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**Chapter 12**  
**Developing a Response to Wildfires**

**Introduction**

This chapter describes the program components required to develop and implement a response to wildfires.

**Objectives**

All responses to wildfires and wildland fire use fires will be based on firefighter and public safety, cost effectiveness, and values to be protected consistent with resource objectives, regardless of ignition source, as described in an approved, National Environmental Protection Agency (NEPA) compliant Fire Management Plan (FMP). Prescribed fires will be implemented through an approved prescribed fire plan and in accordance with the FMP.

A revised flow chart was developed through National Wildfire Coordinating Group (NWCG) to depict the framework in which the 2001 Federal Wildland Fire Management Policy will be implemented. The chart will identify what action may be taken given an ignition, regardless of source. Management actions depend on the provisions in the approved FMP.

**Annual Operating Plan**

Agencies and Tribes, in conjunction with their cooperators, will develop a wildland fire Annual Operating Plan (AOP). This plan is documented in the FMP (see Chapter 3). At a minimum the AOP plan must include the following elements.

**AOP Elements**

**Organization**

- Chain-of-command/table of organization for local agencies and cooperators.
- Notification process/procedures.
- Roles/responsibilities, etc.

**Dispatch Operations**

- Dispatcher roles and responsibilities
- Procedures for dispatch of resources off unit.

**Daily Duties:**

- Check-in/out of administrative/fire personnel
- Intelligence.
- Weather.
- Briefings.
- Verify initial attack (IA) Response Levels.

**1 IA Response Plan (Preplanned response to an incident.)****2 Key Elements**

- 3 • Identification of geographic Preparedness Level
- 4 • Fire weather
- 5 • Identification of wildfire danger
- 6 • Process for assessing the appropriate response.
- 7 • Identification of resources to respond to a given Fire Management Zone
- 8 (FMZ) based on fire danger and weather
- 9 • Cooperator support and planned response
- 10 • Communications procedures

11

**12 Emergency Operations (Fire/Non-fire)****13 Key Elements**

- 14 • Agency and Regional notification
- 15 • Call-back procedures
- 16 • Evacuation of fire area
- 17 • Closing public/private roads
- 18 • Ordering additional personnel, equipment, aircraft
- 19 • Fire weather watch and red flag warning notification
- 20 • Temporary flight restrictions (TFR)
- 21 • Aircraft pre-accident plan
- 22 • Utility company notification (Power and Gas)
- 23 • Law enforcement dispatching procedures/requirements
- 24 • Hazmat/spill response notification procedures
- 25 • Search and rescue

26

**27 Local Agreements**

28 A list of local agreements should be maintained on file and reviewed annually  
29 with the respective cooperators.

30

**31 Communications**

- 32 • Procedures for assigning/managing local radio frequencies.
- 33 • A map of repeater sites/frequencies.
- 34 • Instructions for using local dispatch radio consoles, phones, computers, fax  
35 machines, paging systems, etc.

36

**37 Weather**

- 38 • Procedures for processing of weather observations via Weather Information  
39 Management System (WIMS).
- 40 • Daily posting and briefing procedures; broadcasts of fire weather forecasts to  
41 local fire suppression personnel.
- 42 • Procedures for processing spot weather forecast requests and disseminating  
43 spot forecasts to the field.

- 1 • Procedures for immediate notification to fire suppression personnel of Fire  
2 Weather Watches and Red Flag Warnings.

3  
4 **Fire Danger**

- 5 • Remain aware of locally significant fire danger indices and record those  
6 values daily.  
7 • Update and post monthly the seasonal trends of those values vs average.

8  
9 **Briefings**

10 Identify time frames and frequencies/locations for daily briefings must be clearly  
11 specified in the local dispatch Standard Operating Procedures (SOP). A method  
12 should also be identified for documenting briefings (time given, content of  
13 briefing, and person(s) conducting and receiving briefing).

14  
15 **Preparedness Levels**

16 Identify general information relating to the local preparedness plan; procedures  
17 for identifying level; notification to management; dispatching roles and  
18 responsibilities at each preparedness level, etc.

