

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 **Vision and Objectives for Fire Management**

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. The
16 following objectives support this vision:

- 17 • Risk Management and Risk Reduction – Assure management of risk to
18 people, communities and natural and cultural resources is the fundamental
19 principle used to make informed decisions in all fire management programs.
20 Minimize the risk to people, communities and natural and cultural resources
21 by assessing the potential benefits of actions, severity of concerns, and
22 probabilities of occurrences to reduce risk.
- 23 • Ecological – Meet the Forest Service mission through the use of fire
24 management programs to protect people and communities, conserve natural
25 and cultural resources, and maintain and restore ecological health.
- 26 • Collaboration – Implement the wildland fire management program through
27 collaboration and partnerships.
- 28 • Learning – Learn from science, and ours and our partners' experiences, to
29 improve fire management programs.
- 30 • Empowerment – Employees are expected and empowered to be creative and
31 decisive, to exercise initiative and accept responsibility and use their
32 training, experience, and judgement to implement the agency's mission.

33 **Foundational Doctrine**

34 The vision of the Forest Service's Fire and Aviation Management program is to
35 use a doctrinal approach based on leadership, operations and risk management.
36 To support this vision, Forest Service policy is to:

- 37 • Take all response actions to ensure the safety of firefighters, other
38 personnel, and the public regardless of cost or resource loss; no resource or
39 facility is worth the loss of human life.

- 1 • The intent of wildfire response is to protect human life, property, and
2 achieve protection and natural resource management objectives established
3 in Land and Resource Management Plans.
- 4 • Leadership principles are the foundational doctrine on which fire and
5 aviation management operations will be based.

6 A doctrinal approach goes beyond strict compliance with procedural rules, and
7 promotes risk-based application of wildland fire management principles to
8 improve decision making and firefighter safety. Foundational doctrine has been
9 codified in Forest Service Manual 5100 direction and will guide fundamental
10 wildland fire management policy, practices, behaviors, and customs to be
11 mutually understood at every level of command.

12 Under this doctrinal approach:

- 13 • Employees are expected and empowered to be creative and decisive, to
14 exercise initiative and accept responsibility, and to use their training,
15 experience, and judgment in decision-making to carry out their leader's
16 intent.
- 17 • Employees are expected and empowered to make reasonable and prudent
18 decisions to accomplish the agency mission while minimizing unnecessary
19 risk.

20 **Mission**

- 21 • The Forest Service is prepared and organized to support national and
22 international emergencies with trained personnel and other assets when
23 requested.
- 24 • Agency employees respond when they come across situations where human
25 life is immediately at risk or there is a clear emergency, and they are
26 capable of assisting without undue risk to themselves or others.
- 27 • Support for local fire emergencies takes priority over accomplishment of
28 local resource targets. Support of non-local fire emergencies will be at the
29 discretion of the local line officer, as bounded by agency agreements and
30 Regional or National direction.
- 31 • A cooperative relationship between the Forest Service and other agencies is
32 essential. The Forest Service is committed to honor its part of the joint
33 responsibility to develop and maintain effective working relationships with
34 its intergovernmental cooperators.

35 **Wildland Fire Response Principles**

- 36 • Response to wildland fire is based on the ecological, social, and legal
37 consequences of fire. The circumstances under which a fire occurs, and the
38 likely consequences to firefighter and public safety and welfare, natural and
39 cultural resources, and values to be protected dictate the appropriate
40 management response to fire.

- 1 • Response to wildfire in the Wilderness focuses on the natural ecological
2 role of fire and activities are conducted in a manner compatible with overall
3 wilderness management objectives.
4 • Success is achieving reasonable objectives with the least firefighter risk
5 necessary while enhancing stakeholder support for our management efforts.

6 **Leadership and Accountability**

- 7 • All levels of leadership must communicate a clear vision of Agency goals
8 and management principles, ensuring they are shared and understood by all
9 levels of the organization.
10 • All levels of leadership must express clear intent concerning roles and
11 responsibilities to ensure wildfire response assignments are appropriate,
12 risk-based and effective.
13 • Leaders regularly monitor operations for safety, efficiency and
14 effectiveness, and take action when there is recognition of exceptional or
15 problematic employee performance.

