions can be performed by the IMT through a delegation of authority with the exception of the responsibilities of the Park Superintendent which includes:

- Approving a decision.
- Writing the rationale for the decision.
- Initiating a new decision process during the Periodic Assessment. However, working together the IMT usually provides recommendations about changing conditions, needed tactics, and implementation strategies that might initiate a new decision within WFDSS.
- Entering or editing objectives or requirements for the local unit from local unit planning documents. However, the team has the responsibility to clarify local unit objectives and requirements with that unit.

## **G. IMT Performance Evaluations**

Chapter 11 of the Red Book covers Team Evaluations.

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

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## 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. Below is a list of items to consider when drafting turn back standards. This is not a complete list; 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 (Appendix 1 Example Turn Back Standards Letter).

- 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 Van demobed
- Fireline rehab is complete
- All Suppression related damage identified (fence line, gates, etc)
- All spike camps, helispots, helibases rehabilitated
- All back haul completed
- All time for personnel is accounted for and documented

## III. INTER-AGENCY COORDINATION

### A. NMAC

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:

- Providing oversight of general business practices between the NMAC group and the Geographic Area Multi-Agency Coordination groups.
- Establishing priorities and resource allocation among geographic areas.
- Establishing the National Preparedness Level
- Activating and maintaining a ready reserve of national resources for assignment directly by NMAC as needed.
- Implementing decisions of the NMAC.

The National Interagency Coordination Center's website for NMAC is:

<http://www.nifc.gov/nicc/administrative/nmac/index.html>

### B. GMAC Group

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Geographic Area Multi-Agency Coordinating (GMAC) groups oversee geographic area multi-agency coordination. They are comprised of area lead administrators or fire managers from the agencies that have jurisdiction or support responsibilities, or that may be significantly impacted by resource commitments. Their responsibilities include:

- Establishing priorities for the geographic area.
- Acquiring, allocating, and reallocating resources.
- Provide NMAC with National Ready Reserve (NRR) resources as required.
- Issue coordinated and collective situation status reports.

## **C. Area Command and Unified Command**

Chapter 11 of the Red book provides information regarding Area and Unified Command of incidents.

Area Command is an Incident Command System organization established to oversee the management of large or multiple incidents to which several Incident Management Teams have been assigned. Area Command may become Unified Area Command when incidents are multi-jurisdictional. The determining factor for establishing Area Command is the span of control of the Agency Administrator.

For additional information on Interagency Coordination and Cooperation refer to Chapter 8 of the Interagency Standards for Fire and Fire Aviation Operations.

## **IV. CRITICAL INCIDENT/SERIOUS ACCIDENT**

### **A. Incident within an Incident**

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

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

The NPS has a Loss of Human Life Handbook (LOHL) to guide response to fatalities. The LOHL and other helpful resources are available at <https://sites.google.com/a/nps.gov/leses/es/cism/lodd>

### **B. Reviews and Investigations**

Reviews, Facilitated Learning Analysis (FLA), Rapid Lesson Sharing (RLS) and investigations are used by wildland fire and aviation managers to assess and improve the effectiveness and safety of organizational operations. Information derived from safety reviews and accident investigations should only be used by agencies for accident prevention and safety purposes.

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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 Park Superintendent concerning what type and level of investigation or review is appropriate. There is a variety of accident investigation and analysis tools that could be used individually or concurrently for multiple investigations or reviews. It is possible depending on the incident that the Region or National Office will implement some level of review and will be the delegating authority for the review, FLA or investigation on your park. For more information regarding reviews see the *Interagency Standards for Fire and Fire Aviation Operations* Chapter 18.

## 1. Reviews

Reviews are methodical examinations of system elements such as program management, safety, leadership, operations, preparedness, training, staffing, business practices, budget, cost containment, planning, and interagency or intra- agency cooperation and coordination.

Reviews do not have to be associated with a specific incident. The purpose of a review is to ensure the effectiveness of the system element being reviewed, and to identify deficiencies and recommend specific corrective actions. The table below summarizes Review Types and Requirements and is further discussed in Chapter 18 of the *Interagency Standards for Fire and Fire Aviation Operations*.

