

Chapter 02

Program Policy, Leadership and Guidance Overview

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Introduction

The following policies are accepted and endorsed by the Secretaries of Agriculture and Interior to provide consistent fire management practices among federal Wildland Fire Management (WFM) agencies which develop and guide BIA wildland fire operations.

The statutes which authorize and provide the means for managing wildland fire on or threatening lands under the jurisdiction of the DOI are identified in Part 620 of the Department Manual, WFM. The information within this chapter describes the general types of wildland fire and respective standards and qualifications.

Federal Wildland Fire Policy

In 2001, an update of the 1995 Federal Fire Policy was completed and approved by the Secretaries of the Interior and Agriculture. On April 21, 2004 the Secretaries approved the Interagency Strategy for the Implementation of the Federal Wildland Fire Policy.

On May 2, 2008, the WFLC issued a memorandum entitled *Modification of Federal Wildland Fire Policy Guidance*. The document modified policy statements made in the 2003 strategy document. As directed by the WFLC, the modifications were tested in a number of field units in the 2008 fire season and then incorporated into this document.

In 2009, The National Wildfire Coordinating Group (NWCG) issued a memorandum to the NWCG board that 1) affirms the soundness of the *Review and Update of the 1995 Federal Wildland Fire Management Policy (January 2001)*, 2) reiterates the policy changes stated in the May 2, 2008 WFLC memorandum entitled *Modification of Federal Wildland Fire Policy Guidance*, 3) states that the Wildland Fire Decision Support System (WFDSS) will replace existing analysis and decision processes, and 4) confirms that the *Interagency Strategy for the Implementation of Federal Wildland Fire Management Policy (June 20, 2003)* will be replaced in 2009 by the *Guidance for Implementation of Federal Wildland Fire Management Policy (February, 2009)*.

This guidance also calls for the increased dialogue and collaboration between federal agencies and tribal, local, and state agencies as plans are updated and implemented to manage wildfires in order to accomplish resource and protection objectives.

Federal Wildland Fire Policy - Guiding Principles and Policy Statements

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02-1

1
2 The following guiding principles and policy statements are from the *Review and*
3 *Update of the 1995 Federal Wildland Fire Management Policy (January 2001)*.
4 These remain the foundational principles and policy statements for Federal
5 Wildland Fire Management.

6

7 **Guiding Principles**

8

9 1. Firefighter and public safety is the first priority in every fire management
10 activity.

11

12 2. The role of wildland fire as an essential ecological process and natural change
13 agent will be incorporated into the planning process. Federal agency land and
14 resource management plans set the objectives for the use and desired future
15 condition of the various public lands.

16

17 3. Fire Management Plans, programs, and activities support land and resource
18 management plans and their implementation.

19

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

25

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

33

34 6. Fire Management Plans and activities are based upon the best available
35 science. Knowledge and experience are developed among all federal wildland
36 fire management agencies. An active fire research program combined with
37 interagency collaboration provides the means to make these tools available to all
38 fire managers.

39

40 7. Fire Management Plans and activities incorporate public health and
41 environmental quality considerations.

42

43 8. Federal, State, tribal, local, interagency, and international coordination and
44 cooperation are essential. Increasing costs and smaller work forces require that
45 public agencies pool their human resources to successfully deal with the ever-
46 increasing and more complex fire management tasks. Full collaboration among

1 federal wildland fire management agencies and between the federal wildland fire
2 management agencies and international, State, tribal, and local governments and
3 private entities result in a mobile fire management work force available for the
4 full range of public needs.

5
6 9. Standardization of policies and procedures among federal wildland fire
7 management agencies is an ongoing objective. Consistency of plans and
8 operations provides the fundamental platform upon which federal wildland fire
9 management agencies can cooperate, integrate fire activities across agency
10 boundaries, and provide leadership for cooperation with State, tribal, and local
11 fire management organizations.

12
13 **Federal Wildland Fire Management Policy**

14
15 1. Safety
16 Firefighter and public safety is the first priority. All Fire Management Plans and
17 activities must reflect this commitment.

18
19 2. Fire Management and Ecosystem Sustainability
20 The full range of fire management activities will be used to help achieve
21 ecosystem sustainability, including its interrelated ecological, economic, and
22 social components

23
24 3. Response to Wildland Fire
25 Fire, as a critical natural process, will be integrated into land and resource
26 management plans and activities on a landscape scale, and across agency
27 boundaries. Response to wildland fires is based on ecological, social and legal
28 consequences of the fire. The circumstances under which a fire occurs, and the
29 likely consequences on firefighter and public safety and welfare, natural and
30 cultural resources, and, values to be protected, dictate the appropriate response to
31 the fire.