16 **The Operational Environment**

17 ***Risk Management***

18 The wildfire response environment is complex and possesses inherent hazards. It
19 should be recognized that even with reasonable risk mitigations responses can
20 result in harm to firefighters.

- 21 • The Forest Service is committed to the aggressive management of risk.
22 • Apply a risk management process to minimize unnecessary risk in wildfire
23 response while maximizing the opportunities to achieve management
24 objectives.
25 • Maintaining state of the art decision support systems based on the best
26 available science is essential for making sound decisions on how to manage
27 all wildland fire to achieve Land and Resource Management Plan
28 objectives, including public and Agency personnel safety.

29 **Operations**

30 Every wildfire response operation is directed toward clearly-defined, decisive,
31 and obtainable objectives.

32 ***Wildfire Response***

- 33 • When it is time to engage a wildfire, do so in a manner that is appropriate,
34 risk-based, and effective.
35 • Command and control will be decentralized to cope with the unpredictable
36 nature of wildfire. To achieve leader's intent and accomplish operational
37 objectives, subordinate commanders must make decisions on their own
38 initiative, and coordinate their efforts to maintain unity of effort.
39 • Judgement in combination with principles and rules will guide wildfire
40 response practices and actions.

- 1 • Rapid deployment and appropriate concentration of wildfire response
2 resources at the decisive time and place are essential to successful wildfire
3 response actions.
- 4 • Maintaining a high capability to ensure effective initial attack is essential to
5 public and firefighter safety, accomplishment of management objectives,
6 and cost containment.
- 7 • The interdependence of wildland fire jurisdictions requires the
8 collaborative, proactive engagement of cooperators, partners, and the public
9 in response activities.

10 **Risk Management Protocol**

11 Sound decision making relies on identifying reasonable objectives for protection
12 of critical values at risk, while considering the amount and quality of exposure
13 to firefighters and the likelihood of success. The Forest Service is committed to
14 using a risk management protocol that is comprised of three (3) key elements:

15 Pre-season preparedness work is critical to success when a fire starts.

- 16 • Build capacity of our decision makers and their key stakeholders to manage
17 the uncertainty and inherent risks of fires.
- 18 • Complete landscape level risk assessments by developing a common
19 understanding of what are the values to be protected and can be summed up
20 best by answering these questions; ‘What is important?’, ‘Why is it
21 important?’, ‘How important is it?’, and ‘What are the consequences?’
- 22 • Complete a risk analysis, in concert with key stakeholders and partner
23 agencies, to predetermine the range of acceptable response strategies for
24 protecting the identified values at risk while balancing firefighter and public
25 exposure.

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

- 27 1. Complete an incident risk assessment.
 - 28 • Develop an assessment of what is at risk (from preseason work or input
29 from key stakeholders), and the associated probabilities and potential
30 consequences.
- 31 2. Complete a risk analysis.
 - 32 • Consider alternatives (objectives, strategies and tactics) against desired
33 outcomes, exposure to responders, probability of success and values to
34 be protected.
- 35 3. Complete two-way risk communications.
 - 36 • Engage community leaders, local government officials, partners, and
37 other key stakeholders of the incident to share the risk picture and enlist
38 input.

- 1 4. Conduct risk-sharing dialogue.
- 2 • Engage appropriate senior line officers and political appointees (as
- 3 necessary) regarding the potential decision aimed at obtaining
- 4 understanding, acceptance, and support for the alternatives and likely
- 5 decision.
- 6 5. Make the risk-informed decision.
- 7 6. Document the risk: assessment, analysis, communication, sharing and
- 8 decision in WFDSS.
- 9 7. Continue monitoring and adjusting as necessary or as conditions change.
- 10 After the incident: As a learning organization we should always strive to
- 11 improve how we conduct our business. We should endeavor to learn from
- 12 each incident and apply those lessons.
- 13 • Complete an incident after action review.
- 14 ○ Engage key stakeholders of the incident to be involved.
- 15 ○ Review what worked, what did not work and suggestions for
- 16 improvement.
- 17 • Conduct a peer review after action process.
- 18 ○ Engage others who have had similar incidents to learn strategies
- 19 for improvement.
- 20 • Implement plans for improvement.
- 21 ○ Make use of lessons learned in real-time if possible.

