



United States Department of the Interior

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

Division of Fire & Aviation

3833 S. Development Avenue

Boise, Idaho 83705

ELECTRONIC COPY ONLY – NO HARD COPY TO FOLLOW

May 29, 2020

To: Deputy and Associate Regional Directors with Oversight of Wildland Fire Management Programs

From: Division Chief, Fire and Aviation Management

Subject: Leader's Intent: 2020 Wildland Fire Season

The 2020 Fire Season will not be like any we have experienced with additional complexity and uncertainties the COVID-19 pandemic presents. Nationally, the Wildland Fire [Predictive Services](#) program expects the 2020 season to have normal to above normal fire activity. As a reminder, normal does not mean slow.

The Department of the Interior has identified fire suppression services and protection of facilities and infrastructure as mission essential functions that should continue through the pandemic. Active forest management that provides for greater flexibility and more defensible space for fire suppression actions around facilities and communities is an essential function in its support of our efforts. Line officers should consult with their park fire management officers and prioritize the completion of projects with multiple objectives that include life safety and asset protection.

Balancing the beneficial role of fire in the ecosystem, effective initial attack, and maintaining firefighter health and their availability for fire management activities will be ever more complex given the pandemic. We are addressing these concerns as effectively as possible, recognizing our normal ways of doing business will require adjustments. Interagency geographic area-based wildland fire response plans have been drafted for this season reflecting COVID-19 pandemic conditions. Park, regional, and national fire staff should use these plans to guide fire response. These plans, as well as guidance issued by the National Wildfire Coordinating Group (NWCG), the National Multi-agency Coordinating Group (NMAC), and the Fire Management Board (FMB) provide interagency best management practices for maintaining fire response capability and firefighter health, including continuity of operations for critical, single point failure resources such as dispatch centers and fire caches along with preparing for initial attack, extended attack, and managing large fires during this pandemic. All of these documents can be found at: <https://doimsp.sharepoint.com/sites/nps-in2-visitor-and-resource-protection/SitePages/insidenps-org-office-home.aspx>.

This won't be easy. You will face challenging fire management decisions in the coming months. Firefighter and public safety remain our highest priority. I encourage you to review the Agency Administrator Management Performance Requirements for Fire Operations beginning on page 70 of the [2020 Interagency Fire and Fire Aviation Operations Guide](#), also known as the Red Book. This is an effective way to reflect on your fire program responsibilities and discuss

specific risks and their mitigation with your staff. Use the resources available to you such as the applicable Geographic Area *Wildfire Response Plan: COVID-19 Pandemic* posted to geographic area coordination center websites, the expertise of your park, regional, and national fire management staff, and public health programs to assist you in managing and leading your team in their engagement with fire. Rely on your park or regional fire staff to help mobilize this type of assistance.

Finally, it is incumbent upon us to ensure the safest possible work environment for our staff assuring not only for their physical well-being but also their mental well-being. Everyone involved in wildland fire activities has the right to a respectful and harassment free environment. This unprecedented year brings enough challenges and stress. Misconduct and harassment will not be tolerated. I encourage you to emphasize this message in your pre-season meetings, messages, and interactions throughout the year.

Soon wildland fire personnel will be reporting for duty, if they haven't already done so. Onboarding, conducting training, project work, and active fuels management activities utilizing disease prevention guidance provided by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention requires additional planning - which is not insurmountable. Maintaining health and readiness for the times of greatest need is imperative. I know you and your staff are up for the challenge. Together, we will work through each new problem as they arise.

cc: Dan Buckley, Branch Chief, Wildland Fire
Karma Hope, Administrative Assistant, Fire and Aviation Management
NPS Memorandums