

1 **Chapter 05**
2 **USDA Forest Service Wildland Fire and Aviation Program**
3 **Organization and Responsibilities**

4
5 **Introduction**

6
7 This document is intended to be a program reference guide that documents the
8 standards for operational procedures and practices for the USDA Forest Service
9 Fire and Aviation Management program. The standards provided in this
10 handbook are based on current agency and interagency wildland fire
11 management policy, and is intended to provide fire and aviation program
12 guidance and to ensure safe, consistent, efficient, and effective fire and aviation
13 operations. This document will be reviewed and updated annually.

14
15 **Foundational Doctrine**

16
17 The following collection of principles and beliefs form the foundational doctrine
18 for fire suppression in the U.S. Forest Service. These principles and beliefs
19 operate at multiple organizational levels, including:

- 20 • Forest Service Wide (i.e., apply to all employees and activities)
- 21 • Fire and Aviation Management (i.e., are specific to the fire and aviation
22 management program)
- 23 • Fire Suppression (i.e., are specific to fire fighting activities).

24
25 **The Operational Environment**

26 • *Fire Suppression*

27 1. No resource or facility is worth the loss of human life, however the wildland
28 fire suppression environment is complex and possesses inherent hazards that
29 can, even with reasonable mitigation, result in harm to fire fighters engaged in
30 fire suppression operations. In recognition of this fact, we are committed to the
31 aggressive management of risk.

32
33 **Mission**

34 • *Forest Service Wide*

35 2. The Forest Service is prepared and organized to support national and
36 international emergencies with trained personnel and other assets when
37 requested.

38
39 3. Agency employees respond when they come across situations where human
40 life is immediately at risk or there is a clear emergency, and they are capable of
41 assisting without undue risk to themselves or others.

42
43 4. In responding to emergencies, we will bring the same professionalism and
44 passion for safety as we do to non-emergency situations.

45

1 5. Support for local fire emergencies takes priority over accomplishment of local
2 resource targets. Support of non-local fire emergencies will be at the discretion
3 of the local line officer, as bounded by agency agreements and Regional or
4 National direction.

5

6 6. A cooperative relationship between the Forest Service and other agencies is
7 essential. The Forest Service is committed to honor its part of the joint
8 responsibility to develop and maintain effective working relationships with its
9 intergovernmental cooperators.

10

11 • *Fire & Aviation Management*

12 7. Fire management is central to meeting the Forest Service mission –
13 conserving natural resources, restoring ecological health, and protecting
14 communities.

15

16 • *Fire Suppression*

17 8. Successful fire suppression is essential to support the Forest Service mission.

18

19 9. The intent of wildfire suppression is to protect human life, property, and at
20 risk lands and resources.

21

22 **Leadership and Accountability**

23 • *Forest Service Wide*

24 10. The hallmarks of Forest Service leadership are action, attitude, and
25 accountability.

26

27 11. Leaders express clear and concise intent to ensure assignments are managed
28 safely, effectively, and efficiently.

29

30 12. Leaders regularly monitor operations for effectiveness, and take action when
31 there is recognition of exceptional or problematic employee performance.

32

33 13. Both positive reinforcement and discipline will be based on individual
34 behavior as measured by: adherence to the rules; appropriate application of
35 doctrine, principles and guidelines; execution of responsibilities commensurate
36 with role; and appropriate use of available information.

37

38 • *Fire Suppression*

39 14. Demonstrated fitness for command is a requirement for leadership positions
40 associated with fire fighting.

41

42 **Roles and Relationships**

43 • *Forest Service Wide*

44 15. Commitment to duty, respect for others, and personal integrity are expected.
45 Every employee fosters a work environment that is enjoyable, rewarding,
46 recognizes the value of diversity, and is free of harassment.

1 • *Fire & Aviation Management*

2 16. Line officers with fire management responsibilities will have knowledge and
3 understanding of fire program management.

4

5 17. Contracted resources will meet identified standards for qualifications,
6 training, productivity, and efficiency necessary to meet emergency response
7 needs.

8

9 18. It is the Forest Service responsibility to initiate and participate in public
10 education efforts to promote support for necessary fire management activities.

11

12 • *Fire Suppression*

13 19. Every Forest Service employee has a responsibility to support fire
14 suppression emergencies in a manner that meets identified needs, and is within
15 their qualifications and capabilities.

