FEDERAL WILDLAND FIRE MANAGEMENT POLICY OVERVIEW

Chapter 01

Federal Wildland Fire Management Policy XXX and Guidance Overview

Scope

The Interagency Standards for Fire and Fire Aviation Operations states, references, or supplements policy for Bureau of Land Management, Forest Service, Fish and Wildlife Service and National Park Service fire and fire aviation program management. Original source policy is stated or referenced throughout this handbook. This handbook attempts to quote verbatim, rather than to paraphrase policy that is stated elsewhere. It also attempts to limit duplication of source policy when a reference will suffice. Interagency Standards for Fire and Fire Aviation Operations is intended to comply with and support the XXX 2009 Implementation Strategy for the Federal Wildland Fire Policy Review and Update of the 1995 Federal Wildland Fire Management Policy (January 2001) and the Guidance for Implementation of Federal Wildland Fire Management Policy (February 13, 2009) and other existing federal policy.

Purpose

The Interagency Standards for Fire and Fire Aviation Operations provides fire and fire aviation program management direction for Bureau of Land Management, Forest Service, Fish and Wildlife Service and National Park Service managers. Employees engaged in fire management activities will continue to comply with all agency-specific health and safety policy. XXX documents, XXX and with fire operations standards stated in the Other references, such as the NWGC Incident Response Pocket Guide (PMS 461, NFES 1077) and the NWCG Fireline Handbook (PMS 410-1, NFES 0065), provide operational guidance.


The XXX 2009 Implementation Strategy for the Federal Wildland Fire Policy comprises Review and Update of the 1995 Federal Wildland Fire Management Policy (January 2001) is comprised of the following guiding principles and discreet policies. As a whole these principles and policy statements guide the philosophy, direction and implementation of fire management planning, activities and projects on federal lands.

Guiding Principles of the Federal Wildland Fire Management Policy

1. Firefighter and public safety is the first priority in every fire management activity.
2. The role of wildland fire as an essential ecological process and natural change agent will be incorporated into the planning process. Federal
agency land and resource management plans set the objectives for the use and desired future condition of the various public lands.

3. Fire Management Plans (FMP)s, programs and activities support land and resource management plans and their implementation.

4. Sound risk management is a foundation for all fire management activities. Risks and uncertainties relating to fire management activities must be understood, analyzed, communicated and managed as they relate to the cost of either doing or not doing an activity. Net gains to the public benefit will be an important component of decisions.

5. Fire management programs and activities are economically viable, based upon values to be protected, costs and land and resource management objectives. Federal agency administrators are adjusting and reorganizing programs to reduce costs and increase efficiencies. As part of this process, investments in fire management activities must be evaluated against other agency programs in order to effectively accomplish the overall mission, set short and long term priorities and clarify management accountability.

6. FMPs and activities are based upon the best available science. Knowledge and experience are developed among all wildland fire management agencies. An active fire research program combined with interagency collaboration provides the means to make these tools available to all fire managers.

7. FMPs and activities incorporate public health and environmental quality considerations.

8. Federal, state, tribal, local, interagency and international coordination and cooperation are essential. Increasing costs and smaller work forces require that public agencies pool their human resources to successfully deal with the ever-increasing and more complex fire management tasks. Full collaboration among federal agencies and between the federal agencies and international, state, tribal and local governments and private entities results in a mobile fire management work force available for the full range of public needs.

9. Standardization of policies and procedures among federal agencies is an ongoing objective. Consistency of plans and operations provides the fundamental platform upon which federal agencies can cooperate, integrate fire activities across agency boundaries and provide leadership for cooperation with state, tribal and local fire management organizations.


Elements of the Federal Wildland Fire Management Policy

1. Safety
Firefighter and public safety is the first priority. All FMPs and activities must reflect this commitment.

01-2 Release Date: January 2011
2. Fire Management and Ecosystem Sustainability
   The full range of fire management activities will be used to help achieve ecosystem sustainability, including interrelated ecological, economic and social components.

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

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

5. Rehabilitation and Restoration
   Rehabilitation and restoration efforts will be undertaken to protect and sustain ecosystems, public health, safety and to help communities protect infrastructure.

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

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

8. Planning
   Every area with burnable vegetation must have an approved FMP. FMPs are strategic plans that define a program to manage wildland and prescribed fires based on the area’s approved land management plan (LMP). FMPs must provide for firefighter and public safety; include fire management strategies, tactics and alternatives; address values to be protected and public
9. **Science**

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

10. **Preparedness**

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

11. **Suppression**

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

12. **Prevention**

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

13. **Standardization**

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

14. **Interagency Cooperation and Coordination**

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

15. **Communication and Education**

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

16. **Agency Administrator and Employee Roles**

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

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

Review and Update of the 1995 Federal Wildland Fire Management Policy
(January 2001)

XXX Guidance for Implementation of Federal Wildland Fire Management
Policy (February 13, 2009)

XXX In February, 2009, the Fire Executive Council (the fire directors of the
DOI - OWFC, BLM, BIA, USFWS and the USDA - USFS) issued the 2009
Guidance for Implementation of Federal Fire Policy which was intended to “be
used to provide consistent implementation of federal wildland fire policy.” On
February 13, 2009, the Fire Executive Council (FEC) approved guidance for the
implementation of federal wildland fire management policy. This guidance
provides for consistent implementation of the Review and Update of the 1995
Federal Wildland Fire Management Policy (January 2001), as directed by the
Wildland Fire Leadership Council.

