

1 **Chapter 5**  
2 **USDA Forest Service Wildland Fire and Aviation Program**  
3 **Organization and Responsibilities**

4 **Introduction**

5 This document is intended to be a program reference guide that documents the  
6 standards for operational procedures and practices for the USDA Forest Service  
7 Fire and Aviation Management program. The standards provided in this  
8 handbook are based on current agency and interagency wildland fire  
9 management policy, and are intended to provide fire and aviation program  
10 guidance, and to ensure safe, consistent, efficient, and effective fire and aviation  
11 operations. This document will be reviewed and updated annually.

12 **Foundational Doctrine**

13 The vision of the Forest Service's Fire and Aviation Management program is to  
14 safely and effectively extinguish fire, when needed; use fire where allowable;  
15 manage our natural resources; and as a Nation, live with wildland fire. To  
16 support this vision, five objectives set the foundation for an all-inclusive and  
17 comprehensive High Reliability Fire Management program. These objectives  
18 are intrinsic for supporting the vision.

- 19 • Risk Management and Risk Reduction- transforming our workforce into a  
20 more refined safety culture.
- 21 • Implementing fire management programs to protect the ecology of Forest  
22 Service lands for multiple uses.
- 23 • Enhanced and Improved Collaboration and Partnerships.
- 24 • Learning – utilizing science, research, and innovative practices.
- 25 • Empowerment of employees in leadership, judgment, and decision making.

26 Doctrine is beliefs and teachings which form the fundamental core values of our  
27 work. Doctrinal approach goes beyond strict compliance with procedural rules,  
28 and promotes risk-based application of wildland fire management principles to  
29 improve decision making and firefighter safety. Foundational doctrine has been  
30 codified in Forest Service Manual 5100 direction and will guide fundamental  
31 wildland fire management policy, practices, behaviors, and customs to be  
32 mutually understood at every level of command.

33 The following collection of principles and beliefs form the foundational doctrine  
34 for fire suppression in the U.S. Forest Service. These principles and beliefs  
35 operate at multiple organizational levels, including:

- 1 • Forest Service Wide (i.e., applies to all employees and activities).
- 2 • Fire and Aviation Management (i.e., are specific to the fire and aviation
- 3 management program).
- 4 • Fire Suppression (i.e., are specific to firefighting activities).

#### 5 **The Operational Environment**

##### 6 • *Fire Suppression*

- 7 1. No resource or facility is worth the loss of human life; however, the
- 8 wildland fire suppression environment is complex and possesses inherent
- 9 hazards that can, even with reasonable mitigation, result in harm to fire
- 10 fighters engaged in fire suppression operations. In recognition of this fact,
- 11 we are committed to the aggressive management of risk.

#### 12 **Mission**

##### 13 • *Forest Service Wide*

- 14 2. The Forest Service is prepared and organized to support national and
- 15 international emergencies with trained personnel and other assets when
- 16 requested.
- 17 3. Agency employees respond when they come across situations where
- 18 human life is immediately at risk or there is a clear emergency, and they are
- 19 capable of assisting without undue risk to themselves or others.
- 20 4. In responding to emergencies, we will bring the same professionalism
- 21 and passion for safety as we do to non-emergency situations.
- 22 5. Support for local fire emergencies takes priority over accomplishment of
- 23 local resource targets. Support of non-local fire emergencies will be at the
- 24 discretion of the local line officer, as bounded by agency agreements and
- 25 Regional or National direction.
- 26 6. A cooperative relationship between the Forest Service and other agencies
- 27 is essential. The Forest Service is committed to honor its part of the joint
- 28 responsibility to develop and maintain effective working relationships with
- 29 its intergovernmental cooperators.
- 30 • *Fire and Aviation Management*
- 31 7. Fire management is central to meeting the Forest Service mission –
- 32 conserving natural resources, restoring ecological health, and protecting
- 33 communities.
- 34 • *Fire Suppression*
- 35 8. Successful fire suppression is essential to support the Forest Service
- 36 mission.
- 37 9. The intent of wildfire suppression is to protect human life, property, and
- 38 at risk lands and resources.

#### 39 **Leadership and Accountability**

##### 40 • *Forest Service Wide*

- 41 10. The hallmarks of Forest Service leadership are action, attitude, and
- 42 accountability.

- 1 11. Leaders express clear and concise intent to ensure assignments are  
2 managed safely, effectively, and efficiently.
- 3 12. Leaders regularly monitor operations for effectiveness, and take action  
4 when there is recognition of exceptional or problematic employee  
5 performance.
- 6 13. Both positive reinforcement and discipline will be based on individual  
7 behavior as measured by adherence to the rules; appropriate application of  
8 doctrine, principles, and guidelines; execution of responsibilities  
9 commensurate with role; and appropriate use of available information.
- 10 • *Fire Suppression*
- 11 14. Demonstrated fitness for command is a requirement for leadership  
12 positions associated with firefighting.

### 13 **Roles and Relationships**

- 14 • *Forest Service Wide*
- 15 15. Commitment to duty, respect for others, and personal integrity are  
16 expected. Every employee fosters a work environment that is enjoyable,  
17 rewarding, recognizes the value of diversity, and is free of harassment.
- 18 • *Fire and Aviation Management*
- 19 16. Line officers with fire management responsibilities will have knowledge  
20 and understanding of fire program management.
- 21 17. Contracted resources will meet identified standards for qualifications,  
22 training, productivity, and efficiency necessary to meet emergency response  
23 needs.
- 24 18. It is the Forest Service responsibility to initiate and participate in public  
25 education efforts to promote support for necessary fire management  
26 activities.
- 27 • *Fire Suppression*
- 28 19. Every Forest Service employee has a responsibility to support fire  
29 suppression emergencies in a manner that meets identified needs, and is  
30 within their qualifications and capabilities.