19  
20 Specific triggers should be incorporated into preparedness plans that cause the  
21 preparedness level to move up or down. These triggers could be related to  
22 number/size of wildfires, amount and type of resources available/committed,  
23 regional/national fire situation, condition of local fuels, observed wildfire  
24 behavior, and human-caused risk or predicted lightning activity level, etc.  
25 Specific actions should also be tied to each preparedness level, such as  
26 repositioning of suppression resources (crews, engines, helitack, etc.), the  
27 activation of local MAC Groups, making contacts with other agencies, and hiring  
28 of Call-When-Needed (CWN) aircraft, emergency rental equipment or emergency  
29 firefighting (EFF) crews.

30  
31 **Aviation**

- 32 • Ordering/scheduling requirements and procedures.  
33 • Special use airspace.  
34 • Special use mission requirements.  
35 • Incident/accident reporting and documentation procedures.  
36 • Flight management/tracking procedures.

37  
38 **Dispatch Center Staffing Plan**

- 39 • Call-out procedures for additional personnel in emergency situations.  
40 • Designation of duty officer for dispatch center.  
41 • Shift limitations and day off/Rest and Relaxation (R&R) policy.  
42 • EFF hiring, etc.

43  
44

1 **Expanded Dispatch Plan**

- 2 • Indicators for considering establishment of expanded dispatch.
- 3 • Recommended organization and points of contact.
- 4 • Overhead positions to order.
- 5 • Location/facilities.
- 6 • Equipment/supplies.
- 7 • Support needs.
- 8 • Procurement or buying unit team considerations.
- 9 • Service and supply plan, etc.

10

11 **Administrative**

- 12 • Funding.
- 13 • Travel.
- 14 • Time sheets.
- 15 • Fire reports, etc.

16

17 **Accident/Incident**

- 18 • Criteria/definitions.
- 19 • Agency/Tribal notification and documentation requirements.
- 20 • Procedures for mobilization of critical incident stress debriefing teams, etc.

21

22 **Medical Plan**

- 23 • Activation/evacuation information.
- 24 • Medical facility locations and phone numbers.
- 25 • Air and ground transport (Medivac) capability.
- 26 • Burn center information, etc.

27

28 **Media Plan**

- 29 • General procedures.
- 30 • Notification requirements to Agency/Tribal external affairs personnel;
- 31 routing for media calls.

32

33

34 **Response to Wildland Fire**

35 **Definition:** Fire, as a critical natural process, will be integrated into land and  
36 resource management plans and activities on a landscape scale, and across agency  
37 boundaries. Response to wildland fires is based on ecological, social and legal  
38 consequences of the fire. The circumstances under which a fire occurs, safety  
39 and welfare concerns for firefighters and the public, natural and cultural  
40 resources, and values to be protected, dictate the appropriate response to the fire.

41

42

1 **Response Options**

2 Responses ranging from fire monitoring to intense suppression actions, on all or  
3 portions of the wildfire perimeter, are available to Fire Managers. The basis of  
4 this information is the Review and Update of the 1995 Federal Wildland Fire  
5 Management Policy that resulted in the 2001 Federal Wildland Fire Management  
6 Policy.

7

8 Wildfires in areas without approved FMPs, or with FMPs that are not consistent  
9 with the 2001 Federal Fire Policy, must be suppressed.

10

11 **Evaluation Criteria to Develop Response to Wildland Fire**

- 12 • Land and Resources Management Objectives
- 13 • Risks to firefighters and public health and safety
- 14 • Coordination across jurisdictional boundaries
- 15 • Weather
- 16 • Fuel conditions
- 17 • Threats and values to be protected
- 18 • Cost efficiencies

19

20 **Response to Wildland Fire- Examples**

21

22 **Monitoring from a distance**

23 Planned or unplanned ignitions are likely to achieve land and resource  
24 management goals and require only periodic monitoring from a nearby location  
25 or aircraft.

26

27 **Monitoring on-site**

28 Monitoring, approved in a FMP and directed in a WIFIP, is carried out on  
29 wildland fire use fires and managed for resource benefits. Monitors are placed on  
30 site to track the spread, growth, intensity and/or characteristics of wildland fires.

31

32 **Confinement**

33 Actions taken when wildfires are not viable candidates for resource benefits and  
34 an analysis of strategic alternatives indicates threats from the wildfire do not  
35 require costly deployment of large numbers of suppression resources for  
36 mitigation or suppression. Typically these wildfires will have little to no on-the-  
37 ground activity and wildfire movement remains confined within a pre-determined  
38 area bounded by natural barriers or fuel changes.