16

17 **Operations**

18 • *Forest Service Wide*

19 20. Employees are expected and empowered to be creative and decisive, to
20 exercise initiative and accept responsibility, and to use their training, experience,
21 and judgment in decision-making to carry out their leader's intent.

22

23 21. Employees are expected and empowered to make reasonable and prudent
24 decisions to accomplish the agency mission while minimizing exposure to
25 hazards.

26

27 22. Clear, uncomplicated plans and concise orders maximize effectiveness and
28 minimize confusion.

29

30 • *Fire Suppression*

31 23. When it is time to fight fire, we do so in a manner that maximizes
32 effectiveness of effort, has highest regard for firefighter and public safety, and
33 controls costs.

34

35 24. Every fire suppression operation is directed toward clearly-defined, decisive,
36 and obtainable objectives.

37

38 25. Command and control must be decentralized to cope with the unpredictable
39 nature of fire. To achieve their leader's intent and accomplish operational
40 objectives, subordinate commanders are required to make decisions on their own
41 initiative, and to coordinate their efforts.

42

43 26. Unity of effort is maintained and suppression actions are coordinated at all
44 times.

45

1 27. Using principles requires judgment in application, while adherence to rules
2 does not. In combination, principles and rules guide our fundamental wildland
3 fire suppression practices and behaviors, and are mutually understood at every
4 level of command.

5
6 28. Rapid deployment and concentration of fire suppression resources at the
7 decisive time and place is essential to successful fire suppression actions.

8
9 29. Maintaining high capability for initial attack is essential to public and fire
10 fighter safety, accomplishment of management objectives, and cost containment.

11 **Risk Management**

12 **Risk Management**

13 **• Fire Suppression**

14 30. We practice risk management to minimize the exposure and affects of the
15 inherent hazards in fire suppression while maximizing the opportunities to
16 achieve leader intent.

17 **Agency Administrator Positions**

18
19 The Forest Service Director of Fire and Aviation Management, the Director of
20 Human Resources and the Forest Service Line Officer Team have developed
21 core fire management competencies for inclusion into the position descriptions
22 and in selection criteria for agency administrators. They are presented here for
23 reference.

24 **Evaluation Criterion**

25
26 Knowledge of fire program management including ability to integrate fire and
27 fuels management across all program areas and functions; ability to implement
28 fire management strategies and integrate natural resource concerns into
29 collaborative community protection and ecosystem restoration strategies;
30 knowledge to oversee a fire management program including budget,
31 preparedness, prevention, suppression, and hazardous fuels reduction; ability to
32 serve as an agency administrator during an incident on an assigned unit; and
33 ability to provide a fully staffed, highly qualified, and diversified firefighting
34 workforce that exists in a "safety first" and "readiness" environment.

35 **Training and Core Competencies**

- 36 • Attend a regional or national Fire Management Leadership for Agency
37 Administrators training session
- 38 • Require a shadow assignment with a fully qualified agency administrator
- 39 • Receive training or experience in the Wildland Fire Decision Support
40 System (WFDSS).
- 41 • Provide a Delegation of Authority to incident commanders

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1 **Line Officer Certification Program**

2 The following principles will guide certification of agency administrators in fire
3 management:

- 4 • Regional Foresters are accountable for certification of line officers
- 5 • Line officer evaluation includes standards for training, background and
6 experience, and demonstrated ability, which will result in a qualitative
7 evaluation of readiness by the Regional Forester
- 8 • When the complexity level of a fire exceeds a line officer's certification, a
9 coach will be assigned to advise (but not replace)
- 10 • This certification program will be periodically evaluated and updated as
11 needed
- 12 • Decision Support Groups may be requested and would be assigned as fire
13 costs approach certain thresholds
- 14 • The Coaching/Shadowing program, to be administered by each region, is an
15 integral part of this certification program

16
17 **Line Officers will be evaluated in three basic areas:**

- 18 • Training
- 19 • Background and experience
- 20 • Demonstrated understanding of concepts and principles

21
22 This certification program is a multi-level process where line officers
23 demonstrate competence in one of three levels of managing fires. Those levels
24 would be Working, Journey, and Advanced.

