United States Department of the Interior

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20240

OCT 14 2011

Memorandum

To: Director, Bureau of Indian Affairs
Director, Bureau of Land Management
Director, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Director, National Park Service

From: Kim A. Thorsen, Deputy Assistant Secretary – Law Enforcement, Security, and Emergency Management

Subject: Office of Wildland Fire Coordination Policy Memorandum 2011-2
Department of the Interior Wildland Fire Boot Stipend

The Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) recently settled an arbitration case with the Federal Indian Service Employees (FISE) regarding the purchase of wildland fire boots. During the proceedings, the attorney for FISE wrote to the Assistant Secretary for Occupational Safety and Health in the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL), contending "… the Department of the Interior pays for these boots for the wildland firefighters employed by the National Park Service and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (almost all of whom are non-Indian) while it forces the predominately American Indian firefighting crews who work alongside them to pay for their own boots." The FISE asked the DOL to "escalate this to the Secretarial level and ask Secretary Solis to contact Secretary Salazar directly" for "prompt attention" and an "immediate response" from the Department of the Interior (DOI) to their complaint.

The National Wildfire Coordinating Group (NWCG) establishes wildland fire standards for use by the bureaus and the NWCG Wildland Fire Boot standard has been adopted by each bureau as appropriate for safe work on the fireline. The NWCG concluded that protective footwear is very personal in nature and can be used by employees off the job site. Therefore, appropriate boots should be a condition of employment for firefighting positions. Boots should be purchased by the employee prior to employment.

Within the DOI, guidelines for purchasing boots for firefighters have indeed varied by bureau. However, the bureaus and Office of Wildland Fire, in consultation with the USDA Forest Service, have reached a consensus on the appropriate level and mechanism for providing financial assistance to all employees who, as a condition of employment, are required to purchase wildland fire boots. Our new policy will allow a $100.00 per year stipend to qualified firefighters as described in the attachment. If you have questions or need additional information, please contact Kirk Rowdabaugh, 202-606-3447.

Attachment: Office of Wildland Fire Coordination Policy Memorandum 2011-2,
Department of the Interior Wildland Fire Boot Stipend

Office of Wildland Fire Coordination Policy 2011-2
Wildland Fire Boot Stipend

Purpose:
To provide Departmental guidance to the bureaus and offices on the payment of a yearly stipend to employees for wildland fire boots.

Background:
The National Wildfire Coordinating Group (NWCG) establishes wildland fire standards for use by the bureaus, and the NWCG Wildland Fire Boot standard has been adopted by each bureau as appropriate for safe work on the fireline. The NWCG has also concluded that protective footwear is very personal in nature and can be used by employees off the job site. Therefore, appropriate boots should be a condition of employment for firefighting positions and should be purchased by the employee prior to employment.

Scope:
This policy applies to all bureaus and offices within the Department, and to all employees, regardless of their employment status.

Time Frame:
This policy is effective January 1, 2012 and remains in effect until rescinded or modified.

Policy:
The payment of a one-hundred dollar ($100.00) per year stipend is authorized for employees holding a valid Incident Qualification Card with a Fitness Rating of moderate or arduous, and who, as a condition of employment, are required to purchase wildland fire boots that satisfy the standards described in the *Interagency Standards for Fire and Fire Aviation Operations* and the *Wildland Fire and Aviation Program Management and Operations Guide (BIA).* Validity of the Incident Qualification Card is determined by the Fitness Expiration date on the card.

Personnel hired under the Administratively-Determined (AD) authority who qualify will receive the stipend at time of payment following their first fire assignment in an IQCS qualified position requiring an arduous or moderate fitness rating in each calendar year. DOI bureaus and offices will follow established payment processes for disbursement of stipends for all other personnel assigned to wildland fires.

Kim A. Thorsen
Deputy Assistant Secretary
Law Enforcement, Security and Emergency Management

10/14/11
Date

Distribution:

Director, Bureau of Indian Affairs
Director, Bureau of Land Management
Director, Fish & Wildlife Service
Director, National Park Service
DOI Fire Executive Council
DOI Bureau Fire Directors