39

40 **Monitoring plus contingency actions**

41 Monitoring is carried out on wildland fire use fires (approved in a FMP and  
42 directed in a WFIP) managed for resource benefits but circumstances necessitated  
43 preparation of contingency actions to satisfy external influences and insure  
44 adequate preparation for possible undesirable developments.

**1 Monitoring plus mitigation actions**

2 Actions on wildland fire use fires (approved in a FMP and directed in a WFIP)  
3 managed for resources benefits that either pose real, but not necessarily  
4 immediate, threats or do not have a totally naturally defensible boundary. These  
5 wildland fires are monitored but operational actions are developed and  
6 implemented to delay, direct, or check fire spread, or to contain the wildland fire  
7 to a defined area, and/or to ensure public safety (through signing, information,  
8 and trail/area closures).

**10 Initial Attack (IA)**

11 Action where an initial response is taken to suppress wildfires, consistent with  
12 firefighter and public safety and values to be protected.

**14 Large wildfire suppression with multiple strategies**

15 This action categorizes wildfires where a combination of tactics such as direct  
16 attack, indirect attack, and confinement by natural barriers are utilized to  
17 accomplish protection objectives as directed in a Wildland Fire Decisions  
18 Support System (WFDSS) or Wildland Fire Situation Analysis (WFSA).

**20 Control and extinguishment**

21 Actions taken on a wildfire when the selected alternative indicates a control  
22 strategy using direct attack. Sufficient resources are assigned to achieve control  
23 of the wildfire with a minimum of acres burned.

**25 Responding to Wildfires**

26 The information in this section is documented in several guides such as the  
27 *NWCG Incident Response Pocket Guide* (NFES#1077) and *NWCG Fireline*  
28 *Handbook* (NFES#0065).

**30 Definition**

31 Initial Attack – A planned response to wildfire given the wildfire’s potential  
32 behavior. The objective of IA is to stop the spread of the wildfire and put it out at  
33 least cost.

**35 Initial Attack Operations**

36 Resources taking action as IA on a wildfire must have a qualified IA Incident  
37 Commander (IC) as identified in *NWCG Wildland Fire Qualifications Guide*  
38 (PMS 310-1). The response may consist of one or more resources.

39 Upon arriving at the incident the IC is responsible for the following actions:

- 41 • Fire Size-Up Information (*IRPG, Fireline Handbook*)
  - 42 • Fire Name
  - 43 • Location
  - 44 • Terrain (slope, aspect, elevation)

- 1     • Position of fire on the slope
- 2     • Size of fire
- 3     • Fuel type
- 4     • Anticipated control problems
- 5     • Hazards/concerns
- 6     • Fire behavior/spread potential
- 7     • Values threatened
- 8     • Weather conditions
- 9     • Wind speed and direction
- 10    • Resources on the fire
- 11    • Resources needed, if any
- 12    • Cause (known, suspected, under investigation)
- 13
- 14    • Incident Supervision and Management
  - 15      • Safety of firefighters and the public are the highest priority.
  - 16      • Ensuring that all firefighting actions are in full compliance with the Ten
  - 17         Standard Fire Orders and mitigation of the applicable Watch Out
  - 18         Situations has been accomplished.
  - 19      • Ensuring that arriving ground forces on Type: 3-5 wildfire incidents
  - 20         have positive and documented contact with appropriate incident
  - 21         management personnel and receive a briefing.
  - 22      • Manage fatigue of personnel and ensure compliance with work/rest and
  - 23         length of assignment guidelines.
  - 24      • Assign personnel to fireline positions for which they are qualified, as
  - 25         certified by their employing agency.
  - 26      • Monitor effectiveness of planned strategy and tactics. Immediately
  - 27         delay, modify, or abandon firefighting action of any part of a wildfire
  - 28         where strategies and tactics cannot be safely implemented.
  - 29
- 30    • Fire cause determination
  - 31      • Note who reported the wildfire.
  - 32      • Note people and vehicles in the vicinity of the wildfire.
  - 33      • Weather conditions.
  - 34      • Locate the wildfire origin and protect it from disturbance.
  - 35      • Search wildfire origin for wildfire cause.
  - 36      • Protect evidence.
  - 37      • Photograph origin.
  - 38      • Provide notes, information and physical evidence to the responsible law
  - 39         enforcement representative, or make the notes part of the official fire
  - 40         record.
  - 41
- 42    • Operational Briefings