22 The following Risk Assessment and Risk Decision questions are designed to
23 inform fire management decisions by stimulating thinking and prompting
24 dialogue, analyzing and assessing risk, and recognizing shared risks and
25 communicating those risks within the Agency and with partners and
26 stakeholders.

- 27 • Risk Assessment:
 - 28 1. What are the critical values at risk?
 - 29 2. What is the chance the critical values will be impacted, and if so what
 - 30 are the consequences?
 - 31 3. What are the opportunities to manage fire to meet land management
 - 32 objectives?
 - 33 4. What are the possible low probability/high consequence events?
 - 34 5. Who are the stakeholders that should be consulted prior to making a
 - 35 decision?
- 36 • Risk Decision:
 - 37 1. What alternatives (objectives, strategies, and tactics) are being
 - 38 considered?
 - 39 2. What is the exposure of responders for the alternatives being
 - 40 considered?
 - 41 3. What is the relative probability of success associated with the
 - 42 alternatives being considered?

- 1 4. What alternative provides for the best balance between the desired
- 2 outcome and exposure to responders?
- 3 5. What are the critical thresholds that will trigger reconsideration of the
- 4 proposed alternative and how will they be monitored?

5 **Specific Line Officer Responsibilities for Fire and Aviation at the Field**

6 **Level**

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

- 9 • Knowledge of fire program management including ability to integrate fire
- 10 and fuels management across all program areas and functions;
- 11 • Ability to implement fire management strategies and integrate natural
- 12 resource concerns into collaborative community protection and ecosystem
- 13 restoration strategies;
- 14 • Knowledge to oversee a fire management program including budget,
- 15 preparedness, prevention, suppression, and hazardous fuels reduction;
- 16 • Ability to serve as an Agency Administrator during an incident on an
- 17 assigned unit; and
- 18 • Ability to provide a fully staffed, highly qualified, and diversified
- 19 firefighting workforce that exists in a “safety first” and “readiness”
- 20 environment.

21 **Responsibilities**

- 22 • Integrate fire and fuels management across all functional areas.
- 23 • Implement fire management strategies and integrate natural resource
- 24 concerns into collaborative community protection and ecosystem restoration
- 25 strategies on the unit.
- 26 • Manage a budget that includes fire preparedness, prevention, suppression,
- 27 and hazardous fuels in an annual program of work for the unit.
- 28 • Ensure the DLA Wildland Fire Equipment Catalog is used as the primary
- 29 and mandatory source of supply for wildland fire suppression equipment,
- 30 supplies and protective clothing. Any deviation must follow the
- 31 requirements listed in FSH 6309.32 - Required Sources of Supplies and
- 32 Services and FAR 8.002 - Priorities for Use of Government Supply Sources.
- 33 The deviation must be supported by a Job Hazard Analysis (JHA) that
- 34 documents the specific reason the stock item does not meet the job
- 35 requirements and is signed by the applicable line officer. The purchasing
- 36 official must confirm that the JHA supports the alternate purchase. The
- 37 DLA Wildland Fire Equipment Catalog is at
- 38 <https://www.fedmall.mil/index.html>.
- 39 • Perform duties of Agency Administrator and maintain those qualifications.
- 40 • Provide a fully staffed, highly qualified, and diverse workforce in a "safety
- 41 first" environment.
- 42 • Support and participate in wildfire prevention.

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

3 **Preparedness**

4 Preparedness is a continuous process that includes all fire management activities
5 conducted in advance of wildland fire ignitions to ensure an appropriate, risk
6 informed and effective wildland fire response to meet National and Agency
7 goals.