### 31 **Operations**

- 32 • *Forest Service Wide*
- 33 20. Employees are expected and empowered to be creative and decisive, to  
34 exercise initiative and accept responsibility, and to use their training,  
35 experience, and judgment in decision-making to carry out their leader's  
36 intent.
- 37 21. Employees are expected and empowered to make reasonable and  
38 prudent decisions to accomplish the agency mission while minimizing  
39 exposure to hazards.
- 40 22. Clear, uncomplicated plans and concise orders maximize effectiveness  
41 and minimize confusion.

- 1 • *Fire Suppression*
- 2 23. When it is time to fight fire, we do so in a manner that maximizes
- 3 effectiveness of effort, has highest regard for firefighter and public safety,
- 4 and controls costs.
- 5 24. Every fire suppression operation is directed toward clearly-defined,
- 6 decisive, and obtainable objectives.
- 7 25. Command and control must be decentralized to cope with the
- 8 unpredictable nature of fire. To achieve their leader's intent and accomplish
- 9 operational objectives, subordinate commanders are required to make
- 10 decisions on their own initiative, and to coordinate their efforts.
- 11 26. Unity of effort is maintained and suppression actions are coordinated at
- 12 all times.
- 13 27. Using principles requires judgment in application, while adherence to
- 14 rules does not. In combination, principles and rules guide our fundamental
- 15 wildland fire suppression practices and behaviors, and are mutually
- 16 understood at every level of command.
- 17 28. Rapid deployment and concentration of fire suppression resources at the
- 18 decisive time and place is essential to successful fire suppression actions.
- 19 29. Maintaining high capability for initial attack is essential to public and
- 20 fire fighter safety, accomplishment of management objectives, and cost
- 21 containment.

## 22 **Risk Management**

- 23 • *Fire Suppression*
- 24 30. We practice risk management to minimize the exposure and affects of
- 25 the inherent hazards in fire suppression while maximizing the opportunities
- 26 to achieve leader intent.

## 27 **Agency Administrator Roles and Responsibilities for Incident Management**

### 28 **Agency Administrator Core Competencies**

29 Core competencies include:

- 30 • Risk management
- 31 • Incident management processes
- 32 • WFDSS and other decision support tools
- 33 • Social, political economic impacts
- 34 • Collaboration with partners and stakeholders

35 For additional information, a copy of the *Line Officer Desk Reference for Fire*  
36 *Program Management* can be downloaded at  
37 [http://www.wfmrda.nwcg.gov/line\\_officer\\_resources.php](http://www.wfmrda.nwcg.gov/line_officer_resources.php).

### 38 **Agency Administrator Certification Program**

39 The following principles will guide certification of Agency Administrators in  
40 wildfire management:

- 1 • Regional Foresters are accountable for certification of Agency  
2 Administrators;
- 3 • Agency Administrator evaluation includes standards for training,  
4 background and experience, and demonstrated ability, which will result in a  
5 qualitative evaluation of readiness by the Regional Forester;
- 6 • When the complexity level of a fire exceeds an Agency Administrator's  
7 certification, a coach will be assigned to advise (but not replace);
- 8 • This certification program will be periodically evaluated and updated as  
9 needed;
- 10 • Assistance with decision documentation and analysis can be requested  
11 through the Wildland Fire Management RD&A – National Fire Decision  
12 Support Center (NFDSC); and
- 13 • The Coaching/Shadowing program, to be administered by each region, is an  
14 integral part of this certification program.

15 **Agency Administrators will be evaluated in three basic areas:**

- 16 • Training;
- 17 • Background and experience; and
- 18 • Demonstrated understanding of concepts and principles.

19 This certification program is a multi-level process where Agency Administrators  
20 demonstrate competence in one of three levels of managing fires. Those levels  
21 would be Working, Journey, and Advanced.

22 **Guidelines**

23 In consideration of the appropriate level (Working, Journey, Advanced) to  
24 assign an Agency Administrator, the Regional Forester should consider the  
25 following guidelines:

- 26 • For individuals that do not meet at least the Working Level, a coach will be  
27 assigned to support that Agency Administrator in managing Type 3 or  
28 higher wildfire incidents.

29 **Working Level** – The Agency Administrator could manage a low to moderate  
30 complexity fire. The Agency Administrator should meet the following:

- 31 • **Training:** Local or National Fire Management Leadership, and WFDSS  
32 training.
- 33 • **Background and Experience:**
  - 34 ○ Successful management of a minimum of one Type 3 or higher fire.  
35 Consider duration, complexity and size of the fire.
  - 36 ○ Management oversight of a low-complexity fire program and/or  
37 experience as an Agency Administrator or representative.
  - 38 ○ Applicable experience in all-hazard or other incident oversight may be  
39 considered in lieu of this experience.
  - 40 ○ Consider career fire experience.