- 1 • Wildland fire personnel are not always familiar with local fuel and  
2 weather conditions, terrain, potential hazards, etc. Fire personnel not  
3 provided with information regarding the incident may be less effective,  
4 and safety may be compromised. Therefore, it is policy to brief all fire  
5 personnel who arrive at an incident, at the earliest possible time.
- 6 • An Operational Briefing Checklist is shown in **Appendix I-1**. This  
7 checklist contains the elements of a fireline briefing, as identified in the  
8 IRPG, to brief all incoming crews and personnel.
- 9
- 10 • Spot Weather Forecasts
- 11 • Spot Weather Forecast should be requested for wildfires that have  
12 potential for extreme wildfire behavior or exceeding IA, or are located in  
13 areas where Red Flag Warnings have been issued. The “Spot Weather  
14 Form” in **Appendix I-2** represents a standard format for developing this  
15 information. For specific geographical information review the *National*  
16 *Weather Service AOPs* for that geographic area. Spot weather forecasts  
17 can also be requested electronically via the Internet at such web sites as  
18 the National Fire Weather Page, <http://fire.boi.noaa.gov/>.
- 19
- 20 The basic elements of a spot weather forecast are:
- 21
- 22 • Name fire or other project
- 23 • Control agency
- 24 • Request time and date
- 25 • Location by Latitude and Longitude
- 26 • Drainage name
- 27 • Aspect
- 28 • Fire Size
- 29 • Elevation
- 30 • Fuel type
- 31 • Fire character (ground, crown)
- 32 • Current weather conditions
- 33 - location
- 34 - elevation
- 35 - observation time
- 36 - wind direction
- 37 - wind velocity (eye level or 20 feet)
- 38 - dry bulb
- 39 - wet bulb
- 40 - remarks
- 41 • Strategy and Tactics
- 42 Determining the IA strategies and tactics must be based on the main incident  
43 and management objective – providing for firefighter and public safety.
- 44 There are other factors, including wildfire behavior (rate of spread, fuel

1 type(s), flame length, etc.), which along with values at risk and wildland fire  
2 suppression resources available, often dictate which strategies and tactics  
3 should be used.

4

5 **Extended Attack Operations**

6

7 **Definition**

8 Extended Attack – Suppression activity for a wildfire that has not been contained  
9 or controlled by IA or contingency resources and for which more firefighting  
10 resources are arriving, en route, or being ordered by the IA IC.

11

12 **Organization**

13 When complexity levels exceed initial attack capabilities, the appropriate ICS  
14 positions should be added to the command staff, commensurate with the  
15 complexity of the incident. Extended Attack actions can overwhelm an IA IC, if  
16 specific Incident Command System (ICS) organizational issues are not addressed  
17 at an early stage. The Wildfire Complexity Analysis (WCA) and WFDSS/WFSA  
18 can be used to assist the manager in determining an appropriate management  
19 structure to provide for safe and efficient fire suppression operations.

20

21 A unified command structure should be a consideration in all multi-jurisdiction  
22 incidents.

23

24 **Wildfire Complexity Analysis (WCA)**

25 A WCA should be used as a guide for Agency Administrators and/or fire  
26 managers to identify and mitigate certain complexity or safety issues by selecting  
27 a different strategy, tactic, or higher qualification of incident management  
28 personnel to safely and effectively manage the incident.

29

30 **Developing the WCA**

31 **Assumptions**

- 32 • As an incident becomes more complex, the need for an incident management  
33 team (IMT) or organization increases.
- 34 • To facilitate assembling an efficient and effective organization, key  
35 managers should be involved during the early stages of complexity analysis.
- 36 • The analysis is not a cure-all for the decision process; local fire history,  
37 current fire conditions, and management requirements must be considered.