32
33 4. Use of Wildland Fire
34 Wildland fire will be used to protect, maintain, and enhance resources and, as
35 nearly as possible, be allowed to function in its natural ecological role. Use of
36 fire will be based on L/RMP and associated Fire Management Plans and will
37 follow specific prescriptions contained in operational plans.

38
39 5. Rehabilitation and Restoration (Currently, Emergency Stabilization and
40 Rehabilitation)
41 Rehabilitation and restoration efforts will be undertaken to protect and sustain
42 ecosystems, public health and safety, and to help communities protect
43 infrastructure

44
45 6. Protection Priorities

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

7

8 7. Wildland Urban Interface

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

18

19 8. Planning

20 Every area with burnable vegetation must have an approved Fire Management
21 Plan. Fire Management Plans are strategic plans that define a program to
22 manage wildland fires based on the area's approved land management plan. Fire
23 Management Plans must provide for firefighter and public safety; include fire
24 management strategies, tactics, and alternatives; address values to be protected
25 and public health issues; and be consistent with resource management objectives,
26 activities of the area, and environmental laws and regulations.

27

28 9. Science

29 Fire Management Plans and programs will be based on a foundation of sound
30 science. Research will support ongoing efforts to increase our scientific
31 knowledge of biological, physical, and sociological factors. Information needed
32 to support fire management will be developed through an integrated interagency
33 fire science program. Scientific results must be made available to managers in a
34 timely manner and must be used in the development of land management plans,
35 Fire Management Plans, and implementation plans.

36

37 10. Preparedness

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

42

43 11. Suppression

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

46

1 12. Prevention

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

4

5 13. Standardization

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

9

10 14. Interagency Cooperation

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

15

16 15. Communication and Education

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

22

23 16. Agency Administrator and Employee Roles

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

30

31 17. Evaluation

32 Agencies will develop and implement a systematic method of evaluation to
33 determine effectiveness of projects through implementation of the 2001 Federal
34 Fire Policy. The evaluation will assure accountability, facilitate resolution of
35 areas of conflict, and identify resource shortages and agency priorities.

36

37

38 **Guidance for Implementation of the Federal Wildland Fire Management**
39 **Policy**

40

41 The following guidelines should be used to provide consistent implementation of
42 Federal Wildland Fire Policy.

43

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

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- 1 2. Agencies and bureaus will review, update, and develop agreements that
- 2 clarify the jurisdictional inter-relationships and define the roles and
- 3 responsibilities among local, state, tribal and federal fire protection entities.
- 4 3. Responses to wildland fire will be coordinated across levels of government
- 5 regardless of the jurisdiction at the ignition source.
- 6 4. Fire management planning will be intergovernmental in scope and developed
- 7 on a landscape scale.
- 8 5. Wildland fire is a general term describing any non-structure fire that occurs in
- 9 the wildland. Wildland fires are categorized into two distinct types:
- 10 a. Wildfires – Unplanned ignitions or prescribed fires that are declared wildfires
- 11 b. Prescribed Fires – Planned ignitions
- 12 6. A wildland fire may be concurrently managed for one or more objectives and
- 13 objectives can change as the fire spreads across the landscape. Objectives are
- 14 affected by changes in fuels, weather, topography; varying social understanding
- 15 and tolerance; and involvement of other governmental jurisdictions having
- 16 different missions and objectives.
- 17 7. Management response to a wildland fire on federal land is based on objectives
- 18 established on the applicable Land/Resource Management Plan and/or the Fire
- 19 Management Plan.
- 20 8. Initial action on human-caused wildfire will be to suppress the fire at the
- 21 lowest cost with the fewest negative consequences with respect to firefighter and
- 22 public safety.
- 23 9. Managers will use a decision support process to guide and document wildfire
- 24 management decisions. The process will provide situational assessment, analyze
- 25 hazards and risk, define implementation actions, and document decisions and
- 26 rationale for those decisions.