- 1 • **Demonstrated Ability:** Successful evaluation by a coach (including  
2 feedback from ICs or ACs) that the candidate has demonstrated  
3 understanding and application of the responsibilities of an Agency  
4 Administrator on smaller low-complexity fires with a basic understanding  
5 of the elements of the core competencies.
- 6 **Journey Level** – The Agency Administrator could manage a moderate to high  
7 complexity fire. The Agency Administrator needs to be certified at the Working  
8 Level and should meet the following:
- 9 • **Training:** Local or National Fire Management Leadership, and WFDSS  
10 training.
- 11 • **Background and Experience:**
- 12 ○ Successful management of a minimum of one Type 2 or higher fire, or  
13 one successful higher complexity fire (Type 1). Duration, complexity  
14 and size of the fire should be considered.
- 15 ○ Management oversight of a moderate-complexity fire program, or  
16 experience as an Agency Administrator or Representative on Type 2 or  
17 higher fires.
- 18 ○ Applicable experience in all-hazard or other incident oversight may  
19 also be considered in lieu of other guidelines.
- 20 • **Demonstrated Ability:** Successful evaluation by a coach (including  
21 feedback from ICs or ACs) that the candidate has demonstrated  
22 understanding and application of the responsibilities of an Agency  
23 Administrator/Representative on moderate to large complex fires in the core  
24 competencies, and other elements that may be relevant.
- 25 **Advanced Level** – The Agency Administrator could manage a high complexity  
26 fire. The Agency Administrator needs to be certified at the Journey Level, and  
27 should meet the following:
- 28 • **Training:** Local or National Fire Management Leadership and WFDSS  
29 training.
- 30 • **Background and Experience:**
- 31 ○ Successful management of several Type 1 or 2 fires (at least one is a  
32 Type 1 fire), depending on fire experience. Duration, complexity, and  
33 size of the fires should be considered.
- 34 ○ Management oversight of a moderate to high-complexity fire program.
- 35 ○ Applicable experience in all-hazard or other incident oversight may  
36 also be considered in lieu of other guidelines.
- 37 • **Demonstrated Ability:** Successful evaluation by a coach (including  
38 feedback from ICs or ACs) that the candidate has demonstrated  
39 understanding and application of the responsibilities of an Agency  
40 Administrator on large complex fires in the core competencies, and other  
41 elements that may be relevant.

**1 Evaluation Process**

- 2 • Every trainee will receive an evaluation from a certified Agency
- 3 Administrator/Agency Administrator Representative or coach using the
- 4 form identified in the *Line Officer Desk Reference for Fire Program*
- 5 *Management*.
- 6 • Individuals involved in a shadow assignment should receive creditable
- 7 experience through documentation.

8 Creditable work experiences to achieve and maintain certification levels:

- 9 • Coaching
- 10 • Regional Forester Representative (RFR)
- 11 • Acting Agency Administrator/Representative assignments
- 12 • Shadow assignments

13 Training opportunities to achieve and maintain core competencies:

- 14 • Upper levels of fire leadership and fire management courses;
- 15 • Function as the Line Officer in sand table exercises and training simulations
- 16 in S-420, S-520, and other fire courses;
- 17 • Participate in advanced risk management training;
- 18 • Get assigned to a Type 1 or Type 2 team as a training assignment (e.g.,
- 19 shadow plans) and see the world from their viewpoint;
- 20 • WFDSS training (see the WFDSS homepage <http://wfdss.usgs.gov> for
- 21 training materials and the WFM RD&A Line Officer Resources page for
- 22 Agency Administrator specific refresher training materials
- 23 [http://www.wfmrda.nwcg.gov/line\\_officer\\_resources.php](http://www.wfmrda.nwcg.gov/line_officer_resources.php));
- 24 • Include risk management and fire management topics during annual line
- 25 officer meetings;
- 26 • Attend staff rides (staff rides need to include a stand that portrays the line
- 27 officer perspective);
- 28 • Participate in prescribed fires and/or attend prescribed fire training;
- 29 • Participate in other leadership and/or decision-making training;
- 30 • Attend L-580 *Leadership is Action*.

**31 Currency**

32 Currency is reviewed annually by the Certifying Official for frequency of  
33 demonstrated exercise of Core Competencies. It is recommended an Agency  
34 Administrator/Representative engage in a Type 1 or Type 2 incident within a  
35 five-year period. An assignment may include coaching or shadowing.

**36 Guidance on the Selection of Coaches**

37 Coaches can be a current or former Agency Administrator/Representative. The  
38 Regional Forester determines the level of certification for which a coach is  
39 qualified.

1 Criteria for individuals serving as Coaches are as follows:

- 2 • Must be a “Journey” level Agency Administrator/Representative in dealing  
3 with large fire incident, or rated at an experience level commensurate with  
4 incident being managed; Present and past Agency Administrators can serve  
5 as coaches, including retirees that were qualified/experienced; and  
6 • Must be willing and able to serve as a Coach.

7 **Definitions**

8 **Agency Administrator:** An individual with the delegated authority for an  
9 incident.

10 **Coach:** A fully qualified Agency Administrator/Representative at journey or  
11 advanced level.

12 **Shadow:** An individual that does not perform the duty of Agency  
13 Administrator/Representative, but observes a qualified, designated Agency  
14 Administrator/Representative.

15 **Agency Administrator Trainee:** An Agency Administrator working on  
16 certification by performing the role under the supervision and authority of the  
17 Agency Administrator and/or Representative.

18 **Coach/Shadow Team:** A team comprised of a qualified Coach and group of  
19 Shadows who may travel to multiple incidents and support sites to increase their  
20 level of understanding.

21 **Acting Agency Administrator:** An individual acting in an Agency  
22 Administrator roll certified at the level required by the incident complexity and  
23 delegated authorities to provide relief and support.

24 **Regional Forester Agency Administrator Representative:** A representative  
25 that carries out roles and responsibilities as delegated.

26 **Specific Agency Administrator Responsibilities for Fire and Aviation at the**  
27 **Field Level**

28 The Forest Service has developed core fire management competencies. They are  
29 presented here for reference:

- 30 • Knowledge of fire program management including ability to integrate fire  
31 and fuels management across all program areas and functions;  
32 • Ability to implement fire management strategies and integrate natural  
33 resource concerns into collaborative community protection and ecosystem  
34 restoration strategies;  
35 • Knowledge to oversee a fire management program including budget,  
36 preparedness, prevention, suppression, and hazardous fuels reduction;

- 1 • Ability to serve as an Agency Administrator during an incident on an  
2 assigned unit; and
- 3 • Ability to provide a fully staffed, highly qualified, and diversified  
4 firefighting workforce that exists in a “safety first” and “readiness”  
5 environment.