38

39 The WCA Form and respective guidelines is shown in **Appendix I-3**.

40

41 The following guidelines will be used developing the WCA. One “Yes” check in  
42 each of the five major elements would indicate a complexity level suggesting  
43 consideration of a type 2 IMT. If some elements are not involved, use the  
44 following ranges:

- 1 • 1-3 “Yes” checks: Current management should be able to handle the  
2 incident. The local organization fills positions as needed. Continue to  
3 monitor objectives and accomplishments; consider a type 3 organization.  
4 • 4-6 “Yes” checks: Indicates complexity level suggesting a type 3 team.  
5 • 7-10 “Yes” checks: Scrutinize overall complexity and safety concerns,  
6 consider past fire history and current and expected situation, and review  
7 WFDSS/WFSA. This complexity suggests the need for a Type 1 or Type 2  
8 team.

9  
10 The WCA should be reviewed periodically to determine the level of management  
11 required.

### 12 **Wildland Fire Situation Analysis (WFSA)**

13 The WFSA is in the last year of use. Units are strongly encouraged to make the  
14 transition from WFSA to Wildland Fire Decision Support System (WFDSS).  
15

16  
17 The WFSA must be used to determine the most appropriate management  
18 strategies for incidents that exceed IA.

19  
20 The WFSA is a decision making process in which the Agency Administrator or  
21 representative describes the situation, evaluates the expected effects, establishes  
22 objectives and constraints for the management of the incident, selects an  
23 appropriate alternative, and documents that decision.

- 24  
25 • The primary criteria for choosing suppression strategies are to minimize  
26 costs without compromising safety. Planned and actual suppression  
27 costs must also be commensurate with the values to be protected. They  
28 must be included and displayed in the WFSA.

29  
30 The Agency Administrator, his/her representative, and the Fire Management  
31 Officer (FMO) or IC prepares the WFSA. The format and level of detail required  
32 depends on the specific incident and its complexity. The key is to document the  
33 decision. Agency Administrator/Line officers are responsible for financial  
34 oversight.

35  
36 The following represents the WFSA dollars thresholds for line officer approval  
37 and certification. The Agency Superintendent approves all WFSAs, but any  
38 WFSA over the \$2,000,000 threshold, will be certified by the appropriate Agency  
39 Administrator listed below.

- 40 • Up to \$2,000,000 Agency Superintendent  
41 • \$2,000,000 - \$5,000,000 Regional Director  
42 • Greater than \$5,000,000 BIA Director

43 The WFSA approval is the line officer’s responsibility and cannot be delegated.  
44

1 Multi-jurisdictional Incidents will require a collaboratively developed WFSA that  
2 is approved and signed by each of the respective agencies. Each agency will use  
3 the appropriate Agency Administrator approving levels for certifying each  
4 agency's costs for the WFSA.

5 A WFSA form and respective instructions are shown in **Appendix I-4**. The  
6 WFSA is available in an electronic format at the following web site:  
7 <http://www.fs.fed.us/fire/wfsa/>.

8  
9 **Required elements to be addressed in the WFSA:**

- 10 • Current Situation
- 11 • Evaluation Criteria
- 12 • Alternatives
- 13 • Analysis of Effects
- 14 • Record of Decision
- 15 • Review/Evaluation/Update
- 16 • Probability of Success
- 17 • Consequences of Failure

18  
19 **WFSA Element Descriptions**

20 Current Situation - This portion of the analysis provides basic information  
21 describing the wildfire situation at the time the analysis was conducted. It is  
22 important to clearly describe the situation that occurred at the time the decision  
23 was made. Elements to be addressed are:

- 24 • Fire name and number.
- 25 • Date of analysis: This is the date on which the current analysis was made.  
26 Enter the month, day, and year.
- 27 • Time: Enter the time of day the analysis was completed. Enter the 24-hour  
28 clock time.
- 29 • Location: Use local terminology for point of origin. Include a legal  
30 description and latitude and longitude.
- 31 • Fire weather and behavior:
  - 32 • Current - Briefly discuss the fire weather in terms of temperature, wind  
33 and daily patterns. Describe the fire in non-technical terms, such as  
34 creeping, spotting crowning, etc. Discuss the flame lengths, rates of  
35 spread, size, etc.
  - 36 • Predicted - Describe the predicted weather patterns, and fire behavior  
37 predictions based on weather, fuels, topography, and the potential size.
- 38 • Resource availability: Briefly discuss the availability of suppression  
39 resources to control the wildfire and wildfire activity at the local and  
40 geographic level.
- 41 • Management objectives and constraints: The management objectives and  
42 constraints should be summarized to assist in the decision process.
- 43 • Social or external considerations: Discuss any issues that would contribute to  
44 making good suppression decisions.