25
26 **Guidelines**

27 In consideration of the appropriate level (Working, Journey, and Advanced) to
28 assign a line officer, the Regional Forester should consider the following
29 guidelines:

- 30 • For individuals that do not meet at least the Working Level, a coach will be
31 assigned to support that line officer in managing Type 3 or higher wildfire
32 incidents.

33
34 **Working Level** - The line officer could manage a low to moderate complexity
35 fire. The line officer should meet the following:

- 36 • **Training:** Fire Management Leadership or National Fire Management for
37 Line Officers, and WFDSS Certification (*FSM 5130*)
- 38 • **Background and Experience:** Successful management of a minimum of
39 one Type 3 or higher fire, or one successful higher complexity fire (Type 2
40 or higher) quality shadow assignment (consider complexity and size of the
41 fires). Management oversight of a low-complexity fire program and/or
42 experience as an agency administrator or representative. Applicable
43 experience in all hazard or other incident oversight may be considered in
44 lieu of this experience. Consider career fire experience.

- 1 • **Demonstrated Ability:** Successful evaluation by a coach (including
2 feedback from ICs or ACs) that the candidate has demonstrated
3 understanding and application of the responsibilities of an agency
4 administrator on smaller low-complexity fires with a basic understanding of
5 the elements of the core competencies.

6

7 **Journey Level** - The line officer could manage a moderate to high complexity
8 fire. The line officer needs to be certified at the Working Level and should meet
9 the following:

- 10 • **Training:** Fire Management Leadership or National Fire Management for
11 Line Officers, and WFDSS Certification (*FSM 5130*).
- 12 • **Background and Experience:**
- 13 ➤ Successful management of a minimum of one Type 2 or higher fire, or
14 one successful higher complexity fire (Type I) quality shadow
15 assignment, depending on fire experience (complexity and size of the
16 fires should be considered).
- 17 ➤ Management oversight of a moderate-complexity fire program or
18 experience as an agency administrator or representative on Type 2 or
19 higher fires.
- 20 ➤ Applicable experience in all hazard or other incident oversight may
21 also be considered in lieu of other guidelines.
- 22 • **Demonstrated Ability:** Successful evaluation by a coach (including
23 feedback from ICs or ACs) that the candidate has demonstrated
24 understanding and application of the responsibilities of an agency
25 administrator on moderate to large complex fires in the core competencies,
26 and other elements that may be relevant.

27

28 **Advanced Level** - The line officer could manage a high complexity fire. The
29 line officer needs to be certified at the Journey Level and should meet the
30 following:

- 31 • **Training:** Fire Management Leadership or National Fire Management for
32 Line Officers, and WFDSS Certification (*FSM 5130*).
- 33 • **Background and Experience:**
- 34 ➤ Successful management of a minimum of 5 Type 1 or 2 fires (at least
35 one of which is a Type 1 fire), depending on fire experience
36 (complexity and size of the fires should be considered).
- 37 ➤ Management oversight of a moderate to high-complexity fire program.
- 38 ➤ Applicable experience in all hazard or other incident oversight may
39 also be considered in lieu of other guidelines.
- 40 • **Demonstrated Ability:** Successful evaluation by a coach (including
41 feedback from ICs or ACs) that the candidate has demonstrated
42 understanding and application of the responsibilities of an agency
43 administrator on large complex fires in the core competencies, and other
44 elements that may be relevant.

45

46

1 Other Considerations

2 Core competencies, consistent with Fire Doctrine principles, include:

- 3 ● Safety.
- 4 ● Strategies and tactics for cost containment.
- 5 ● Incident management processes.
- 6 ● Understanding of decision support tools.
- 7 ● Situational awareness of resource availability & allocation.
- 8 ● Understanding fire agreements and cost apportionment.
- 9 ● WFDSS experience
- 10 ● Monitoring and evaluation of fire operations.
- 11 ● Risk management.
- 12 ● Social/political awareness and interpersonal relations.

13

14 Other training opportunities to achieve core competencies - Additional training
15 opportunities/suggestions (will be updated as program is evaluated)

- 16 ● Upper levels of fire leadership and fire management courses
- 17 ● Be the actual line officer in the Type 3 IC certification sand table exercises
- 18 ● Participate in advanced risk management training.
- 19 ● Get assigned to a Type 1 or Type 2 team as a training assignment (e.g.
20 shadow Plans) and see the world from their viewpoint
- 21 ● Assist in 420 simulation as a line officer
- 22 ● WFDSS training
- 23 ● Include risk management and fire management topics to annual line officer
24 meetings
- 25 ● Attend staff rides (staff rides need to include a stand that portrays the line
26 officer perspective)
- 27 ● Participate in prescribed fires and/or attend prescribed fire training.