#### 6 **Responsibilities**

- 7 • Integrate fire and fuels management across all functional areas.
- 8 • Implement fire management strategies and integrate natural resource  
9 concerns into collaborative community protection and ecosystem restoration  
10 strategies on the unit.
- 11 • Manage a budget that includes fire preparedness, prevention, suppression,  
12 and hazardous fuels in an annual program of work for the unit.
- 13 • Ensure the DLA Wildland Fire Equipment Catalog is used as the primary  
14 and mandatory source of supply for wildland fire suppression equipment,  
15 supplies and protective clothing. Any deviation must follow the  
16 requirements listed in FSH 6309.32 - Required Sources of Supplies and  
17 Services and FAR 8.002 - Priorities for Use of Government Supply Sources.  
18 The deviation must be supported by a Job Hazard Analysis (JHA) that  
19 documents the specific reason the stock item does not meet the job  
20 requirements and is signed by the applicable line officer. The purchasing  
21 official must confirm that the JHA supports the alternate purchase. The  
22 DLA Wildland Fire Equipment Catalog is at  
23 [http://www.gsa.gov/portal/mediaId/237435/fileName/DLA\\_WFPP\\_Catalog\\_2015\\_\(Final\).action](http://www.gsa.gov/portal/mediaId/237435/fileName/DLA_WFPP_Catalog_2015_(Final).action).
- 24
- 25 • Perform duties of Agency Administrator and maintain those qualifications.
- 26 • Provide a fully staffed, highly qualified, and diverse workforce in a "safety  
27 first" environment.
- 28 • Support and participate in wildfire prevention.

29 These responsibilities are based on current policy and provide program guidance  
30 to ensure safe, consistent, efficient, and effective fire and aviation operations.

#### 31 **Preparedness**

- 32 • Take all necessary and prudent actions to ensure firefighter and public  
33 safety.
- 34 • Ensure sufficient qualified fire and non-fire personnel are available to  
35 support fire operations at a level commensurate with the local and national  
36 fire situation.
- 37 • Ensure accurate position descriptions are developed and reflect the  
38 complexity of the unit. Individual Development Plans promote and enhance  
39 FMO currency and development.
- 40 • Provide a written Delegation of Authority to FMOs that provides an  
41 adequate level of operational authority at the unit level. Include Multi-  
42 Agency Coordinating (MAC) Group authority, as appropriate.

- 1 • Identify resource management objectives to maintain a current Fire  
2 Management Plan (FMP) that identifies an accurate level of funding for  
3 personnel and equipment.
- 4 • Develop preparedness standards that are in compliance with agency fire  
5 policies.
- 6 • Management teams meet once a year to review fire and aviation policies,  
7 roles, responsibilities, and delegations of authority. Specifically address  
8 oversight and management controls, critical safety issues, and high-risk  
9 situations such as transfers of incident command, periods of multiple fire  
10 activity, and Red Flag Warnings.
- 11 • Ensure fire and aviation preparedness reviews are conducted each year and  
12 include the key components of the record of decision for the nationwide  
13 aerial application of fire retardant on National Forest System land.
- 14 • Meet annually with cooperators and review interagency agreements to  
15 ensure their continued effectiveness and efficiency.
- 16 • Meet annually with local US Fish and Wildlife Service and NOAA  
17 Fisheries specialists to ensure the avoidance maps reflect changes during  
18 the year on additional species or changes made for designated critical  
19 habitat, and reporting and monitoring guidelines are still valid and being  
20 applied.
- 21 • Convene and participate in annual conferences and fire reviews.
- 22 • Agency Administrators, Fire Program Managers, and/or Safety and Health  
23 Program Managers shall conduct after action reviews on all Type 3 fires  
24 and a minimum of 10% of their unit's Type 4 and 5 fires and document  
25 their inspections in the incident records.

#### 26 **Suppression**

- 27 • Ensure use of fire funds is in compliance with Agency policies.
- 28 • All fires must utilize the WFDSS to inform and document decisions related  
29 to course of action, resource allocations, and risk management  
30 considerations. WFDSS will be used to approve and publish decisions on all  
31 fires that exceed initial attack or include a resource management objective.  
32 See table below for WFDSS approval authorities.
- 33 • Personally attend reviews on Type 1 and Type 2 fires. Ensure Agency  
34 Administrator representatives are assigned when appropriate.
- 35 • Provide incident management objectives (all wildfires must have a  
36 protection objective), written delegations of authority, and a complete  
37 Agency Administrator briefing to Incident Management Teams.
- 38 • Ensure briefings include any applicable information for avoidance areas and  
39 waterways per the nationwide aerial application of fire retardant direction,  
40 mapping, and cultural resources. Include the reporting requirements in the  
41 briefing if a misapplication of fire chemical occurs. Provide resource  
42 advisors if the use of aerially applied fire retardant is expected and the unit  
43 has mapped avoidance areas (which include waterways and 300' or larger

- 1 buffers) and otherwise evaluate the need for resource advisors for all other
- 2 fires, and assign as appropriate.
- 3 • For all unplanned human-caused fires where responsibility can be
- 4 determined, ensure actions are initiated to recover cost of suppression
- 5 activities, land rehabilitation, damages to the resource, and improvements.
- 6 • Ensure structure exposure protection principles are followed.

7 **Responsibilities and Oversight**

- 8 • Agency Administrators are responsible for all aspects of fire management.
- 9 • Agency Administrators will ensure that all Forest Service employees and
- 10 employees of interagency partners working on Forest Service jurisdiction
- 11 wildfires clearly understand direction.
- 12 • Agency Administrators must approve and publish decisions in WFDSS and
- 13 issue delegations of authority to the Incident Commander. The Agency
- 14 Administrator authority is based on incident type.

| Incident Type | USFS Approval*   |
|---------------|--|
| Type 1        | Regional Forester level with National oversight  |
| Type 2        | Forest Supervisor level with oversight by the Regional Forester  |
| Type 3, 4, 5  | District Ranger level with oversight by the Forest Supervisor  |
|               | This authority may be delegated to an Agency Administrator who meets wildfire response certification requirements. |

15 \*Authority may be retained at the Regional Forester level.