Guidance for Implementation of Federal Wildland Fire Management Policy
(February 13, 2009), page 3.

XXX The key statements from this document are: The following
guidelines should be used to provide consistent implementation of federal
wildland fire policy.

1. Wildland fire management agencies will use common standards for all
aspects of their fire management programs to facilitate effective
cooperation among cooperating agencies.

2. Agencies and bureaus will review, update and develop agreements that
clarify the jurisdictional inter-relationships and define the roles and
responsibilities among local, state, tribal and federal fire protection entities.

3. Responses to wildland fire will be coordinated across levels of government
regardless of the jurisdiction at the ignition source.

4. Fire Management Plans will be intergovernmental in scope and developed
on a landscape scale.

5. Wildland fire is a general term describing any non-structure fire that occurs
in the wildland. Wildland fires are categorized into two distinct types:
 a. Wildfires - Unplanned ignitions or prescribed fires that are
declared wildfires.

 b. Prescribed Fires - Planned ignitions.
6. A wildland fire may be concurrently managed for one or more objectives and objectives can change as the fire spreads across the landscape. Objectives are affected by changes in fuels, weather, topography; varying social understanding and tolerance; and involvement of other governmental jurisdictions having different missions and objectives.

7. Management response to a wildland fire on federal land is based on objectives established in the applicable Land/Resource Management Plan and/or the Fire Management Plan.

8. Initial action on human-caused wildfire will be to suppress the fire at the lowest cost with the fewest negative consequences with respect to firefighter and public safety.

9. Managers will use a decision support process to guide and document wildfire management decisions. The process will provide situational assessment, analyze hazards and risk, define implementation actions and document decisions and rationale for those decisions.


Fire Management Objectives

Federal agency fire management programs should help resource managers protect, maintain and enhance federal lands in a cost effective manner.

Wildland fire management objectives are:

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

Fire Operations Doctrine

Purpose of Fire Operations Doctrine
Fire operations doctrine states the fundamental principles on the subject of fire operations. This doctrine establishes a particular way of thinking about fire operations. It provides a philosophy for leading firefighters in fire operations, a mandate for professionalism and a common language. Fire operations doctrine does not consist of procedures to be applied to specific situations so much as it sets forth general guidance that requires judgment in application.

The Nature of Fire Operations
Fire is a complex, dynamic and often unpredictable phenomenon. Fire operations require mobilizing a complex organization that includes management, command, support and firefighting personnel, as well as aircraft, vehicles, machinery, and communications equipment. While the magnitude and complexity of the fire itself and of the human response to it will vary, the fact that fire operations are inherently dangerous will never change. A firefighter utilizing the best available science, equipment and training and working within the scope of agency doctrine and policy, can still suffer serious injury or death.

Wildland Fire Operations Risk Management
The primary means by which we prevent accidents in wildland fire operations is through aggressive risk management. Our safety philosophy acknowledges that while the ideal level of risk may be zero, a hazard free work environment is not a reasonable or achievable goal in fire operations. Through organized, comprehensive and systematic risk management, we will determine the acceptable level of risk that allows us to provide for safety yet still achieve fire operations objectives. Risk management is intended to minimize the number of injuries or fatalities experienced by wildland firefighters.

Fire Preparedness
Fire preparedness is the state of being ready to provide an appropriate response to wildland fires based on identified objectives. Preparedness is the result of activities that are planned and implemented prior to fire ignitions. Preparedness requires identifying necessary firefighting capabilities and implementing coordinated programs to develop those capabilities. Preparedness requires a continuous process of developing and maintaining firefighting infrastructure, predicting fire activity, identifying values to be protected, hiring, training, equipping, pre-positioning and deploying firefighters and equipment, evaluating
performance, correcting deficiencies and improving operations. All
preparedness activities should be focused on developing fire operations
capabilities and on performing successful fire operations.

Fire Operations Command Philosophy
It is essential that our philosophy of command support the way we conduct fire
operations. First and foremost, in order to generate effective decision making in
fire operations and to cope with the unpredictable nature of fire, commanders’
intent must be lucid and unambiguous and lines of authority must be clearly
articulated and understood. Subordinate commanders must make decisions on
their own initiative based on their understanding of their commander’s intent. A
competent subordinate commander who is at the point of decision may
understand a situation more clearly than a senior commander some distance
removed. In this case, the subordinate commander must have the freedom to
take decisive action directed toward the accomplishment of operational
objectives. However, this does not imply that unity of effort does not exist, or
that actions are not coordinated. Unity of effort requires coordination and
cooperation among all forces toward a commonly understood objective.
Unified, coordinated action, whether between adjacent single resources on the
fireline or between the highest command level and the most subordinate
firefighter, is critical to successful fire operations.