1

2

3

**4 Evaluation Criteria**

5 Document the criteria used to evaluate suppression alternatives:

- 6 • Safety (firefighter/public).
- 7 • Land and resource management objectives.
- 8 • Environmental considerations.
- 9 • Social, political, economic considerations.
- 10 • Resources availability. Local, geographic, and national wildfire activities
- 11 and reinforcement capabilities.

12

**13 Alternatives**

14 Develop a sufficient number of alternatives to represent a reasonable range for  
15 the situation. Each alternative must be practical and contain the level of detail  
16 required to compare the alternatives and make a decision based on pre-identified  
17 evaluation criteria.

- 18 • **Strategy** - Briefly state the alternative strategies for management of the  
19 incident. Use geographic names, locations, etc. Roughly designate each  
20 strategy on a map.
- 21 • **Management Forces Required** - Make general estimates with enough detail  
22 to help in estimation of costs, determine if resources are available, etc.
- 23 • **Estimate Date of Control** - Estimates for each alternative should be made  
24 based on predicted weather and behavior factors, barriers, fuels etc., and the  
25 effects of suppression efforts.
- 26 • **Estimated Size at Containment** - Estimates for acreage burned under each  
27 alternative should be recorded and displayed on a map.
- 28 • **Estimated Cost** - Estimate total cost of suppression alternative. Include  
29 suppression costs, and rehabilitation. Estimated cost should also consider the  
30 probability of success, i.e., the consequences of failure. The WFSA  
31 "Decision Tree Application" describes the cost of failure based on the  
32 probability of success (see attached description). **Note:** The "average acre  
33 cost" from the planning process often works better than trying to estimate the  
34 cost for a specific situation.
- 35 • **Estimated Probability of Success** - Based on estimates from 0-100 for each  
36 alternative.

37

**38 Analysis of Effects**

39 Apply the above evaluation criteria to the alternatives. The results of the analysis  
40 will be the basis for selecting the appropriate alternative. The analysis of effects  
41 is based on the best estimates on the unit, resource and fire management. The  
42 situation will determine the level of detail required. You may display the effects  
43 in dollars, or as positive or negatives, as demonstrated on the example forms.  
44 The important thing is to document your decision. Ensure that estimates of

1 potential wildfire consequences are consistent with resource objectives, values,  
2 fire effects, and policy.

3 **Record of Decision**

4 Agency Administrator selects an alternative that best implements the objectives  
5 and constraints for the management of the area. Agency Administrator selects the  
6 level of management required to successfully implement the selected alternative  
7 (Type 1, Type 2, or Type 3 IMT). Briefly provide rationale for decisions. The  
8 WFSAs shall become a permanent part of the final fire record.

9

10 **Monitoring/Evaluation/Update**

11 The WFSAs must be reviewed prior to each operational period to determine if the  
12 alternative is still valid. The responsible Agency Administrator must sign the  
13 WFSAs to document the review. If costs exceed 10% the approved dollar amount  
14 in the WFSAs, the WFSAs will need recertification from by the appropriate  
15 certifying line authority. In addition, the WFSAs may need to be redone if the  
16 objectives have changed.

17

18 **Wildland Fire Decision Support System**

19 Wildland Fire Decision Support System (WFDSS) is a decision making process  
20 which an Agency Administrator or representative describes the situation,  
21 evaluates the expected effects, establishes objectives and constraints for the  
22 management of the incident, selects an appropriate alternative, and documents  
23 that decision.

24

25 WFDSS is structured to provide access to a suite of decision support analysis  
26 tools, document fire management decisions, and provide a long term operational  
27 plan as needed. WFDSS is endorsed by the Wildland Fire Leadership Council  
28 and NWCG. It is designed to: 1) support the Federal Wildland Fire Policy  
29 implementation guidance update (2009) and 2) replace the Wildland Fire  
30 Situation Analysis, the Wildland Fire Implementation Plan, and the Long-Term  
31 Implementation Plan (used on a limited basis in Indian Country).