27

28 **Implementation of the Federal Wildland Fire Management Policy**

29

30 Each of the departments or agencies participating in the review will adopt the

31 *Guidance for Implementation of Federal Wildland Fire Management Policy*

32 *(February 2009)* and review and revise, as appropriate, all manuals, handbooks,

33 guidebooks, plans, agreements and other pertinent documents

34

35 The National Wildfire Coordination Group (NWCG) will adopt the *Guidance for*

36 *Implementation of Federal Wildland Fire Management Policy (February 2009)*

37 and review and revise, as appropriate, all interagency training courses,

38 operational guides, standards, terminology, reporting requirements,

39 skill/competency/ qualification/certification requirements and other pertinent

40 documents.

41

42 The federal fire directors, in collaboration with state, local and tribal fire

43 managers and public and nongovernment organizations, will communicate

44 direction stated in the *Guidance for Implementation of Federal Wildland Fire*

45 *Management Policy (February 2009)* with internal and external audiences to

46 foster understanding and support for the complexity of wildland fire management

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1
2 The federal fire directors will revise or develop accountability standards,
3 performance measures, and tracking systems to assess if resource and protection
4 objectives are met during the course of management on all wildland fires.

5
6 **Department of the Interior Wildland Fire Management Policy (1998)**

7 The Department's Wildland Fire Management Policy is cited in the DOI,
8 Departmental Manual Part 620: Chapter 1.

9
10 **Secretary of the Interior**

11 The Secretary of the Interior through the Bureau Directors of the Bureau of Land
12 Management (BLM), United States Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS), National
13 Park Service (NPS), and Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA), are responsible for
14 WFM activities of the Department (including such activities when contracted for,
15 in whole or in part, with other agencies or Tribes) under the statutes cited in 620
16 DM 1.1.

17
18 **Assistant Secretary - Policy, Management and Budget (PMB)**

19 The Assistant Secretary - PMB is responsible for coordination of strategic level
20 inter-bureau, inter-agency, and inter-functional wildland fire policy development
21 and oversight. Principle responsibility for these functions within PMB lies with
22 the Office of Wildland Fire Coordination (OWFC). Advice and
23 recommendations on wildland fire policy and program issues are provided to the
24 Secretary and other policy officials.

25
26 **Assistant Secretaries for Land and Minerals Management, Fish and Wildlife
27 and Parks, and Indian Affairs**

28 The Assistant Secretaries for Land and Minerals Management, Fish and Wildlife
29 and Parks, and Indian Affairs are responsible for wildland fire policy
30 development and oversight within their respective bureaus; and for coordination
31 of inter-bureau and inter-agency policy development with the Assistant Secretary
32 - PMB.

33

34

35 **Bureau of Indian Affairs Fire Management Policy**

36 Policy and responsibility for the BIA WFM program is documented in the Indian
37 Affairs Manual (IAM), Part 90, Chapter 1. This part identifies the authorities,
38 standards, and procedures that have general and continuing applicability to
39 wildland fire activities under the jurisdiction of the Assistant Secretary - Indian Affairs.

40

41 **Mission**

42 To enhance the quality of life, promote economic opportunity, and to carry out
43 the responsibility to protect and improve the trust assets of American Indians,
44 American Indian Tribes, and Alaska Natives.

45

1 We will accomplish this through the delivery of quality services and by
2 maintaining government to government relationships within the spirit of self-
3 determination.

4

5 **Wildland Fire Management Objectives**

- 6 • To provide for firefighter and public safety as the first priority in every
7 WFM activity.
- 8 • To provide for effective wildland fire protection, fire use and hazardous
9 fuels management, and timely rehabilitation on Indian forest and range
10 lands held in Trust by the United States of America, based on
11 management plans approved by the Indian land owner. Preparedness
12 will be based on the most efficient level of meeting Tribal goals and
13 objectives for the program, utilizing an interagency approach to meet
14 local, regional, and national resource needs.
- 15 • Implementation of Tribal management of the program will be facilitated
16 under Self-Determination, as requested by Tribal government.

17

18 **Responsibility**

19 The following positions are responsible for WFM activities of the Bureau
20 (including such activities when contracted for, in whole or in part, with other
21 Agencies or Tribes) under the statutes cited in 620 DM 1.1.

22

23 **Bureau Director for BIA:**

- 24 • Responsibility for the implementation of an effective WFM program.
- 25 • Responsible for implementation of policies and recommendations in the
26 Federal Wildland Fire Management Policy.

27

28 **Director, Branch of Fire Management:**

- 29 • Responsible for the development of policies and standards for firefighter
30 safety and training and for the prevention, suppression and use of
31 wildland fires on Indian Trust lands.