- 16 • Critical long duration wildfire oversight roles include ensuring that:
  - 17 ○ Up-to-date Published Decisions are completed and documented in
  - 18 WFDSS.
  - 19 ○ Hazards are identified and risk assessments are incorporated into
  - 20 Published Decisions.
  - 21 ○ Coordination with partners and potentially affected parties is conducted
  - 22 (including smoke impacts). Unified command is implemented early if
  - 23 necessary.
  - 24 ○ Resource capacity and availability are adequately assessed to meet
  - 25 expectations.
- 26 • This oversight role should address concerns of the states, cooperators, and
- 27 the public including air quality impacts from multiple wildfires.

28 **Risk Management Framework**

29 Sound decision making relies on identifying reasonable objectives for protection  
 30 of critical values at risk, while considering the amount and quality of exposure

1 to firefighters and the likelihood of success. The Forest Service is committed to  
2 using a risk management framework that is comprised of three (3) key elements:

- 3 Pre-season preparedness work is critical to success when a fire starts.
- 4 • Build capacity of our decision makers and their key stakeholders to manage  
5 the uncertainty and inherent risks of fires.
  - 6 • Complete landscape level risk assessments by developing a common  
7 understanding of what are the values to be protected and can be summed up  
8 best by answering these questions; ‘What is important?’, ‘Why is it  
9 important?’, ‘How important is it?’, and ‘What are the consequences?’
  - 10 • Complete a risk analysis, in concert with key stakeholders and partner  
11 agencies, to predetermine the range of acceptable response strategies for  
12 protecting the identified values at risk while balancing firefighter and public  
13 exposure.

14 During incident phase focuses on a Seven (7) Step Risk Management Process:

- 15 1. Complete an incident Risk Assessment.
  - 16 • Develop an assessment of what is at risk (from preseason work or input  
17 from key stakeholders), and the associated probabilities and potential  
18 consequences.
- 19 2. Complete a Risk Analysis.
  - 20 • Consider alternatives (objectives, strategies and tactics) against desired  
21 outcomes, exposure to responders, probability of success and values to  
22 be protected.
- 23 3. Complete Two-Way Risk Communications.
  - 24 • Engage community leaders, local government officials, partners, and  
25 other key stakeholders of the incident to share the risk picture and enlist  
26 input.
- 27 4. Conduct Risk Sharing Dialogue.
  - 28 • Engage appropriate senior line officers and political appointees (as  
29 necessary) regarding the potential decision aimed at obtaining  
30 understanding, acceptance, and support for the alternatives and likely  
31 decision.
- 32 5. Make the Risk Informed Decision.
- 33 6. Document the risk: assessment, analysis, communication, sharing and  
34 decision in WFDSS.
- 35 7. Continue Monitoring and Adjusting as necessary or as conditions change.  
36 After the incident: As a learning organization we should always strive to  
37 improve how we conduct our business. We should endeavor to learn from  
38 each incident and apply those lessons.
  - 39 • Complete an incident after action review.
    - 40 ○ Engage key stakeholders of the incident to be involved.
    - 41 ○ Review what worked, what did not work and suggestions for  
42 improvement.

- 1     • Conduct a peer review after action process.
- 2         ○ Engage others who have had similar incidents to learn strategies
- 3         for improvement.
- 4     • Implement plans for improvement.
- 5         ○ Make use of lessons learned in real-time if possible.

6 The following Risk Assessment and Risk Decision questions are designed to  
7 inform fire management decisions by stimulating thinking and prompting  
8 dialogue, analyzing and assessing risk, and recognizing shared risks and  
9 communicating those risks within the Agency and with partners and  
10 stakeholders.

- 11     • Risk Assessment:
  - 12         1. What are the critical values at risk?
  - 13         2. What is the chance the critical values will be impacted, and if so what
  - 14         are the consequences?
  - 15         3. What are the opportunities to manage fire to meet land management
  - 16         objectives?
  - 17         4. What are the possible low probability/high consequence events?
  - 18         5. Who are the stakeholders that should be consulted prior to making a
  - 19         decision?
- 20     • Risk Decision:
  - 21         6. What alternatives (objectives, strategies, and tactics) are being
  - 22         considered?
  - 23         7. What is the exposure of responders for the alternatives being
  - 24         considered?
  - 25         8. What is the relative probability of success associated with the
  - 26         alternatives being considered?
  - 27         9. What alternative provides for the best balance between the desired
  - 28         outcome and exposure to responders?
  - 29         10. What are the critical thresholds that will trigger reconsideration of the
  - 30         proposed alternative and how will they be monitored?

### 31 **Safety**

- 32     • Review safety policies, procedures, and concerns with field fire and
- 33     aviation personnel.
- 34     • Ensure timely follow-up actions to program reviews, fire preparedness
- 35     reviews, fire and aviation safety reviews, and management reviews.
- 36     • Monitor the fire situation and provide oversight during periods of critical
- 37     fire activity and situations of high risk.
- 38     • Ensure there is adequate direction in fire management plans to maintain fire
- 39     danger awareness.
- 40     • Take appropriate actions with escalating fire potential.
- 41     • Ensure appropriate investigation or Lessons Learned analyses are conducted
- 42     for incidents, entrapments, and serious accidents.

**1 Fuels**

- 2 • Complete a fuels treatment effectiveness assessment on all wildfires which
- 3 start in or burn into a fuel treatment area.
- 4 • Enter results of the assessment in the Fuels Treatment Effectiveness
- 5 Monitoring (FTEM) database found at [www.nwportal.fs.usda.gov](http://www.nwportal.fs.usda.gov) within 90
- 6 days of control of the fire. Reference FSM 5140.