- 8 • Take all necessary and prudent actions to ensure firefighter and public
9 safety.
- 10 • Ensure sufficient qualified fire and non-fire personnel are available to
11 support fire operations at a level commensurate with the local and national
12 fire situation.
- 13 • Ensure accurate position descriptions are developed and reflect the
14 complexity of the unit. Individual Development Plans promote and enhance
15 FMO currency and development.
- 16 • Provide a written Delegation of Authority to FMOs that provides an
17 adequate level of operational authority at the unit level. Include Multi-
18 Agency Coordinating (MAC) Group authority, as appropriate.
- 19 • Ensure the plans contained in the Fire Management Reference System
20 (FMRS) are based on resource objectives found in the LRMP.
- 21 • Ensure budget requests and allocations reflect preparedness requirements
22 from the program of work and support objectives from the LRMP.
- 23 • Develop preparedness standards that are in compliance with agency fire
24 policies.
- 25 • Management teams meet once a year to review fire and aviation policies,
26 roles, responsibilities, and delegations of authority. Specifically address
27 oversight and management controls, critical safety issues, and high-risk
28 situations such as transfers of incident command, periods of multiple fire
29 activity, and Red Flag Warnings.
- 30 • Ensure fire and aviation preparedness reviews are conducted each year and
31 include the key components of the record of decision for the nationwide
32 aerial application of fire retardant on National Forest System land.
- 33 • Meet annually with cooperators and review interagency agreements to
34 ensure their continued effectiveness and efficiency.
- 35 • Meet annually with local US Fish and Wildlife Service and NOAA
36 Fisheries specialists to ensure the avoidance maps reflect changes during
37 the year on additional species or changes made for designated critical
38 habitat, and reporting and monitoring guidelines are still valid and being
39 applied.

40 **Wildfire Response**

- 41 • Ensure use of fire funds is in compliance with Agency policies.
- 42 • WFDSS will be used to approve and publish decisions on all fires. See
43 Chapter 11 for the fire criteria that require a published decision.

- 1 • Personally attend reviews on Type 1 and Type 2 fires. Ensure Agency
2 Administrator representatives are assigned when appropriate.
- 3 • Provide incident management objectives (all wildfires must have a
4 protection objective), written delegations of authority, and a complete
5 Agency Administrator briefing to Incident Management Teams.
- 6 • Ensure briefings include any applicable information for avoidance areas and
7 waterways per the nationwide aerial application of fire retardant direction,
8 mapping, and cultural resources. Include the reporting requirements in the
9 briefing if a misapplication of fire chemical occurs. Provide resource
10 advisors if the use of aerially applied fire retardant is expected and the unit
11 has mapped avoidance areas (which include waterways and 300' or larger
12 buffers) and otherwise evaluate the need for resource advisors for all other
13 fires, and assign as appropriate.
- 14 • For all unplanned human-caused fires where responsibility can be
15 determined, ensure actions are initiated to recover cost of suppression
16 activities, land rehabilitation, damages to the resource, and improvements.
- 17 • Ensure structure exposure protection principles are followed.
- 18 • Ensure that a sufficient number of incident after action reviews are
19 conducted for Type 3, 4, and 5 wildfires to adequately assess the unit's
20 wildland fire response capability, performance, procedures and to enhance
21 learning.

22 Responsibilities and Oversight

- 23 • Line Officers are responsible for all aspects of fire management.
- 24 • Agency Administrators will ensure that all Forest Service employees and
25 employees of interagency partners working on Forest Service jurisdiction
26 wildfires clearly understand direction.
- 27 • Agency Administrators must approve and publish decisions in WFDSS and
28 issue delegations of authority to the Incident Commander. The Agency
29 Administrator authority is based on incident type.

Incident Type	USFS Approval ¹
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.

¹Authority may be retained at the Regional Forester level.