28

29 Guidance on the Selection of Coaches

30 Coaches can be current or former line officers. The Regional Forester
31 determines the level of certification for which a coach is qualified.

32 Criteria for individuals serving as Coaches are as follows:

- 33 ● Must be a “Journey” level line officer in dealing with large fire incident, or
34 rated at an experience level commensurate with incident being managed.
35 Present and past agency administrators can serve as coaches, including
36 retirees that were qualified/experienced.
- 37 ● Is willing and able to serve as a Coach.

38

39 Performance Standards

40 Add the following standards to the existing performance standards for Forest
41 Supervisors and District Rangers under Performance Standard #4, Leadership,
42 Coaching, and Supervising:

- 43 ● Integrate fire and fuels management across all functional areas.

- 1 • Implement fire management strategies and integrate natural resource
2 concerns into collaborative community protection and ecosystem restoration
3 strategies on the unit.
- 4 • Manage a budget that includes fire preparedness, prevention, suppression,
5 and hazardous fuels in an annual program of work for the unit.
- 6 • Perform duties of agency administrator and maintain those qualifications.
- 7 • Provide a fully staffed, highly qualified, and diverse workforce in a "safety
8 first" environment.

9
10 These standards are based on current policy and provide program guidance to
11 ensure safe, consistent, efficient, and effective fire and aviation operations. This
12 document will be reviewed and updated annually.

13

14 **Specific Agency Administrator Performance Standards for Fire and** 15 **Aviation at the Field Level**

16

17 **Preparedness**

- 18 • Take all necessary and prudent actions to ensure firefighter and public
19 safety.
- 20 • Ensure sufficient qualified fire and non-fire personnel are available to
21 support fire operations at a level commensurate with the local and national
22 fire situation.
- 23 • Ensure accurate position descriptions are developed and reflect the
24 complexity of the unit. Individual Development Plans promote and enhance
25 FMO currency and development.
- 26 • Provide a written Delegation of Authority to FMOs that provides an
27 adequate level of operational authority at the unit level. Include Multi-
28 Agency Coordinating (MAC) Group authority, as appropriate.
- 29 • Identify resource management objectives to maintain a current Fire
30 Management Plan (FMP) that identifies an accurate level of funding for
31 personnel and equipment.
- 32 • Develop preparedness standards that are in compliance with agency fire
33 policies.
- 34 • Management teams meet once a year to review fire and aviation policies,
35 roles, responsibilities, and delegations of authority. Specifically address
36 oversight and management controls, critical safety issues, and high-risk
37 situations such as transfers of incident command, periods of multiple fire
38 activity, and Red Flag Warnings.
- 39 • Ensure fire and aviation preparedness reviews are conducted each year.
- 40 • Meet annually with cooperators and review interagency agreements to
41 ensure their continued effectiveness and efficiency.
- 42 • Convene and participate in annual conferences and fire reviews.
- 43 • Agency administrators, Fire Program Managers, and/or Safety and Health
44 Program Managers shall conduct after action reviews on all Type 3 fires

1 and a minimum of 10% of their unit's Type 4 and 5 fires and document
2 their inspections in the incident records.

3

4 **Suppression**

- 5 ● Ensure use of fire funds is in compliance with Agency policies.
- 6 ● The WFDSS will be used and approved on all fires that escape initial attack.
- 7 ● WFDSS analysis that are expected to exceed \$10 million in suppression
8 costs are forwarded to the Regional Office for review and approval.
- 9 ● Personally attend reviews on Type 1 and Type 2 fires.
- 10 ● Provide incident management objectives, written delegations of authority,
11 and a complete agency administrator briefing to Incident Management
12 Teams.
- 13 ● Evaluate the need for resource advisors for all fires, and assign as
14 appropriate.
- 15 ● For all unplanned human-caused fires where responsibility can be
16 determined, ensure actions are initiated to recover cost of suppression
17 activities, land rehabilitation, damages to the resource, and improvements.
- 18 ● Ensure structure exposure protection principles are followed.