**7 Prescribed Fire**

- 8 • Provide program leadership by visiting prescribed fire treatment projects
- 9 and providing leader's intent to prescribed fire personnel.
- 10 • Ensure compliance with National and Regional Office policy and direction
- 11 for prescribed fire activities and ensure that periodic reviews and
- 12 inspections of the prescribed fire program are completed.
- 13 • Adhere to procedures for Regional and/or National level approvals for new
- 14 and continued prescribed fire activities at National Preparedness Levels 4
- 15 and 5 as described in the *National Interagency Mobilization Guide*.
- 16 • Ensure a Prescribed Fire Plan is written and approved for each project prior
- 17 to implementation in accordance with the *Interagency Prescribed Fire*
- 18 *Planning and Implementation Procedures Guide* (PMS 484) available at
- 19 <http://www.nwecg.gov/publications/484>.
- 20 • Review Prescribed Fire Plans:
  - 21 ○ Ensure that the prescribed fire plan has been reviewed and
  - 22 recommended by a qualified technical reviewer.
  - 23 ○ Ensure that prescribed fire plans are designed to achieve desired
  - 24 conditions as described in Land and Resource Management Plans and
  - 25 project-specific NEPA decision document.
- 26 • Approve Prescribed Fire Plans:
  - 27 ○ Minimum qualifications for Forest Supervisors, District Rangers, other
  - 28 Line Officers and formally delegated "Acting" Line Officers to approve
  - 29 prescribed fire plans are:
    - 30 ▪ Completing a National or Regional Fire Management Leadership
    - 31 course, or
    - 32 ▪ Completing an Agency Administrator Workshop at the National
    - 33 Prescribed Fire Training Center, or
    - 34 ▪ Qualifying in a Type 1 or 2 Command and General Staff position
    - 35 (currency not required), or
    - 36 ▪ Qualifying as a Prescribed Fire Burn Boss (RXB1 or RXB2) or
    - 37 Prescribed Fire Manager (RXM1 or RXM2) (currency not
    - 38 required).
  - 39 ○ Attending an agency administrator session at the National Prescribed
  - 40 Fire Training Center (PFTC) may be substituted for the minimum
  - 41 training requirement for approving prescribed fire plans only.
  - 42 ○ Authority to approve prescribed fire plans is held at the Forest
  - 43 Supervisor level but may be delegated in writing to other qualified line
  - 44 officers or staff. Delegations should be based on meeting the minimum

- 1 training or experience described above and demonstrated ability.  
2 Documentation that supports the delegated authorities should be  
3 included in the individuals training records.  
4 ○ Approve prescribed fire plan amendments and determine the need for  
5 additional technical review of proposed plan amendments prior to  
6 approval.  
7 ● Reauthorize all prescribed fire plans if more than one year has elapsed since  
8 last authorization.  
9 ● Report all instances of prescribed fires resulting in a wildfire declaration  
10 and/or air quality Notice-of-Violation as required in FSM 5140.

#### 11 **Fire Management Position Requirements**

12 The *Interagency Fire Program Management Qualifications Standard (IFPM)*  
13 and *Forest Service Fire Program Management Standard (FS-FPM)* will be used  
14 in conjunction with specific agency requirements when filling vacant fire  
15 program positions, and as an aid in developing Individual Development Plans  
16 (IDPs) for employees.

#### 17 **Specific Fire Management Staff Responsibilities for Fire Operations at the** 18 **Field Level**

##### 19 **Preparedness**

- 20 ● Use sound risk management practices as the foundation for all aspects of  
21 fire and aviation management.  
22 ● Ensure that only trained and qualified personnel are assigned to fire and  
23 aviation duties.  
24 ● Develop, implement, evaluate, and document fire and aviation training  
25 program to meet current and anticipated needs.  
26 ● Establish an effective process to gather, evaluate, and communicate  
27 information to managers, supervisors, and employees. Ensure clear concise  
28 communications are maintained at all levels.  
29 ● Ensure fire and aviation management staffs understand their roles,  
30 responsibilities, authority, and accountability.  
31 ● Develop and maintain effective communication with the public and  
32 cooperators.  
33 ● Regardless of funding level, provide a safe, effective, and efficient fire  
34 management program.  
35 ● Organize, train, equip, and direct a qualified work force. An Individual  
36 Development Plan (IDP) must be provided for incumbents who do not meet  
37 new standards. Establish qualification review process.  
38 ● Take appropriate action when performance is exceptional or deficient.  
39 ● Ensure fire and aviation policies are understood, followed, and coordinated  
40 with other agencies as appropriate.  
41 ● Ensure that adequate resources are available to implement fire management  
42 operations.

- 1 • Provide fire personnel with adequate guidance, training, and decision-
- 2 making authority to ensure timely decisions.
- 3 • Develop and maintain agreements, annual operating plans, and contracts on
- 4 an interagency basis to increase effectiveness and efficiencies.
- 5 • Develop, maintain, and annually evaluate the FMP to ensure accuracy and
- 6 validity.
- 7 • Ensure budget requests and allocations reflect preparedness requirements in
- 8 the FMP.
- 9 • Develop and maintain current operational plans (e.g., dispatch, pre-attack,
- 10 prevention).
- 11 • Ensure that reports and records are properly completed and maintained.
- 12 • Ensure fiscal responsibility and accountability in planning and expenditures.
- 13 • Assess, identify, and implement program actions that effectively reduce
- 14 unwanted wildland fire ignitions and mitigate risks to life, property, and
- 15 resources.
- 16 • Work with cooperators to identify processes and procedures for providing
- 17 fire adapted communities within the wildland urban interface.