32

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34

35 **Regional Directors:**

- 36 • Responsible for ensuring activities and/or plans reflect a commitment to
37 safety and a state of readiness
- 38 • Commensurate with values at risk to minimize wildland fire loss.

39

40 **Agency Superintendents:**

- 41 • Responsible for ensuring every wildland firefighter, fireline supervisor
42 and fire manager takes positive action to obtain compliance with
43 established standards and safe firefighting practices.

44

1 **Wildland Fire Program Leadership**

2 **1. Wildland Fire Leadership Council (WFLC)**

3 WFLC is a cooperative, interagency organization dedicated to achieving
4 consistent implementation of the goals, actions, and policies in the
5 National Fire Plan and the Federal Wildland Fire Management Policy.

6
7 The WFLC consists of the Department of Agriculture's Undersecretary
8 for Natural Resources and the Environment and the Chief of the U.S.
9 Forest Service; the Department of the Interior's Directors of the NPS,
10 FWS, and BLM; the Assistant Secretary of Indian Affairs and the Chief
11 of Staff to the Secretary of the Interior; the Department of Homeland
12 Security's U.S. Fire Administration; the Intertribal Timber Council; the
13 Western Governors Association; the National Association of State
14 Foresters; and the National Association of Counties.

15
16 **2. Fire Executive Council (FEC)**

17 The FEC provides coordinated interagency federal executive level
18 wildland fire policy leadership, direction, and program oversight.

19
20 **3. National Wildfire Coordinating Group (NWCG)**

21 NWCG provides a forum in which issues, both short and long term,
22 involving standards and program implementation can be coordinated,
23 discussed, and resolved. NWCG initiates actions to improve
24 coordination and integration of state, tribal, and federal wildland fire
25 programs while recognizing individual agency missions. NWCG will
26 provide national leadership and establish, implement, maintain, and
27 communicate policy, standards, guidelines, and qualifications for
28 wildland fire program management.

29
30 NWCG is comprised of federal, tribal (through ITC), and state
31 representation. It assumes the responsibilities of the now defunct
32 National Fire and Aviation

33
34
35 **Wildland Fire Coordinating Groups**

36 **1. Office of Wildland Fire Coordination (OWFC)**

37 The OWFC is comprised of representatives from the DOI WFM
38 programs. OWFC is responsible for managing and overseeing the
39 Department's WFM program and policy.

40
41 **2. National Multi-Agency Coordination Group (NMAC)**

42 The NMAC is comprised of the WFM Fire Directors, National
43 Association of State Foresters, National Interagency Coordination
44 Center, National Weather Service and the military at Preparedness
45 Level 3 and above. This group is located at the National Interagency
46 Fire Center (NIFC). The group establishes national priorities and

1 provides national leadership and direction to wildland fire activities.
2 Additional information on MAC groups is documented in the National
3 Interagency Mobilization Guide and local Geographic Area Operation
4 Guides.
5

6 **3. Geographic Multi-Agency Coordination Groups (GMAC)**

7 A GMAC is activated at the local geographic area level whenever
8 wildland fire activities are affecting more than one agency or there is
9 competition for incident resources. There may also be a need for
10 geographic areas to activate GMAC when the National Preparedness
11 Level is at 5 enabling Area response to requests/direction from the
12 NMAC.
13

14 **4. Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)**

15 Under provisions of the Robert T. Stafford Disaster and Emergency
16 Assistance Act (P.L. 93-233, as amended) and the Executive Order
17 12148, Federal Emergency Management (July 20, 1979, as amended)
18 WFM agencies can provide assistance to Presidential declared disasters
19 and emergencies nationwide. The Federal Emergency Management
20 Agency (FEMA) is the overall coordinator of the Federal Response Plan
21 (FRP) which guides 26 Federal agencies and the American Red Cross in
22 response activities. In the FRP, the USDA Forest Service is the primary agency
23 responsible for emergency support functions under firefighting.
24

25 **5. National Interagency Coordination Center (NICC)**

26 The NICC is located at NIFC, Boise, Idaho. The mission of NICC is the cost
27 effective and timely coordination of land management agency emergency
28 response for wildland fire at the national level. This is accomplished through
29 planning, situation monitoring and expediting resources orders between the BIA
30 Regions, BLM States, NPS Regions, USFWS Regions, USDA Forest Service
31 Regions, National Weather Service (NWS) Regions and other cooperating
32 agencies. NICC coordinates the movement of all resources across geographic
33 area dispatch boundaries not covered by local operating plans or other direction
34 found in the National Interagency Mobilization Guide.
35

36 **6. Geographic Area Coordination Centers (GACC)**

37 The GACCs provide support to local level fire management
38 organizations when resource needs exceed a local unit's capability. The
39 GACC is responsible for movement of resources within its geographic
40 area of responsibility to meet the situational needs.