19

20 **Responsibilities and Oversight**

- 21 ● Agency Administrators are responsible for all aspects of fire management.
- 22 ● Agency Administrators will ensure that all Forest Service employees and
23 employees of interagency partners working on forest Service jurisdiction
24 wildfires clearly understand direction.
- 25 ● Agency Administrators must approve a decision analysis (and subsequent
26 courses of action) and issue delegations of authority to the incident
27 commander. The agency administrator authority is based on the agency's
28 estimated management cost of the incident or by the complexity level as set
29 out in FSM 5131.04a-5131.04d.
- 30 ● Approval letters for wildland fire decision analyses are based on the
31 agency's projected cost and not the total estimated cost of the wildfire. The
32 following approval thresholds apply as stated in FSM 5131.04 and subject
33 to qualification and certification policies stated in FSM 5131.11 (note- prior
34 certification thresholds are no longer applicable):
 - 35 ➤ Up to \$2 million – District Ranger
 - 36 ➤ \$2 million to \$10 million – Forest Supervisor
 - 37 ➤ Over \$10 million – Regional Forester
- 38 ● Oversight designations are based on the complexity level as determined
39 using the methods in the appendix.
 - 40 ➤ Type 3, 4, and 5 wildfire decisions/delegations are made at the
41 District Ranger level with oversight by the Forest Supervisor.
 - 42 ➤ Type 2 wildfire decisions/delegations are made at the Forest
43 Supervisor level with oversight by the Regional Forester.
 - 44 ➤ Type 1 wildfire decisions/delegations are made at the Regional
45 Forester level with National oversight.

- 1 • Critical long duration wildfire oversight roles include ensuring that:
 - 2 ➤ Up-to-date decision analyses are completed and documented in
 - 3 Wildland Fire Decision Support System (WFDSS).
 - 4 ➤ Hazards are identified and risk assessments are incorporated into
 - 5 decisions.
 - 6 ➤ Coordination with partners and potentially affected parties is
 - 7 conducted (including smoke impacts). Unified command is
 - 8 implemented early if necessary.
 - 9 ➤ Resource capacity and availability are adequately assessed to meet
 - 10 expectations.
- 11 • This oversight role should address concerns of the states, cooperators, and
- 12 the public including air quality impacts from multiple wildfires.

13

14 **Safety**

- 15 • Review safety policies, procedures, and concerns with field fire and
- 16 aviation personnel.
- 17 • Ensure timely follow-up actions to program reviews, fire preparedness
- 18 reviews, fire and aviation safety reviews, and management reviews.
- 19 • Monitor the fire situation and provide oversight during periods of critical
- 20 fire activity and situations of high risk.
- 21 • Ensure there is adequate direction in fire management plans to maintain fire
- 22 danger awareness.
- 23 • Take appropriate actions with escalating fire potential.
- 24 • Ensure appropriate investigation or Lessons Learned analyses are conducted
- 25 for incidents, entrapments, and serious accidents.

26

27 **Prescribed Fire**

- 28 • Ensure an approved burn plan is followed for each prescribed fire project,
- 29 including follow-up monitoring and documentation to ensure management
- 30 objectives are met.
- 31 • Provide management oversight by personally visiting wildland and
- 32 prescribed fire activities each year.
- 33 • Ensure compliance with National and Regional Office policy and direction
- 34 for prescribed fire activities and ensure that periodic reviews and
- 35 inspections of the prescribed fire program are completed.
- 36 • Approve Prescribed Fire Plans. Authority may be delegated to the Line
- 37 Officers as provided under specific directions.
- 38 • Review Prescribed Fire Plans and recommend or approve the plans
- 39 depending upon the delegated authority. Ensure that the Prescribed Fire
- 40 Plan has been reviewed and recommended by a qualified technical reviewer
- 41 who was not involved in the plan preparation.

42

43 **Fire Management Positions**

44 The following standards show the minimum operational experience
45 recommended for fire management positions. The *Interagency Fire Program*

1 *Management Qualifications Standard (including FS-FPM Fire Program*
2 *Management)* will be used as a guide in conjunction with specific agency
3 requirements when filling vacant fire program positions, and as an aid in
4 developing Individual Development Plans (IDPs) for employees.