### 18 **Suppression**

- 19 • Provide for and personally participate in periodic site visits to individual
- 20 incidents and projects.
- 21 • Utilize the Organizational Needs Assessment and/or Complexity Analysis
- 22 to ensure the proper level of management is assigned to all incidents.
- 23 • Ensure incoming personnel and crews are briefed prior to fire and aviation
- 24 assignments.
- 25 • Coordinate the development of Published Decisions within WFDSS with
- 26 local unit staff specialists for all fires that escape initial attack.
- 27 • Ensure effective transfer of command of incident management occurs and
- 28 safety is considered in all functional areas.
- 29 • Monitor fire activity to anticipate and recognize when complexity levels
- 30 exceed program capabilities. Increase managerial and operational resources
- 31 to meet needs.
- 32 • Complete cost recovery actions when unplanned human-caused fires occur.
- 33 • Ensure structure exposure protection principles are followed.
- 34 • Ensure all misapplications of wildland fire chemicals are reported and
- 35 appropriate consultation conducted as needed (see Chapter 12).
- 36 • Ensure 5% assessment of fires less than 300 acres that had aerial fire
- 37 retardant used and have avoidance areas as a result of the record of decision
- 38 for the nationwide aerial application of fire retardant on National Forest
- 39 System land is completed and documented for misapplication reporting.
- 40 • Ensure all assessments of impacts to threatened and endangered species or
- 41 cultural resources are conducted by trained and qualified resource
- 42 personnel.

**1 Safety**

- 2 • Ensure completion of a Job Hazard Analysis (JHA) for fire and fire aviation
- 3 activities, and implement applicable risk mitigation measures.
- 4 • Ensure work/rest and R&R guidelines are followed during all fire and
- 5 aviation activities. Deviations are approved and documented.
- 6 • Initiate, conduct, and/or participate in fire management related reviews and
- 7 investigations.
- 8 • Monitor fire season severity predictions, fire behavior, and fire activity
- 9 levels. Take appropriate actions to ensure safe, efficient, and effective
- 10 operations.

**11 Prescribed Fire**

- 12 • Ensure a written, approved burn plan exists for each prescribed fire project.
- 13 • Prepare and implement all prescribed fire plans in accordance with the
- 14 *Interagency Prescribed Fire Planning and Implementation Procedures*
- 15 *Guide* (PMS 484) available at <http://www.nwcg.gov/publications/484>.
- 16 • Ensure that the Prescribed Fire Burn Boss assigned to each project is
- 17 qualified at the appropriate level as determined by project complexity (see
- 18 the *Interagency Prescribed Fire Planning and Implementation Procedures*
- 19 *Guide* at <http://www.nwcg.gov/publications/484> for specific guidance).
- 20 • Review and update all prescribed fire plans as necessary to comply with
- 21 policy or procedures and submit to agency administrator for review and
- 22 approval.
- 23 • Submit amendments to prescribed fire plans to the agency administrator for
- 24 approval.
- 25 • If more than one year has elapsed since approval, a prescribed fire plan will
- 26 be reviewed to ensure assumptions are still valid and conditions have not
- 27 changed, updated as necessary, and resubmitted to the agency administrator
- 28 for approval.

**29 Structure Exposure Protection Principles****30 Mission and Role**

31 A significant role of the Forest Service is to manage natural resources on public  
32 land, and management of unwanted wildland fire is a primary mission in that  
33 role. Wildland firefighter training, tools, and personal protective equipment are  
34 based on the wildland environment. This does not prevent using wildland tactics  
35 in the Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) when risks are mitigated. Wildland  
36 firefighter training for the WUI, however, is centered on the concepts of  
37 preventing wildland fire from reaching areas of structures and/or reducing the  
38 intensity of fire that does reach structures. Fire suppression actions on structures  
39 that are outside federal jurisdiction, outside the scope of wildland firefighting  
40 training, or beyond the capability of wildland firefighting resources are not  
41 appropriate roles for the Forest Service.

1 Forest Service leadership will express clear and concise “leader’s intent” to  
2 ensure structure protection assignments are managed safely, effectively, and  
3 efficiently. Leaders are expected to operate under existing policies and doctrine  
4 under normal conditions. Where conflicts occur, employees will be expected to  
5 weigh the risk versus gain, and operate within the intent of Agency policy and  
6 doctrine.

#### 7 **Strategic Principles**

- 8 • The Forest Service actively supports creation of Firewise and Fire Adapted  
9 Communities and structures that can survive wildland fire without  
10 intervention. We support the concept that property owners have primary  
11 responsibility for reducing wildfire risks to their lands and assets.
- 12 • The Forest Service will actively work toward applying Firewise concepts to  
13 all Forest Service owned structures, facilities, and permitted use to serve as  
14 a model to publics and communities.
- 15 • The Forest Service will apply strategy and tactics to keep wildland fires  
16 from reaching structures, as prudent to do so, considering risk management  
17 for firefighters and publics, fire behavior, values at risk including natural  
18 resources, availability of firefighting resources, and jurisdictional  
19 authorities.
- 20 • The Forest Service will be proactive in developing agreements with  
21 interagency partners to clarify its structure protection policy.
- 22 • The Forest Service structure protection role is based on the assumption that  
23 other Departments and agencies will fulfill their primary roles and  
24 responsibilities. The Forest Service will not usurp individual, local, or state  
25 responsibility for structure protection.
- 26 • Prior to task implementation, a specific structure protection role briefing  
27 will be accomplished.

#### 28 **Tactical Applications**

##### 29 ***Structure Protection Definition***

30 Actions taken in advance of a fire reaching structures or other improvements are  
31 intended to safely prevent the fire from damaging or destroying these values at  
32 risk. For the Forest Service, structure protection involves the use of standard  
33 wildland fire suppression tactics and control methods; including the use of  
34 standard equipment, fire control lines, and the extinguishing of spot fires near or  
35 on the structure when safe and practical.

##### 36 ***USFS Role***

37 As documented in a Forest Service doctrinal principle, “Agency employees  
38 respond when they come across situations where human life is immediately at  
39 risk or there is a clear emergency, and they are capable of assisting without  
40 undue risk to themselves or others.” This principle serves as a foundational basis  
41 for the roles employees play in structure protection.

