

# Handout 9-1

## MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING

### Between the United States Department of the Interior and the United States Department of Agriculture

**I. Purpose.** This Memorandum of Understanding establishes the basis for interagency investigation of serious fire-related accidents.

**II. Introduction.** If the causal factors of a serious fire-related accident are identified, effective corrective actions to prevent a recurrence can be taken. Interagency investigations add perspective and enhance the mix of skills and knowledge on the investigation team. Interagency investigations are especially important where there are common management and corrective action issues.

**III. Policy.** Interagency investigations will be conducted whenever a serious fire-related accident occurs on a USDA Forest Service managed fire, Department of the Interior managed fire, or a jointly managed fire. Aircraft accidents occurring during wildland fire operations will be investigated by the National Transportation Safety Board, the USDA Forest Service, and the Department of the Interior in accordance with established laws and agreements.

#### IV. Definitions.

A. *Serious Fire-Related Accidents.* Accidents occurring to personnel participating in wildland fire suppression or prescribed burning operations, or to personnel working in direct support of those activities, which result in one or more fatalities or the hospitalization of three or more personnel.

B. *Co-Lead Investigations.* Team leaders from both Departments and team members from both Departments.

C. *Agency-Lead Investigations.* Single team leader and team members from both Departments.

**V. Procedures.** Interagency investigation teams will include personnel from both the Department of the Interior and the Department of Agriculture. Representatives of the Department of Labor, Occupational Safety and Health Administration will

be invited to participate in these investigations, or will be given full support to conduct their own investigation.

A. *Co-Lead Investigations* will be conducted whenever:

1. A serious fire-related accident occurs on a USDA Forest Service/Department of the Interior jointly managed fire, or,
2. A serious fire-related accident involving USDA Forest Service personnel occurs on a Department of the Interior managed fire, or,
3. A serious fire-related accident involving Department of the Interior personnel occurs on a USDA Forest Service managed fire.

B. *Agency-Lead Investigations* will be conducted whenever only one agency is responsible for managing a fire, and a serious fire-related accident occurs affecting only personnel of that same agency. The agency responsible for managing the fire will lead the investigation.

**VI. Timeframes.** The report should be completed and a copy submitted to the appropriate Departmental Designated Safety and Health Official(s) within 45 calendar days of the accident.

**VII. Training and Qualifications.** Team leaders, investigators, and specialists will meet minimum training and qualification standards as jointly established by the Department of Agriculture, the Department of the Interior, and the National Wildfire Coordinating Group.

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