5

6 **Specific Fire Management Staff Performance Standards for Fire** 7 **Operations at the Field Level**

8

9 **Preparedness**

- 10 ● Use sound risk management practices as the foundation for all aspects of
11 fire and aviation management.
- 12 ● Ensure that only trained and qualified personnel are assigned to fire and
13 aviation duties.
- 14 ● Develop, implement, evaluate, and document fire and aviation training
15 program to meet current and anticipated needs.
- 16 ● Establish an effective process to gather, evaluate, and communicate
17 information to managers, supervisors, and employees. Ensure clear concise
18 communications are maintained at all levels.
- 19 ● Ensure fire and aviation management staffs understand their roles,
20 responsibilities, authority, and accountability.
- 21 ● Develop and maintain effective communication with the public and
22 cooperators.
- 23 ● Regardless of funding level, provide a safe, effective, and efficient fire
24 management program.
- 25 ● Organize, train, equip, and direct a qualified work force. An Individual
26 Development Plan (IDP) must be provided for incumbents who do not meet
27 new standards. Establish qualification review process.
- 28 ● Take appropriate action when performance is exceptional or deficient.
- 29 ● Ensure fire and aviation policies are understood, followed, and coordinated
30 with other agencies as appropriate.
- 31 ● Ensure that adequate resources are available to implement fire management
32 operations.
- 33 ● Provide fire personnel with adequate guidance, training, and decision-
34 making authority to ensure timely decisions.
- 35 ● Develop and maintain agreements, annual operating plans, and contracts on
36 an interagency basis to increase effectiveness and efficiencies.
- 37 ● Develop, maintain, and annually evaluate the FMP to ensure accuracy and
38 validity.
- 39 ● Ensure budget requests and allocations reflect preparedness requirements in
40 the FMP.
- 41 ● Develop and maintain current operational plans. (e.g., dispatch, pre-attack,
42 prevention).
- 43 ● Ensure that reports and records are properly completed and maintained.
- 44 ● Ensure fiscal responsibility and accountability in planning and expenditures.

- 1 • Assess, identify, and implement program actions that effectively reduce
2 unwanted wildland fire ignitions and mitigate risks to life, property, and
3 resources.
4 • Work with cooperators to identify processes and procedures for providing
5 fire safe communities within the wildland urban interface.
6

7 **Suppression**

- 8 • Ensure completion of a job hazard analysis (JHA) for fire and fire aviation
9 activities, and implement applicable risk mitigation measures.
10 • Provide for and personally participate in periodic site visits to individual
11 incidents and projects.
12 • Utilize the incident complexity analysis to ensure the proper level of
13 management is assigned to all incidents.
14 • Ensure incoming personnel and crews are briefed prior to fire and aviation
15 assignments.
16 • Coordinate the development of the Wildland Fire Decision Support System
17 with local unit staff specialists for all fires that escape initial attack.
18 • Ensure effective transfer of command of incident management occurs and
19 safety is considered in all functional areas.
20 • Monitor fire activity to anticipate and recognize when complexity levels
21 exceed program capabilities. Increase managerial and operational resources
22 to meet needs.
23 • Complete cost recovery actions when unplanned human-caused fires occur.
24 • Ensure structure exposure protection principles are followed.
25

26 **Safety**

- 27 • Ensure work/rest and R&R guidelines are followed during all fire and
28 aviation activities. Deviations are approved and documented.
29 • Initiate, conduct, and/or participate in fire management related reviews and
30 investigations.
31 • Monitor fire season severity predictions, fire behavior, and fire activity
32 levels. Take appropriate actions to ensure safe, efficient, and effective
33 operations.
34

35 **Prescribed Fire**

- 36 • Ensure a written, approved burn plan exists for each prescribed fire project.
37 • Ensure all escaped prescribed fires receive a review at the proper level.
38 • Provide the expertise and skills to fully integrate fire and aviation
39 management into interdisciplinary planning efforts.
40 • Ensure compliance with National and Regional Office policy and direction
41 for prescribed fire activities and ensure that program reviews and
42 inspections of the prescribed fire program are completed.
43
44
45