- 1 • Critical long duration wildfire oversight roles include ensuring that:
 - 2 ○ Up-to-date Published Decisions are completed and documented in
 - 3 WFDSS.
 - 4 ○ Hazards are identified and risk assessments are incorporated into
 - 5 Published Decisions.
 - 6 ○ Coordination with partners and potentially affected parties is conducted
 - 7 (including smoke impacts). Unified command is implemented early if
 - 8 necessary.
 - 9 ○ Resource capacity and availability are adequately assessed to meet
 - 10 expectations.
- 11 • This oversight role should address concerns of the states, cooperators, and
- 12 the public including air quality impacts from multiple wildfires.

13 **Safety**

- 14 • Review safety policies, procedures, and concerns with field fire and
- 15 aviation personnel.
- 16 • Ensure timely follow-up actions to program reviews, fire preparedness
- 17 reviews, fire and aviation safety reviews, and management reviews.
- 18 • Monitor the fire situation and provide oversight during periods of critical
- 19 fire activity and situations of high risk.
- 20 • Ensure there is adequate direction in fire management plans to maintain fire
- 21 danger awareness.
- 22 • Take appropriate actions with escalating fire potential.
- 23 • Ensure appropriate investigation or Lessons Learned analyses are conducted
- 24 for incidents, entrapments, and serious accidents.

25 **Fuels**

- 26 • Plan and implement a hazardous fuels management and prescribed fire
- 27 program applying principles and policy elements described in FSM 5100
- 28 and 5140 and guided by the goals described in the National Cohesive
- 29 Wildland Fire Strategy.
- 30 • Complete a fuels treatment effectiveness assessment on all wildfires which
- 31 start in or burn into a fuel treatment area.
- 32 • Enter results of the assessment in the Fuels Treatment Effectiveness
- 33 Monitoring (FTEM) database found at www.nwportal.fs.usda.gov within 90
- 34 days of control of the fire. Reference FSM 5140.

35 **Prescribed Fire**

- 36 • Provide program leadership by visiting prescribed fire treatment projects
- 37 and providing leader's intent to prescribed fire personnel.
- 38 • Ensure compliance with National and Regional Office policy and direction
- 39 for prescribed fire activities and ensure that periodic reviews and
- 40 inspections of the prescribed fire program are completed.
- 41 • Ensure a Prescribed Fire Plan is written and approved for each project prior
- 42 to implementation in accordance with the *Interagency Prescribed Fire*

- 1 *Planning and Implementation Procedures Guide* (PMS 484) available at
2 <https://www.nwcg.gov/publications/484>.
- 3 • Review and approve Prescribed Fire Plans:
- 4 ○ Ensure that the prescribed fire plan has been reviewed and
5 recommended by a qualified technical reviewer.
- 6 ○ Ensure that prescribed fire plans are designed to achieve desired
7 conditions as described in Land and Resource Management Plans and
8 project-specific NEPA decision document.
- 9 • Approve Prescribed Fire Plans:
- 10 ○ Minimum qualifications for Forest Supervisors, District Rangers, other
11 Line Officers and formally delegated “Acting” Line Officers to approve
12 prescribed fire plans are:
- 13 ▪ Completing a National or Regional Fire Management Leadership
14 course, or
- 15 ▪ Completing an Agency Administrator Workshop at the National
16 Prescribed Fire Training Center, or
- 17 ▪ Qualifying in a Type 1 or 2 Command and General Staff position
18 (currency not required), or
- 19 ▪ Qualifying as a Prescribed Fire Burn Boss (RXB1 or RXB2) or
20 Prescribed Fire Manager (RXM1 or RXM2) (currency not
21 required).
- 22 ○ Attending an agency administrator session at the National Prescribed
23 Fire Training Center (PFTC) may be substituted for the minimum
24 training requirement for approving prescribed fire plans only.
- 25 ○ Authority to approve prescribed fire plans is held at the Forest
26 Supervisor level but may be delegated in writing to other qualified line
27 officers or staff. Delegations should be based on meeting the minimum
28 training or experience described above and demonstrated ability.
29 Documentation that supports the delegated authorities should be
30 included in the individuals training records.
- 31 ○ Approve prescribed fire plan amendments and determine the need for
32 additional technical review of proposed plan amendments prior to
33 approval.
- 34 • If more than one year has elapsed since a prescribed fire plan was last
35 approved, the plan will be reviewed, updated as necessary, and re-approved
36 before implementation.
- 37 • Authorize ignition of prescribed fire as delegated and adhere to procedures
38 as described in 5140 for Regional and/or National level approvals for
39 initiation of new and continued prescribed fire activities at National
40 Preparedness levels 4 and 5 or when forecast National Fire Danger Rating
41 System adjective ratings are at “Extreme” category. Report all instances of
42 prescribed fires resulting in a wildfire declaration and/or air quality Notice-
43 of-Violation as required in FSM 5140.