32

33 WFDSS is constructed as a web-based system but can also generate a variety of  
34 standard or custom reports. The Decision Analysis Report (DAR) represents the  
35 compilation of all WFDSS subsection information into a single report that  
36 becomes the formal decision documentation for the incident.

37

38 Effective April 1, 2009, agency administrators are authorized to use the WFDSS  
39 decision analysis process and the Decision Analysis Report, for unplanned  
40 wildland fires in lieu of the three current decision analysis processes. By October  
41 1, 2009 all agency and tribes should be entering all unplanned wildland fires into  
42 the WFDSS system. Additional information can be found at  
43 <http://wfdss.usgs.gov>.

44

45

**1 Wildland Urban Interface Firefighting**

2

**3 Introduction**

4 A Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) exists where community defined values,  
5 structures, watersheds, roads and highways, power and gas lines, or other  
6 community resources intermingle with wildland fuels, and may be threatened by  
7 wildfires. Wildfires in these areas are often multi-jurisdictional and multi-  
8 agency. This complexity combined with the wildfire, public safety, increased  
9 media attention, political pressures, and other factors, may combine to  
10 overwhelm a normal size-up and decision-making process. The potential exists  
11 in areas of WUI for extremely dangerous and complex fire burning conditions

12

**13 Policy**

14 The operational role of the BIA in the WUI is wildland firefighting, hazardous  
15 fuels reduction, cooperative prevention and education, and technical assistance.  
16 Structural fire suppression is the responsibility of Tribal, state, or local  
17 governments. BIA managers and supervisors will not knowingly place BIA  
18 wildland firefighters in positions where exposure to noxious gases or chemicals  
19 would require the use of self-contained breathing apparatus. Cooperative  
20 agreements will not commit Agency personnel to suppression or other all-risk  
21 response activities outside of the guidance provided below. The authorized  
22 funding under the suppression (92310) operations sub-activity is for wildfire  
23 suppression activities only.

**24 • Structure Fires, Vehicle Fires, and Dump (Landfill) Fires**

25 Structure, vehicle, and dump fire suppression is not a functional  
26 responsibility of BIA wildland fire resources. These fires have the potential  
27 to emit high levels of toxic gases, for which BIA wildland firefighters are  
28 neither trained nor equipped. BIA firefighters will not take direct  
29 suppression action on structure, vehicle, or dump fires. BIA firefighters will  
30 not be dispatched to structure, vehicle, or dump fires unless there is an  
31 immediate and significant threat to lands and resources that are under BIA  
32 protection. This policy will be reflected in suppression response plans.

33

34 Should BIA firefighters encounter structure, vehicle, or dump fires,  
35 firefighting efforts will be limited to areas where the fire has spread onto  
36 BIA protected lands, and only when such actions can be accomplished safely  
37 and with no exposure to smoke emitted from the fire. Structure protection  
38 will be limited to exterior efforts, and only when such actions can be  
39 accomplished safely and in accordance with established wildland fire  
40 operations standards.

41

42 BIA fire managers should avoid giving the appearance that their wildland  
43 fire firefighters resources are trained and equipped to perform structure and  
44 vehicle fire suppression.

45

**1 Emergency Medical Response**

2 Medical emergency response is not a functional responsibility of BIA wildfire  
3 suppression resources. BIA wildland fire firefighters are not trained and  
4 equipped to perform emergency medical response duties, and should not be part  
5 of a preplanned response that requires these duties. Local fire and emergency  
6 medical services have the functional responsibility for these types of responses.  
7 When BIA firefighters encounter emergency medical response situations, their  
8 efforts should be limited to immediate care (first aid, first responder actions) that  
9 they have been trained to provide as part of their normal fire suppression duties.  
10 BIA fire managers should avoid giving the appearance that their wildland fire  
11 firefighters are trained and equipped to perform emergency medical response.

12

**13 Hazardous Materials**

14 BIA wildland fire firefighters have the potential to be exposed to hazardous  
15 materials releases while performing their jobs. Hazardous materials or waste may  
16 be found on public lands in a variety of forms, e.g., clandestine drug lab waste,  
17 mining waste, illegal dumping, and transportation accidents.

18

19 BIA employees that discover any unauthorized waste dump or spill site that  
20 contains indicators of potential hazardous substances should take the following  
21 precautions:

- 22 • Treat each site as if it contains harmful materials;
- 23 • Do not handle, move, or open any container, breathe vapors, or make contact  
24 with the material;
- 25 • Move a safe distance upwind from the site; and
- 26 • Contact appropriate personnel. Generally, this is the Hazardous Materials  
27 Coordinator for the BIA area.