1 **Structure Exposure Protection Principles**

2

3 **Mission and Role**

4 A significant role of the Forest Service is to manage natural resources on public
5 land, and management of unwanted wildland fire is a primary mission in that
6 role. Wildland firefighter training, tools, and personal protective equipment are
7 based on the wildland environment. This does not prevent using wildland
8 tactics in the Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) when risks are mitigated.
9 Wildland firefighter training for the WUI, however, is centered on the concepts
10 of preventing wildland fire from reaching areas of structures and/or reducing the
11 intensity of fire that does reach structures. Fire suppression actions on structures
12 that are outside federal jurisdiction, outside the scope of wildland firefighting
13 training, or beyond the capability of wildland firefighting resources are not
14 appropriate roles for the Forest Service.

15

16 Forest Service leadership will express clear and concise “leader’s intent” to
17 ensure structure protection assignments are managed safely, effectively, and
18 efficiently. Leaders are expected to operate under existing policies and doctrine
19 under normal conditions. Where conflicts occur, employees will be expected to
20 weigh the risk versus gain, and operate within the intent of Agency policy and
21 doctrine.

22

23 **Strategic Principles**

- 24 ● The Forest Service actively supports creation of Firewise Communities and
25 structures that can survive wildland fire without intervention. We support
26 the concept that property owners have primary responsibility for reducing
27 wildfire risks to their lands and assets.
- 28 ● The Forest Service will actively work toward applying Firewise concepts to
29 all Forest Service owned structures, facilities, and permitted use to serve as
30 a model to publics and communities.
- 31 ● The Forest Service will apply strategy and tactics to keep wildland fires
32 from reaching structures, as prudent to do so, considering risk management
33 for firefighters and publics, fire behavior, values at risk including natural
34 resources, availability of firefighting resources, and jurisdictional
35 authorities.
- 36 ● The Forest Service will be proactive in developing agreements with
37 interagency partners to clarify its structure protection policy.
- 38 ● The Forest Service structure protection role is based on the assumption that
39 other Departments and agencies will fulfill their primary roles and
40 responsibilities. The Forest Service will not usurp individual, local, or state
41 responsibility for structure protection.
- 42 ● Prior to task implementation, a specific structure protection role briefing
43 will be accomplished.

44

45

46

1 **Tactical Applications**

2

3 **Structure Protection Definition**

4 Actions taken in advance of a fire reaching structures or other improvements are
5 intended to safely prevent the fire from damaging or destroying these values at
6 risk. For the Forest Service, structure protection involves the use of standard
7 wildland fire suppression tactics and control methods; including the use of
8 standard equipment, fire control lines, and the extinguishing of spot fires near or
9 on the structure when safe and practical.

10

11 **USFS Role**

12 As documented in a Forest Service doctrinal principle, "Agency employees
13 respond when they come across situations where human life is immediately at
14 risk or there is a clear emergency, and they are capable of assisting without
15 undue risk to themselves or others." This principle serves as a foundational basis
16 for the roles employees play in structure protection.

17

18 Pursuant to this "structure protection" policy provided above, Forest Service
19 personnel may engage support from other cooperators in structure protection
20 activities when 1) requested by local government under terms of an approved
21 cooperative agreement or 2) when operating within a unified command. The
22 agency is permitted, without agreement, to render emergency assistance to a
23 local government in suppressing wildland fires, and in preserving life and
24 property from the threat of fire, when properly trained and equipped agency
25 resources are the closest to the need, and there is adequate leadership to do so
26 safely. The agency will NOT routinely provide primary emergency response
27 (medical aids, fire suppression, HAZMAT, etc... as identified on "run cards" or
28 preplanned dispatch scenarios) nor will the agency supplant the local
29 government responsibility to do so.

30

31 The contents of a cooperative agreement will clearly define the responsibilities
32 of partners. Regarding structural fire protection, typical Forest Service
33 responsibilities in the case of mutual aid, initial attack, extended attack, or large
34 fire support include:

- 35 • To provide initial attack through extended attack actions consistent with
36 application of wildland fire strategy and tactics.
- 37 • To supply water in support of tribal, state or local agencies having
38 jurisdictional responsibility for the fire. This would include the use of water
39 tenders, portable pumps, hose, tanks, and supporting draft sites.
- 40 • To assist or supply foam or chemical suppressant capability with engines or
41 aerial application.
- 42 • To assist local authorities in the event of evacuations.
- 43 • To assist local authorities by assessing (triaging) structures for defensibility
44 from wildfire.
- 45 • To coordinate with local authorities on actions taken by Private Structure
46 Protection Companies.