1 Agency Administrator Roles and Responsibilities for Incident Management**2 Agency Administrator Core Competencies**

3 Core competencies include:

- 4 • Risk management
- 5 • Incident management processes
- 6 • WFDSS and other decision support tools
- 7 • Social, political economic impacts
- 8 • Collaboration with partners and stakeholders

9 For access to the Learning Action Plan, Pathways Chart and additional
10 information, a copy of the *Line Officer Desk Reference for Fire Program*
11 *Management* can be downloaded at <https://wfmrda.nwcg.gov>.

12 Agency Administrator Certification Program

13 The following principles will guide certification of Agency Administrators in
14 wildfire management:

- 15 • Regional Foresters are accountable for certification of Agency
16 Administrators;
- 17 • Agency Administrator evaluation includes standards for training,
18 background and experience, demonstrated ability, and utilizing the Learning
19 Action Plan and Pathways Chart which will result in a qualitative evaluation
20 of readiness by the Regional Forester;
- 21 • When the complexity level of a fire exceeds an Agency Administrator's
22 certification, a coach will be assigned to advise (but not replace);
- 23 • This certification program will be periodically evaluated and updated as
24 needed;
- 25 • Assistance with decision documentation and analysis can be requested
26 through the Wildland Fire Management RD&A – National Fire Decision
27 Support Center (NFDSC); and
- 28 • The Coaching/Shadowing program, to be administered by each region, is an
29 integral part of this certification program.

30 Agency Administrators will be evaluated in three basic areas:

- 31 • Training;
- 32 • Background and experience; and
- 33 • Demonstrated understanding of concepts and principles as outlined in the
34 Learning Action Plan.

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

1 **Guidelines**

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

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

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

- 10 • **Training:** M-581 *Fire Program Management – An Overview*; or M-582
11 *Fire Program Management – Leading Complex Programs*; and WFDSS
12 training.
- 13 • **Background and Experience:**
- 14 ○ Successful management of a minimum of one Type 3 or higher fire.
15 Consider duration, complexity and size of the fire.
- 16 ○ Management oversight of a low-complexity fire program and/or
17 experience as an Agency Administrator or representative.
- 18 ○ Applicable experience in all-hazard or other incident oversight may be
19 considered in lieu of this experience.
- 20 ○ Consider career fire experience.
- 21 • **Demonstrated Ability:** Successful evaluation by a coach (including
22 feedback from ICs or ACs) that the candidate has demonstrated
23 understanding and application of the responsibilities of an Agency
24 Administrator on smaller low-complexity fires with a basic understanding
25 of the elements of the core competencies.

26 **Journey Level** – The Agency Administrator could manage a moderate to high
27 complexity fire. The Agency Administrator needs to be certified at the Working
28 Level and should meet the following:

- 29 • **Training:** M-581 *Fire Program Management – An Overview*; or M-582
30 *Fire Program Management – Leading Complex Programs*; and WFDSS
31 training.
- 32 • **Background and Experience:**
- 33 ○ Successful management of a minimum of one Type 2 or higher fire, or
34 one successful higher complexity fire (Type 1). Duration, complexity
35 and size of the fire should be considered.
- 36 ○ Management oversight of a moderate-complexity fire program, or
37 experience as an Agency Administrator or Representative on Type 2 or
38 higher fires.
- 39 ○ Applicable experience in all-hazard or other incident oversight may
40 also be considered in lieu of other guidelines.