Fire Leadership
Leadership is the art of influencing people in order to achieve a result. The most
essential element for success in the wildland fire service is good leadership.
Good leaders provide purpose, direction and motivation for wildland firefighters
working to accomplish difficult tasks under dangerous, stressful circumstances.
Leaders often face difficult problems to which there are no simple, clear-cut, by-
the-book solutions. In these situations, leaders must use their knowledge, skill,
experience, education, values and judgment to make decisions and to take or
direct action - in short, to provide leadership. All firefighters, regardless of
position, must provide leadership.

Fire Suppression
The purpose of fire suppression is to put the fire out in a safe, effective and
efficient manner. Fires are easier and less expensive to suppress when they are
small. When the management goal is full suppression, aggressive initial attack
is the single most important method to ensure the safety of firefighters and the
public and to limit suppression costs. Aggressive initial attack provides the
Incident Commander maximum flexibility in suppression operations.
Successful initial attack relies on speed and appropriate force. All aspects of fire
suppression benefit from this philosophy. Planning, organizing and
implementing fire suppression operations should always meet the objective of
directly, quickly and economically contributing to the suppression effort. Every
firefighter, whether in a management, command, support, or direct suppression
role, should be committed to maximizing the speed and efficiency with which
the most capable firefighters can engage in suppression action. When the
management goal is other than full suppression, or when conditions dictate a
limited suppression response, decisiveness is still essential and an aggressive
approach toward accomplishment of objectives is still critical.

**Principles of Suppression Operations**
The primary means by which we implement command decisions and maintain
unity of action is through the use of common principles of suppression
operations. These principles guide our fundamental fire suppression practices,
behaviors and customs, and are mutually understood at every level of command.
They include Risk Management, Standard Firefighting Orders and Watch Out
Situations, LCES and the Downhill Line Construction Checklist. These
principles are fundamental to how we perform fire suppression operations and
are intended to improve decision making and firefighter safety. They are not
absolute rules. They require judgment in application.

**Principles of Fire Suppression Action**
The principles of fire suppression action provide a framework for developing
fire suppression strategy and for conducting fire suppression operations. Again,
these are not absolute, immutable rules. These five principles provide a
consistent set of considerations with which to evaluate decisions, plans, and
actions in different situations.

1. **Objective**
The principle of the objective is to direct every fire suppression operation
toward a clearly defined, decisive and obtainable objective. The purpose of
fire suppression operations is to achieve the suppression objectives that
support the overall management goals for the fire.

2. **Speed and Focus**
   Speed is rapidity of action. Focus is the convergence of appropriate
   resources at the desired position to initiate action. The principle of speed
   and focus maintains that rapidly deploying and concentrating firefighting
   resources, in a calculated fashion, at the decisive time and place increases
   the likelihood of successful suppression actions.

3. **Positioning**
The principle of positioning maintains that rapid, flexible and opportunistic
   movement increases the effectiveness of fire suppression resources.
   Positioning ranges from single resource offensive or defensive reactions to
dynamic fire conditions, to pre-positioning of multiple resources based on
predicted activity and values at risk. Positioning should always be
undertaken with speed and focus in mind and with sufficient time for
positioning to occur before operations begin.

4. **Simplicity**
The principle of simplicity is that clear, uncomplicated plans and concise
   orders maximize effectiveness and minimize confusion. Simplicity
   contributes to successful actions.
5. Safety

The principle of safety maintains that ensuring the safety of firefighters and other persons affected by fire operations is fundamental to successful suppression action. Safety not only contributes to successful actions, it is indispensable to them.

Cost Effective Fire Operations

Maximizing the cost effectiveness of any fire operation is the responsibility of all involved; including those that authorize, direct or implement those operations. Cost effectiveness is the most economical use of the suppression resources necessary to accomplish mission objectives. Accomplishing fire operations objectives safely and efficiently will not be sacrificed for the sole purpose of “cost savings.” Care will be taken to ensure that suppression expenditures are commensurate with values to be protected, while understanding that other factors may influence spending decisions, including the social, political, economic and biophysical environments.

XXX Professional Liability Insurance

With the signing of Public Law 110-161 on December 26, 2007 temporary fire line managers, in addition to management officials and law enforcement officers, may be reimbursed for up to one half of the cost incurred for professional liability insurance including any administrative processing cost charged by the insurance company. To qualify, these “temporary fire line managers” must meet one of the following three criteria:

- Provide temporary supervision or management of personnel engaged in wildland fire activities;
- Provide analysis or information that affects a supervisor’s or manager’s decision about a wildland fire;
- Direct the deployment of equipment for a wildland fire, such as a base camp manager, an equipment manager, a helicopter coordinator, or an initial attack dispatcher.

Refer to agency specific policies for reimbursement.

MOVED TO CHAPTER 10