1 Pursuant to this “structure protection” policy provided above, Forest Service  
2 personnel may engage support from other cooperators in structure protection  
3 activities when 1) requested by local government under terms of an approved  
4 cooperative agreement or 2) when operating within a unified command. The  
5 agency is permitted, without agreement, to render emergency assistance to a  
6 local government in suppressing wildland fires, and in preserving life and  
7 property from the threat of fire, when properly trained and equipped agency  
8 resources are the closest to the need, and there is adequate leadership to do so  
9 safely. The agency will NOT routinely provide primary emergency response  
10 (medical aids, fire suppression, HAZMAT, etc... as identified on “run cards” or  
11 preplanned dispatch scenarios) nor will the agency supplant the local  
12 government responsibility to do so.

13 The contents of a cooperative agreement will clearly define the responsibilities  
14 of partners. Regarding structural fire protection, typical Forest Service  
15 responsibilities in the case of mutual aid, initial attack, extended attack, or large  
16 fire support include:

- 17 • To provide initial attack through extended attack actions consistent with  
18 application of wildland fire strategy and tactics.
- 19 • To supply water in support of tribal, state or local agencies having  
20 jurisdictional responsibility for the fire. This would include the use of water  
21 tenders, portable pumps, hose, tanks, and supporting draft sites.
- 22 • To assist or supply foam or chemical suppressant capability with engines or  
23 aerial application.
- 24 • To assist local authorities in the event of evacuations.
- 25 • To assist local authorities by assessing (triaging) structures for defensibility  
26 from wildfire.
- 27 • To coordinate with local authorities on actions taken by Private Structure  
28 Protection Companies.

29 As such, there should not be an expectation that the Forest Service will:

- 30 • “Wrap” or set up and administer sprinklers around privately owned  
31 structures.
- 32 • Remove fuels immediately surrounding a structure such as brush,  
33 landscaping, or firewood.

34 As addressed above, the Forest Service will apply strategy and tactics to keep  
35 wildland fires from reaching structures, as prudent to do so, considering risk  
36 management for firefighters and publics, fire behavior, values at risk including  
37 natural resources, availability of firefighting resources, and jurisdictional  
38 authorities.

1 The Forest Service shall not:

- 2 • Take direct suppression actions on structures other than those that tactically  
3 reduce the threat of fire spread to them.  
4 • Enter structures or work on roofs of structures for the purpose of direct  
5 suppression actions.

6 In consideration of Forest Service owned or leased structures outside of  
7 structure fire protection areas these same policies apply. The use of Firewise  
8 principles and aggressive fire prevention measures will be employed for Forest  
9 Service structures at every opportunity.

10 If a Forest Service structure is determined to be at risk, “wrapping” or other  
11 indirect protection methods for the structure can be authorized by the Agency  
12 Administrator. Documentation of these decisions needs to be placed in the fire  
13 documentation package and the unit files. Any employee engaged in “wrapping”  
14 or other indirect methods of protection operations will be thoroughly briefed and  
15 trained in correct safety and personal protection equipment procedures,  
16 especially if the use of ladders or climbing on the structure is necessary. In any  
17 case, the Forest Service holds that no structure is worth the risk of serious injury  
18 to an employee in an attempt to protect that structure or facility from fire.

#### 19 ***Local Government Role***

20 Local government has the responsibility for emergency response, including  
21 structure protection, within their jurisdiction. This responsibility is usually found  
22 within the fire agencies’ charter and is substantiated by tax dollar revenue (sales  
23 and/or property tax).

#### 24 ***Cost***

25 Local governments assume the financial responsibility for emergency response  
26 activities, including structure protection, within their jurisdictions. Local  
27 government will order resources deemed necessary to protect structures within  
28 their jurisdiction. Local agencies will not be reimbursed for performing their  
29 responsibilities within their jurisdiction.

#### 30 ***Tactical Operating Principles***

31 When engaging in structure protection activities, as defined above, Forest  
32 Service personnel will apply the following principles:

- 33 • The first priority for all risk-decisions is human survival, both of firefighters  
34 and the public.  
35 • Incident containment strategies specifically address and integrate protection  
36 of defensible improved property and wildland values.  
37 • Direct protection of improved property is undertaken when it is safe to do  
38 so, when there are sufficient time and appropriate resources available, and  
39 when the action directly contributes to achieving overall incident objectives.  
40 • Firefighter decision to accept direction to engage in structure protection  
41 actions is based on the determination that the property is defensible and the

- 1 risk to firefighters can be safely mitigated under the current or potential fire  
2 conditions.
- 3 ● A decision to delay or withdraw from structure protection operations is the  
4 appropriate course of action when made in consideration of firefighter  
5 safety, current or potential fire behavior, or defensibility of the structure or  
6 groups of structures.
  - 7 ● Firefighters at all levels are responsible to make risk-decisions appropriate  
8 to their individual knowledge, experience, training, and situational  
9 awareness.
  - 10 ● Every firefighter is responsible to be aware of the factors that affect their  
11 judgment and the decision-making process, including: a realistic perception  
12 of their own knowledge, skills, and abilities, the presence of life threat or  
13 structures, fire behavior, availability of resources, social/political pressures,  
14 mission focus, and personal distractions such as home, work, health, and  
15 fatigue.
  - 16 ● An individual's ability to assimilate all available factors affecting  
17 situational awareness is limited in a dynamic wildland urban interface fire  
18 environment. Every firefighter is responsible to understand and recognize  
19 these limitations, and to apply experience, training and personal judgment  
20 to observe, orient, decide, and act in preparation for the "worst case."
  - 21 ● It is the responsibility of every firefighter to participate in the flow of  
22 information with supervisors, subordinates, and peers. Clear and concise  
23 communication is essential to overcome limitations in situational  
24 awareness.  
25