Type	When Conducted	Delegating or Authorizing Official
<b>Preparedness Review</b>	Annually, or management discretion	Local/State/Region/National
<b>After Action Review (AAR)</b>	Management discretion	N/A
<b>Fire and Aviation Safety Team Review (FAST)</b>	As fire activity dictates	Geographic Area Coordinating Group
<b>Safety Assistance Team Visit</b>	As fire activity dictates	Local/State/Region/ National
<b>Aviation Safety and Technical Assistance Team Review</b>	As aviation activity dictates	State/Regional Aviation Manager or MACG
<b>Significant Wildland Fire Review (DOI)</b>	Refer to OWF Policy Memorandum 2016-013	Agency Director, Agency Administrator or individual bureau direction
<b>Individual Fire Review</b>	Management discretion	Local/State/Region/National
<b>Facilitated Learning Analysis (FLA)*</b>	Management discretion	Local/State/Region/National
<b>Rapid Lesson Sharing</b>	Management discretion	N/A
<b>Declared Wildfire Review</b>	See Interagency Prescribed Fire Planning and Implementation Procedures Guide (PMS 484) <i>Guide (2008)</i>	
<b>Notice of Air Quality Exceedance (NOV) Review</b>	See Interagency Prescribed Fire Planning and Implementation Procedures Guide (PMS 484)	

\*A guide for the FLA process is available at: [http://wildfirelessons.net/documents/FLA\\_Guide.pdf](http://wildfirelessons.net/documents/FLA_Guide.pdf)

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In deciding the appropriate type of incident review, it is necessary for Park Superintendents to: 1) determine if administrative actions are needed; 2) understand compliance with OSHA requirements; 3) prepare the agency for civil litigation and tort claims; 4) provide information to the Agency as a learning organization to prevent a future re-occurrence; and meet legal requirements. To address the multiple objectives of the National Park Service, Park Superintendents should consider supporting multiple coordinated (even concurrent) reviews. Data collected through a Facilitated Learning Analysis (FLA) can be used to meet the requirements of OSHA and RM-18.

### 2. Investigations

Investigations are detailed and methodical efforts to collect and interpret facts related to an incident or accident, identify causes (organizational factors, local workplace factors, unsafe acts), and develop control measures to prevent recurrence.

Chapter 18 of the Interagency Standards for Fire and Fire Aviation covers Reviews and Investigations, including – Agency Administrator responsibilities, investigation processes, wildland fire serious accident investigation processes (team configuration, notifications, reports etc.) and fire cause determination and trespass investigation.

The following table summarizes Investigation Types and Requirements and is further discussed in Chapter 18 of the Interagency Standards for Fire and Fire Aviation Operations

<b>Wildland Fire Event</b>	<b>Investigation Type</b>	<b>Notification Requirement</b>	<b>Management level that determines review types and authorizes review*</b>
<b>Serious Wildland Fire Accident</b>	Serious Accident Investigation (SAI) or the Coordinated Response Protocol (CRP) for FS employee fatality events	National	National
<b>Wildland Fire Accident</b>	Accident Investigation (AI) <i>NPS/FS – FLA may be used</i>	BLM/NPS- National FS/FWS- Management Discretion	Region/State/Local
<b>Entrapment/ Burnover</b>	SAI, AI, LLR, depending on severity	National	National/Regional
<b>Fire Shelter Deployment</b>	SAI, AI, LLR, depending on severity	National	National
<b>Near-miss</b>	LLR, AAR	Management Discretion	Region/State/Local
<b>Fire Trespass</b>	Fire Cause Determination & Trespass Investigation	Local	Local

\* Higher level management may exercise their authority to determine the type of review or investigation. Ensure you communicate and report upward with your supervisor and local safety officer.

Information on accident investigations may be found at:  
[http://www.nifc.gov/safety/safety\\_reprtsInvest.html](http://www.nifc.gov/safety/safety_reprtsInvest.html)

Appendix J and L of the Interagency Standards for Fire and Fire Aviation Operations provide sample delegation letters for a Lesson Learned Review and a Fire and Aviation Safety Team (FAST).



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## C. Critical Incident Stress Management

Chapter 7 of the Interagency Standards for Fire and Fire Aviation Operations provides information on Critical Incident Stress Management. A critical incident may be 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.

Serious accidents and fatalities are the most difficult events encountered. Agency policy requires assistance with the procedures for notification and respectfully dealing with serious accidents and fatalities. References include: NWCG PMS 926- Agency Administrator's Guide to Critical Incident Management (available <http://www.nwcg.gov/pms/pubs/pubs.htm>).

## D. Burn injuries

Chapter 7 of the Red Book provides information on the Required Treatment for Burn Injuries including the necessary procedures and documentation process for ensuring that an individual is covered by Workers Compensation benefits.

NWCG Memo #012-2008 addresses these same Standards for Burn Injuries.