- 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/Representative on moderate to large complex fires in the core
5 competencies, and other elements that may be relevant.
- 6 **Advanced Level** – The Agency Administrator could manage a high complexity
7 fire. The Agency Administrator needs to be certified at the Journey Level, and
8 should meet the following:
- 9 • **Training:** M-582 *Fire Program Management – Leading Complex*
10 *Programs*; and WFDSS training.
- 11 • **Background and Experience:**
- 12 ○ Successful management of several Type 1 or 2 fires (at least one is a
13 Type 1 fire), depending on fire experience. Duration, complexity, and
14 size of the fires should be considered.
- 15 ○ Management oversight of a moderate to high-complexity fire program.
- 16 ○ Applicable experience in all-hazard or other incident oversight may
17 also be considered in lieu of other guidelines.
- 18 • **Demonstrated Ability:** Successful evaluation by a coach (including
19 feedback from ICs or ACs) that the candidate has demonstrated
20 understanding and application of the responsibilities of an Agency
21 Administrator on large complex fires in the core competencies, and other
22 elements that may be relevant.

23 Evaluation Process

- 24 • Every trainee will receive an evaluation from a certified Agency
25 Administrator/Agency Administrator Representative or coach using the
26 Learning Action Plan identified in the *Line Officer Desk Reference for Fire*
27 *Program Management*.
- 28 • Individuals involved in a shadow assignment should receive creditable
29 experience through documentation.
- 30 • The purpose of the Learning Action Plan is to provide consistency for the
31 Agency Administrator Coach/Evaluator to evaluate trainees and document
32 their demonstrated abilities to achieve the core competencies, which will be
33 used as a component to achieve the next level certification.
- 34 • Every trainee will complete a Learning Action Plan for evaluation from an
35 Agency Administrator/Agency Administrator Representative or coach using
36 the Learning Action Plan form as identified in the *Line Officer Desk*
37 *Reference for Fire Program Management*.

38 Creditable work experiences to achieve and maintain certification levels:

- 39 • Coaching
- 40 • Regional Forester Representative (RFR)
- 41 • Acting Agency Administrator/Representative assignments
- 42 • Shadow assignments

- 1 Training opportunities to achieve and maintain core competencies:
- 2 • Upper levels of fire leadership and fire management courses;
 - 3 • Function as the Line Officer in sand table exercises and training simulations
 - 4 in S-420, S-520, and other fire courses;
 - 5 • Participate in advanced risk management training;
 - 6 • Get assigned to a Type 1 or Type 2 team as a training assignment (e.g.,
 - 7 shadow plans) and see the world from their viewpoint;
 - 8 • WFDSS training (see the WFDSS homepage <https://wfdss.usgs.gov> for
 - 9 training materials and the WFM RD&A Line Officer Resources page for
 - 10 Agency Administrator specific refresher training materials
 - 11 <https://wfmrda.nwcg.gov/>);
 - 12 • Include risk management and fire management topics during annual line
 - 13 officer meetings;
 - 14 • Attend staff rides (staff rides need to include a stand that portrays the line
 - 15 officer perspective);
 - 16 • Participate in prescribed fires and/or attend prescribed fire training;
 - 17 • Participate in other leadership and/or decision-making training;
 - 18 • Attend L-580 *Leadership is Action*.

19 **Currency**

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

24 **Guidance on the Selection of Coaches**

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

28 Criteria for individuals serving as Coaches are as follows:

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

34 **Definitions**

35 **Agency Administrator:** An individual with the delegated authority for an
36 incident.