41 **Wildland Fire Interagency Agreements for Coordination and Cooperation**

42 Interagency cooperation is vital in attaining WFM program objectives. The
43 ability of a single agency to implement a WFM program is limited without
44 coordination and assistance from other organizations. Interagency cooperation
45 and coordination of shared resources and common activities is imperative at all
46 organizational levels. The following agreements and organizations provide
47 program direction, coordination and/or support to the WFM program.

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1. Department of the Interior and Department of Agriculture Interagency

The WFM programs work cooperatively under an Interagency Agreement entitled "Interagency Agreement for Fire Management between the Bureau of Land Management, Bureau of Indian Affairs, National Park Service, Fish and Wildlife Service of the United States Department of the Interior and the Forest Service of the United States Department of Agriculture". The Agreement Number for BIA is P00C141A9871.

2. International Agreements

Agreements are in place between the United States and Canada, Mexico, Australia and New Zealand that authorize the exchange of fire fighting resources. For more information reference the National Interagency Mobilization Guide.

3. Memorandum of Understanding with Fire Departments

The purpose of this memorandum is to provide a general framework for cooperation and coordination among DOI agencies, National Association of State Foresters, United States Fire Administration, and the USDA Forest Service in the delivery of wildland fire assistance to fire departments. (Reference agreement number K00441-3-194)

4. Interagency Agreement with US Fish and Wildlife Service and the National Marine Fisheries Service

This agreement addresses matters related to compliance with Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act related to the wildfire suppression, wildfire rehabilitation, and hazardous fuels treatment activities.

National Standards - Guides and Handbooks

1. National Interagency Mobilization Guide (NFES 2092)

The National Interagency Mobilization Guide identifies procedures which guide the operations of multi-agency logistical support activity throughout the coordination system. The guide is intended to facilitate interagency dispatch coordination ensuring the timeliest and cost effective incident support services available are provided.

2. Incident Response Pocket Guide (PMS 461)

The Incident Response Pocket Guide (IRPG) is a wildland fire operations guide that encompasses leadership, fire fighting strategies, safety, risk, aviation and other miscellaneous references.

3. Wildland Fire Qualifications System Guide (PMS 310-1)

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1 The Wildland Fire Qualification Systems Guide (PMS 310-1) document
2 provides guidance to participating agencies and organizations for the
3 establishment of standards for wildland fire personnel. Personnel
4 meeting the established standards are qualified for mobilization beyond
5 their geographic area. The qualifications system described in the guide
6 is a performance based qualification system. Components of the
7 qualifications system are: position task books, training courses, job aids,
8 and agency certification.

9
10 **4. Fireline Handbook (PMS 410-1)**

11 The Fireline Handbook (PMS 410-1) is a field reference guide for
12 personnel of wildland fire agencies using the Incident Command System
13 (ICS) in response to wildland fire incidents. The objective of this
14 handbook is to provide an interagency Anuts and Bolts® pocket guide
15 for wildland fire suppression personnel.

16
17 **5. Interagency Incident Business Management Handbook (PMS 902-1)**

18 The Interagency Incident Business Management Handbook (IIBMH) is
19 designed to aid participating agencies in working together in the
20 business and administrative aspect of wildland fire. The handbook
21 describes procedures for maintenance of financial records for personnel,
22 equipment and supplies. It relates to emergency procurement authority
23 to support the incident, cooperative agreements with other public
24 agencies and the private sector, and claims against the US for property
25 loss or damages and personal injury or death.

26
27 **6. Interagency Burned Area Emergency Response and Rehabilitation
28 Guides**Error! Bookmark not defined.

29 The Interagency Burned Area Emergency Response Guidebook and DOI
30 Burned Area Rehabilitation Guide describe the authority, administration,
31 standards and implementation process for emergency stabilization and
32 rehabilitation on burned-over lands.

33
34 **7. Interagency Prescribed Fire Planning and Implementation
35 Procedures Reference Guide**

36 The Interagency Prescribed Fire Planning and Implementation
37 Procedures Reference Guide provides standardized procedures,
38 specifically associated with the planning and implementation of
39 prescribed fire.