



**File Code:** 1700/5100/5700  
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**Date:** December 19, 2008

**Subject:** Positive Work Environment - Reminder to Fireline and other Fire Personnel

**To:** Regional Foresters, Station Directors, Area Director, IITF Director, Deputy Chiefs and WO Chief Staff Directors

Every employee in the Forest Service while at “normal” work or on an emergency incident – has the right to reasonable accommodations and to work in an environment free of discrimination and harassment. Every employee also will be treated with respect. This is also true for Contractors and Administratively Determined (AD) employees.

Sexual harassment is illegal because it constitutes discrimination and discrimination is illegal. Sexual harassment is any unwelcome sexual advance, request for sexual favors, or other verbal, nonverbal, or physical conduct of a sexual nature where such conduct has the purpose or effect of creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive work environment, or unreasonably interferes with the individual’s work performance.

All line officers, their staffs and those delegated to act for line officers, such as incident personnel, should take the necessary actions to ensure that allegations of sexual harassment are addressed quickly and effectively. Employees engaged in sexual harassment or supervisors and managers who tolerate such behavior and fail to take appropriate actions will be subject to disciplinary actions including demotion, suspension, and/or removal.

Disability and reasonable accommodations are also important considerations for emergency incidents. Reasonable Accommodation regulations require that supervisors and employees with disabilities enter into an interactive process. Incident management personnel should NOT make assumptions about what an individual with a disability may or may not need in their work environment.

When accessibility needs and requirements are identified by an employee, we must provide the necessary accommodations when the incident location will lend itself to accessible opportunities. We must also look at whether or not that accommodation allows them to do the job needed on the incident. We are to ensure the highest level of accessibility at incident facilities while continuing to hold safety as our primary focus for all employees. The need for accommodation is not a basis for denying an incident assignment. For more information, refer to “Access Guide for Incident Facilities,” a USDA Forest Service publication from the San Dimas Technology and Developmental Center.

Distribute this reminder widely. Let us continue to strive for a positive work environment with accessible opportunities and free from discrimination and harassment.

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Regional Foresters, Station Directors, Area Director, IITF Director,  
Deputy Chiefs and WO Chief Staff Directors