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

- 1 **Shadow:** An individual that does not perform the duty of Agency
2 Administrator/Representative, but observes a qualified, designated Agency
3 Administrator/Representative.
- 4 **Agency Administrator Trainee:** An Agency Administrator working on
5 certification by performing the role under the supervision and authority of the
6 Agency Administrator and/or Representative.
- 7 **Coach/Shadow Team:** A team comprised of a qualified Coach and group of
8 Shadows who may travel to multiple incidents and support sites to increase their
9 level of understanding.
- 10 **Acting Agency Administrator:** An individual acting in an Agency
11 Administrator roll certified at the level required by the incident complexity and
12 delegated authorities to provide relief and support.
- 13 **Regional Forester Agency Administrator Representative:** A representative
14 that carries out roles and responsibilities as delegated.

15 **Specific Fire Management Staff Responsibilities for Fire Operations at the**
16 **Field Level**

17 **Preparedness**

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

- 19 • Provide for and personally participate in periodic site visits to individual
- 20 incidents and projects.
- 21 • Utilize the Risk Complexity Assessment to ensure the proper level of
- 22 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 Length of Assignment guidelines are followed during
- 5 all fire and 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 <https://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 <https://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 Fire and Aviation Management (FAM) Duty Officer

30 Each Forest or Grassland Fire Management Officer or Assistant Fire
31 Management Officer will perform the duties of a FAM Duty Officer (DO) for
32 their unit, or will provide a delegated DO, during any periods of predicted or
33 actual incident activity. Individuals performing as DO must have the approval of
34 the unit's Agency Administrator and meet the minimum NWCG qualifications
35 as identified in the FS-FAQG Chapter 4.
36 https://www.fs.fed.us/fire/publications/FSFAQG_Chapter4_Dec2016.pdf

37 The required duties for all DOs are:

- 38 • Serve as the unit's primary contact with Dispatch for both on and off-unit
- 39 assignments.
- 40 • Monitor unit incident activity for compliance with Forest Service risk
- 41 management practices.

- 1 • Coordinate and set priorities for unit suppression actions and resource
2 allocation.
 - 3 • Keep Agency Administrators, suppression resources, and information
4 officers informed of the current and expected situation.
 - 5 • Plan for and implement actions required for future needs.
 - 6 • Document key decisions and actions.
- 7 DOs will perform the above duties in addition to any unit specific duties
8 assigned by the unit's Agency Administrators or fire managers through a
9 delegation of authority or unit operating plan.
- 10 In the event that the DO is required to accept an incident assignment, the
11 outgoing DO must transition with another qualified and approved DO.
- 12 Use of District/Zone DOs is intended to manage span of control. When assigned
13 to the DO role, DOs will not concurrently perform any ICS command or
14 operational functions directly connected to an incident.
- 15 DO staffing levels may vary based on locally determined metrics such as fire
16 danger, local area Planning Level, predicted incident activity, prescribed fire
17 implementation, and/or span of control.

18 **Fire Management Position Requirements**

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

24 **Structure Exposure Protection Principles**

25 **Mission and Role**

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

37 Forest Service leadership will express clear and concise "leader's intent" to
38 ensure structure protection assignments are managed safely, effectively, and

1 efficiently. Leaders are expected to operate under existing policies and doctrine
2 under normal conditions. Where conflicts occur, employees will be expected to
3 weigh the risk versus gain, and operate within the intent of Agency policy and
4 doctrine.

5 **Strategic Principles**

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

32 **Tactical Applications**

33 ***Structure Protection Definition***

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

40 ***USFS Role***

41 As documented in a Forest Service doctrinal principle, “Agency employees
42 respond when they come across situations where human life is immediately at

1 risk or there is a clear emergency, and they are capable of assisting without
2 undue risk to themselves or others.” This principle serves as a foundational basis
3 for the roles employees play in structure protection.

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

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

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

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

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

37 As addressed above, the Forest Service will apply strategy and tactics to keep
38 wildland fires from reaching structures, as prudent to do so, considering risk
39 management for firefighters and publics, fire behavior, values at risk including
40 natural resources, availability of firefighting resources, and jurisdictional
41 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.