For additional NWCG incident emergency medical information see:  
[https://www.nwcg.gov/committees/incident-emergency-medical11\\_subcommittee/resources](https://www.nwcg.gov/committees/incident-emergency-medical11_subcommittee/resources) under Guides & Policies

## 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 Lessons Learned Center website is a great resource for information regarding After Action Reviews:  
<https://www.wildfirelessons.net/HigherLogic/System/DownloadDocumentFile.ashx?DocumentFileKey=004b6127-9361-411a-a324-4ee16ac45f3b> . The Lessons Learned Center can provide an AAR training package. Supplemental documents and other resources are also available from the website. Regional and National Office support can be provided in regards to facilitators and other critical personnel for conducting an AAR.

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

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NPS direction for BAER, including prescribed fire, is found in RM-18 Chapter 19.

Chapter 11 of the Interagency Standards for Fire and Fire Aviation Operations 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 07 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.

Specifically, BAER work is focused on emergency watershed rehabilitation to stabilize soil, control water runoff, sedimentation, and debris movement, and prevent threats to life, property, and other downstream values resulting from the loss of vegetation and other organic material consumed by the fire. The Park Superintendent is responsible for assembling the BAER team and directing the team leader. The objectives set for the BAER team will largely be determined by land management standards which apply to the area impacted by the fire and the severity of the fire on that area.

Reference NIFC's BAER Website: <https://www.nifc.gov/BAER/>

Appendix 3 provides a sample delegation of authority letter to a BAER team.

## **PART 4: ACTIVE FUELS MANAGEMENT**

NPS direction for Fuels Management, including prescribed fire, is found in RM-18 Chapter 7.

A prescribed fire is a planned ignition.

The National Park Service will use the 2017 *Interagency Prescribed Fire Planning and Implementation Procedures Guide* (<https://www.nwcg.gov/sites/default/files/publications/pms484.pdf>) as direction for planning, implementing, and evaluating prescribed burns.

The Implementation Guide provides the minimum requirements for the BIA, BLM, FWS, NPS, and USDA Forest Service for planning and conducting prescribed burns. To supplement the minimum requirements found in the guide, NPS prescribed fire programs will adhere to the following additional requirements:

1. All prescribed fire projects will be coordinated in a collaborative process involving adjacent neighbors and local governments.
2. A Delegation of Authority for all off-park burn bosses will be prepared and signed by the Park Superintendent or acting. A current and signed Go-No Go must be completed with the Burn Boss prior to the burn being conducted.
3. An incident action plan (IAP) will be developed for each operational period of a prescribed fire. It is permissible to develop a multi-shift IAP to cover a period of several days. The 215A (Incident Safety Analysis) process will be utilized in the development of the IAP. Required components of the IAP include:
  - a. Organization Assignment (ICS-203)
  - b. Medical Plan (ICS-206)
  - c. Safety Message (or ICS-215A)

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- d. Division Assignment List (ICS-204)
  - e. Communication Plan (ICS-205)
  - f. Project Map
  - g. Weather Forecast (preferably spot weather)
  - h. Aviation Operations Summary (if applicable) (ICS-220)
1. Resources listed as "contingency" must be available to respond to the incident within a specified time frame. If the contingency resource becomes unavailable to respond to the prescribed fire, it must be replaced immediately, as the burn is now out of prescription.
  2. Parks are required to notify the regional fire management office within 24 hours of any of the following events:
    - a. Any prescribed fire converted to a wildfire
    - b. Any prescribed fire requiring activation of the contingency plan specified in the burn plan
    - c. Any prescribed fire that requires additional resources or operational time not accounted for in the incident action plan

If the burn is not an escape or a threat to escape, or is not and will not be declared a wildfire, regional notification is not required.

Although not required, the following items are highly recommended:

1. An executive summary is not required in the burn plan, but it is highly recommended, especially for high complexity burns and omnibus plans. An informative summary is useful for the agency administrator and reviewers of complex burn plans.
2. The Implementation Guide states that only three signatures are required (agency administrator, plan preparer who must be a qualified Type 2 Burn Boss and technical reviewer). It is recommended that the resource manager, the fire ecologist, and the fire management officer are also signatories as reviewers or for concurrence.
3. The Adequate Holding Worksheet is an optional tool for determining holding resources in element 16 (see section 7.3 for the list of prescribed fire plan elements). If it is not used, provide another rationale for determining holding resources.
4. For element 20 (Monitoring) of the prescribed burn plan, direction is provided at the end of this section and in chapter 8, Fire Ecology and Monitoring of RM 18.