28

29

**30 Fuels Management and Hazardous Fuels Program Planning and  
31 Implementation**

32 Chapter 16 Hazardous Fuels Management and Chapter 17 Hazardous Fuels  
33 Program Planning and Implementation have been excluded from this operations  
34 guide indefinitely. The national and interagency policy guides for the hazardous  
35 fuels programs are contained in the following guides and handbooks:

- 36 • *Interagency Prescribed Fire Planning and Implementation Procedures*  
37 *Reference Guide 2008*
- 38 • *BIA Fuels Management Program Supplement to the Interagency*  
39 *Prescribed Fire Implementation and Procedures Reference Guide.*
- 40 • *BIA Fuels Management Program Business Rules Handbook, July 2008*

41

42 Exclusive use of these handbooks and guides enhances intra and interagency  
43 program continuity, avoids duplication, reduces the chances to misinterpret  
44 policy and provides one stop shopping for the fuels programs policy in a fire

1 management and political environment where changes occur frequently. Please  
2 call the Assistant Director, Fire Use and Fuels, Deputy Fire Use and Fuels, or  
3 National Fire Ecologist for more information.

4  
5 **Prescribed Fire or Wildland Fire Use Approvals at Planning Levels 4 and 5**

6 Each Agency/Tribe must complete the Department of the Interior, BIA  
7 Preparedness Level 5 Prescribed Fire and Wildland Fire Use Concurrence Form  
8 (see *BIA Fuels Management Program Supplement to the Interagency Prescribed*  
9 *Fire Implementation and Procedures Reference Guide* and/or *BIA Fuels*  
10 *Management Program Business Rules Handbook, July 2008*) to request  
11 permission to implement a prescribed fire or wildland fire use during National  
12 Preparedness Level 4 and 5.

13  
14 The following provides clarification when requesting approval for fire use  
15 implementation at preparedness levels 4 and 5. This information is reference in  
16 the *2009 National Interagency Mobilization Guide, pages 77 and 79*.

17  
18 **Preparedness Level 4**

19 Wildland Fire Use (WFU) and prescribed fire (Rx) applications can be initiated  
20 or continued if the proposed action is approved by an agency at the Regional or  
21 State Office level. The approval must be based on an assessment of risk, impacts  
22 of the proposed actions on Area resources and activities, and include feedback  
23 from the Geographic Multi-Area Coordinating Group (GMAC). The GMAC  
24 provides information or perspectives to agencies wishing to proceed with or  
25 implement a WFU or Rx application. The final decision to implement resides  
26 with the implementing agency.

27  
28 **Preparedness Level 5**

29 Wildland Fire Use (WFU) and prescribed fire (Rx) applications can be initiated  
30 or continued if the proposed action is approved by an agency at the Regional or  
31 State Office level and local resources can carry out the implementation (including  
32 contingency resources). The approval must be based on an assessment of risk,  
33 impacts of the proposed actions on Area resources and activities, and include  
34 feedback from the GMAC. The GMAC provides information or perspectives to  
35 agencies wishing to proceed with or implement a WFU or Rx application.

36  
37 For WFU or Rx applications to be initiated or continued that require additional  
38 support of resources from outside the local unit or require resource ordering of an  
39 Incident Management Team (IMT) or Fire Use Management Team (FUMT), a  
40 National MAC representative must assess risk and impacts of the proposed action  
41 and present to NMAC for review prior to proceeding. The final decision to  
42 implement resides with the implementing agency.

43  
44 Approval by NMAC requires that requests are submitted no later than 0700 hours  
45 MST, on the day of the proposed ignition (preferably sooner). Ideally, a project

- 1 request would be placed at 0700 Monday for projects that can be ignited and
- 2 placed in patrol status by the following Monday, at which time new requests are
- 3 submitted. The Regional Fuels Specialist should precede the written request with
- 4 a courtesy call, providing as much lead time as possible.
- 5
- 6 Keep project requests brief. The concurrence form contains the essential
- 7 information necessary for the NMAC to approve your request. They do not have
- 8 time to review several pages of attached information.