1 As such, there should not be an expectation that the Forest Service will:

- 2 • “Wrap” or set up and administer sprinklers around privately owned
3 structures
- 4 • Remove fuels immediately surrounding a structure such as brush,
5 landscaping or firewood.

6

7 As addressed above, the Forest Service will apply strategy and tactics to keep
8 wildland fires from reaching structures, as prudent to do so, considering risk
9 management for firefighters and publics, fire behavior, values at risk including
10 natural resources, availability of firefighting resources, and jurisdictional
11 authorities.

12

13 The Forest Service shall not:

- 14 • Take direct suppression actions on structures other than those that tactically
15 reduce the threat of fire spread to them.
- 16 • Enter structures or work on roofs of structures for the purpose of direct
17 suppression actions.

18

19 In consideration of Forest Service owned or leased structures outside of
20 structure fire protection areas these same policies apply. The use of Firewise
21 principles and aggressive fire prevention measures will be employed for Forest
22 Service structures at every opportunity.

23

24 If a Forest Service structure is determined to be at risk, “wrapping” or other
25 indirect protection methods for the structure can be authorized by the Agency
26 Administrator. Documentation of these decisions needs to be placed in the fire
27 documentation package and the unit files. Any employee engaged in
28 “wrapping” or other indirect methods of protection operations will be
29 thoroughly briefed and trained in correct safety and personal protection
30 equipment procedures, especially if the use of ladders or climbing on the
31 structure is necessary. In any case, the Forest Service holds that no structure is
32 worth the risk of serious injury to an employee in an attempt to protect that
33 structure or facility from fire.

34

35 **Local Government Role**

36 Local government has the responsibility for emergency response, including
37 structure protection, within their jurisdiction. This responsibility is usually
38 found within the fire agencies’ charter and is substantiated by tax dollar revenue
39 (sales and/or property tax).

40

41 **Cost**

42 Local governments assume the financial responsibility for emergency response
43 activities, including structure protection, within their jurisdictions. Local
44 government will order resources deemed necessary to protect structures within
45 their jurisdiction. Local agencies will not be reimbursed for performing their
46 responsibilities within their jurisdiction.

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05-15

1 Tactical Operating Principles

2 When engaging in structure protection activities, as defined above, Forest

3 Service personnel will apply the following principles:

- 4 ● The first priority for all risk-decisions is human survival, both of firefighters
5 and the public.
- 6 ● Incident containment strategies specifically address and integrate protection
7 of defensible improved property and wildland values.
- 8 ● Direct protection of improved property is undertaken when it is safe to do
9 so, when there are sufficient time and appropriate resources available, and
10 when the action directly contributes to achieving overall incident objectives.
- 11 ● Firefighter decision to accept direction to engage in structure protection
12 actions is based on the determination that the property is defensible and the
13 risk to firefighters can be safely mitigated under the current or potential fire
14 conditions.
- 15 ● A decision to delay or withdraw from structure protection operations is the
16 appropriate course of action when made in consideration of firefighter
17 safety, current or potential fire behavior, or defensibility of the structure or
18 groups of structures.
- 19 ● Firefighters at all levels are responsible to make risk-decisions appropriate
20 to their individual knowledge, experience, training, and situational
21 awareness.
- 22 ● Every firefighter is responsible to be aware of the factors that affect their
23 judgment and the decision-making process, including: a realistic perception
24 of their own knowledge, skills, and abilities, the presence of life threat or
25 structures, fire behavior, availability of resources, social / political
26 pressures, mission focus, and personal distractions such as home, work,
27 health, and fatigue.
- 28 ● An individual's ability to assimilate all available factors affecting
29 situational awareness is limited in a dynamic wildland urban interface fire
30 environment. Every firefighter is responsible to understand and recognize
31 these limitations, and to apply experience, training and personal judgment
32 to observe, orient, decide, and act in preparation for the "worst case".
- 33 ● It is the responsibility of every firefighter to participate in the flow of
34 information with supervisors, subordinates, and peers. Clear and concise
35 communication is essential to overcome limitations in situational
36 awareness.