## Appendix 1: Delegation of Authority - BAER Team

MEMORANDUM

Reply To: Office of the Superintendent, Agency

Subject: Delegation of Authority, Burned Area Emergency Stabilization and Rehabilitation

To: David N. Smith, Burned Area Emergency Response Team Leader

You are hereby delegated authority and responsibility to establish an Emergency Stabilization Plan outlining emergency treatment measures and standards necessary to mitigate fire and suppression damage resulting from the \_\_\_\_\_ Fire. You will also identify and direct mitigation measures that are immediate in nature and that should be completed by the suppression organization. All rehabilitation activities will be conducted within the framework of provisions contained within Part 620: Department of Interior Manual Chapter 3; National Park Service policy, \_\_\_\_\_ policy and sound resource management practices.

Your primary responsibility is to organize and direct your assigned resources to establish and complete both short and long-term measures to protect the resources of the \_\_\_\_\_ Reservation from further damage and start the process of recovery. You are to work in cooperation with the \_\_\_\_\_ Incident Management Team, which is in charge of incident suppression and you will coordinate your activities with \_\_\_\_\_ Incident Commander. I am also directing the IMT Incident Commander, through copy of this delegation, to assist you and your team in the rapid assessment and implementation of emergency stabilization measures to protect the lives, property and critical natural and cultural resources of \_\_\_\_\_ tribes. This assistance from the IMT will include aerial reconnaissance assistance, ordering of supplies, materials, equipment, and personnel, and implementation of treatments where feasible to complete your task. You are accountable to me, or in my absence, my designated representative.

\_\_\_\_\_, NPS, XX Program Manager will represent me as Park Superintendent when I am unavailable. \_\_\_\_\_ is designated as principle fiscal oversight and business management contact for the Agency.

---

Superintendent, XX Agency Date

Cc: \_\_\_\_\_ Incident Commander

## Appendix 2: Cost Share Agreement Template

COST SHARE AGREEMENT

**Between the**

**XX AGENCY**

**And the**

**XX AGENCY**

This cost share agreement is between the agencies identified above, as negotiated for the following incident in accordance with the Statewide Cooperative Fire Protection Agreement #xx-xx executed between the parties on (date). The purpose of this agreement is to allocate financial responsibility as outlined in the XXX Fire Decision Document and to describe the cost division.

General Incident Information:

Incident Name:			
Incident Start Date and Time:			
Origin:			
Township:	Range:	Section:	
Estimated Size:		Acres at the time of this agreement:	
Incident Cause:			

Incident Numbers by Protection Agency:

Agency	Incident #	Accounting Code

Cost Share Period: This agreement becomes effective on the date indicated below and will remain in effect until amended or terminated.

State date/time:

End date/time:

Other conditions relative to this agreement:

1. Costs incurred by cooperators not engaged with the host agency or IMT in the fire suppression activities will not be included as a part of this cost share agreement.
2. Responsibility for tort claim costs will not be a part of this agreement. Responsibility for these costs will be determined outside this agreement.

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3. Costs for accountable, sensitive, and durable property purchased by each agency will be charged directly to that agency and will not be shared.
4. Non-suppression rehabilitation costs are the responsibility of the jurisdictional agency and will not be shared.
5. Each agency will bill for their costs as outlined in the XX Cooperative Fire Agreement billing procedures.

**Cost Share Methodology:**

Describe the chosen cost share method for this fire and the details that explain the apportionment. A map must be included that shows fire area with the methodology applied to that map.

**Final Agency Apportionment:**

1. Federal Share:

a.	USFS	%
b.	BLM	%
c.	FWS	%
d.	NPS	%
e.	BIA	%

2. State Share :

a.	MT	%
b.	ID	%
c.	ND	%
d.	other	%

**Principal Contacts:**

The following personnel are the principal contacts:

Title:	Name:	Agency:
Agency Administrator		
Agency Representative		
Agency Administrator		
Agency Representative		
Incident Business Advisor(s)		
Incident Commander(s)		
Other IMT members as appropriate		

**Signatures of Authorized Personnel & Attachments:**

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This agreement and the apportionment described are our best judgments of fair and equitable agency cost responsibilities.

List and include appropriate attachments (such as I-Suite reports, Aircraft Use Reports, map, etc.):

Original Agreement: \_\_\_\_\_ (#1)

Supplemental Agreement: Number\_\_\_\_ Supersedes Agreement # \_\_\_\_\_ Dated \_\_\_\_\_

Agency Name:

Address

City, State Zip

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

XXNAME, Title

Agency Name:

Address

City, State Zip

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

XXNAME, Title

