



WASHINGTON



THE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

THE DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

MEMORANDUM

To: Nina Hatfield  
Deputy Assistant Secretary, Budget and Finance, Department of the Interior

Dale Bosworth  
Chief, USDA Forest Service

From: Tim Hartzell *Tim Hartzell*  
Director, Office of Wildland Fire Coordination, Department of the Interior

Corbin Newman *C. F. Newman*  
National Fire Plan Coordinator, USDA Forest Service

Subject: Standardizing Fire Incident Project Codes

This memorandum outlines results of an interagency effort to standardize Forest Service and Department of the Interior fire incident management financial management codes. The effort resulted in a number of recommendations. We request your approval of the recommendations, as outlined in this memorandum.

Background

As a result of the interagency efforts to respond to Congressional direction to standardize fire incident financial coding across all Federal National Fire Plan agencies. A work group of fire operations and budget and finance representatives from the Forest Service and the four Interior firefighting bureaus (Bureau of Land Management, Bureau of Indian Affairs, National Park Service, Fish and Wildlife Service), chaired by the OWFC, met in November to respond to direction from the House Appropriations Subcommittee. The House language, to which the Senate is expected to recede, follows.

*"...the Committee directs the agencies to establish standard coding practices and procedures for fire suppression activities beginning in fiscal year 2003. The Committee expects the agencies to develop a protocol that would work in each financial system and be followed by each agency. The protocol should provide clear, standard instructions for assigning cost codes to be used for each fire event. The protocol should be well understood and uniformly used by fire management and finance officers in each agency. The agencies will be expected to produce reports promptly when requested by the Committee."*

Currently, each of the four Interior firefighting bureaus and the Forest Service use a different cost coding protocol in their respective financial systems to identify the costs of fire suppression incidents. This has caused significant difficulty in determining the full costs of multi-jurisdictional fires. The mission of the work group was to settle all of the FFS and other issues related to adoption of a common coding protocol. The group has succeeded in designing a system that will work with each financial system and facilitate the collection of obligated costs for individual or multi-jurisdictional fires. The system can be fully implemented in all five finance systems beginning in fiscal year 2004. The interagency group makes the following recommendations.

### Recommendations

- A four character alpha-numeric code will be established for every fire incident that is to incur costs. This centrally managed Fire Incident Financial Project/Job Code will be the universal financial project/job code used to code all fire suppression activity. Each code will have at least one letter and up to three numbers. This is necessary to avoid conflicts with all-alpha and all-numeric project codes used by some of the agencies.
- The same code will be used by all five agencies for their costs related to a specific fire. For example, a fire may be designated as K14B; every agency would use that same project code in their finance systems to record costs associated with that fire.
- The same project/job codes will be used for emergency stabilization and rehabilitation costs related to each fire incident.
- An internet website will be created for the assignment of project/job codes. Designated individuals (e.g. dispatch officers) will request codes using a simple online form. The system will automatically generate a code for the incident.
- The website will host a searchable database so that others will be able to find the code for any given incident.
- A contractor, under the auspices of the OWFC and the Forest Service national fire program office, will design the system by March 31, 2003.
- The website and system will be maintained at a central location.
- All Interior Bureaus and the Forest Service will fully implement this standard protocol on October 1, 2003, the beginning of FY 2004. Each agency and bureau finance system will be modified as necessary to accommodate the new project/job coding protocol.
- The fire incident financial project/job code will not replace the fire incident order number assigned by the Resource Ordering and Status System (ROSS).
- The fire project/job code system will be compatible with ROSS, with the eventual goal of being incorporated as a component of ROSS.
- An implementation team representing all affected functional areas and systems will oversee the deployment and training.
- Each bureau/agency will tailor training the needs of their employee users.

The points of contact for the development and implementation of the protocol will be:  
Forest Service - Harry Croft, Deputy, State and Private Forestry, 202-205-1657  
Interior - Scott Dalzell, Budget Officer, OS-OWFC, 202-606-0509  
IT Project Manager - Elyse Turkeltaub, Interior OS-OWFC, 202-606-0518

The other contributing participants of the work group who will continue on as members of the implementation team are:

- Michael Brionez, FS Regional Office Budget, 707-562-9020
- Dave Curry, BLM Alaska GACC, 907-356-5677
- Mary B. Goode, FS NIFC Incident Business Advisor, 208-387-5608
- Gary Grimstvedt, BLM Finance Center, 303-236-6347
- Sally Hampton, Interior OS-OWFC, 202-6-6-3206
- Mike Honnick, FWS National Finance Center, 303-984-6817
- Paul Head, NPS Fire Management Officer, 617-223-5067
- Tory Majors, FS NIFC, Incident Business Advisor, 208-387-5608
- Jonathan Manski, BLM, BICC Center Manager, 541-573-4546
- Maggie Moran, NIFC-BIA, 208-387-5370
- Dallas Murray, FS Boise National Forest, 208-387-4119
- Terry O'Connell, BLM Fire Specialist 208-387-5883
- Rick Squires, NICC, 208-387-5400
- Mike Wallace, BIA Fire Specialist, 208-387-5576
- Bill Webber, Interior OS-PFM, 202-208-5684
- Kathy Winship, FWS Region 2 Regional Office, 505-248-7486

Please indicate your approval or disapproval of the recommendations by signing below. Questions and comments regarding these proposals may be directed to the points of contact or to either of us.

Department of the Interior:

Nina Rose Hatfield 1-10-03  
Approval Date

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Disapproval Date

USDA Forest Service:

Dale A. Brown 1/9/03  
Approval Date

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Disapproval Date

Forest Service Addendum - The Forest Service will aggregate A, B, C, D fires by National Forest where there are no claims or reimbursements involved, and assign all larger fires an individual Job Code. Other code prefixes such as P, W, H remain in place. This memo will be replaced by an Interim Directive as soon as possible.

cc: Mary Sally Matiella, CFO, USDA Forest Service  
John Trezise, Director of Budget, Department of the Interior