

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 (*Leading in the Wildland*  
6 *Fire Service*, PMS 494-2).

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

13 Under this doctrinal approach:

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

### 21 **Mission**

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

### 36 **Wildland Fire Response Principles**

- 37 • Response to wildland fire is based on the ecological, social, and legal  
38 consequences of fire. The circumstances under which a fire occurs, and the  
39 likely consequences to firefighter and public safety and welfare, natural and  
40 cultural resources, and values to be protected dictate the appropriate  
41 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 (see FSM 2320).
- 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 • The Forest Service guide to Risk Management and other helpful Risk  
30 Management resources can be found on the USDA Forest Service website  
31 for Risk Management. <https://www.fs.fed.us/managing-land/fire/safety>

##### 32 **Operations**

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

##### 35 ***Wildfire Response***

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

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

## 12 **Risk Management Protocol**

13 Forest Service Risk Management Protocol begins with working with partners  
14 and stakeholders to identify values affected by fire (positively and negatively)  
15 and then forming clear and reasonable objectives around these values. The  
16 highest value is human life and thus the primary objective will always be  
17 protection of human life. Other objectives will be weighed against the amount of  
18 risk responders and the public must accept in order to accomplish the objectives  
19 as well as the likelihood of success. The Forest Service is committed to using a  
20 three phased risk management protocol:

### 21 **I. Pre-season**

22 Pre-season preparedness work is critical to success when the fire starts.

- 23 • Build decision maker and key stakeholder capacity to manage the  
24 uncertainties and inherent risks of fires.
  - 25 ○ Increase understanding of risk management with key stakeholders and  
26 partner agencies.
  - 27 ○ Build Agency Administrator capacity to perform as risk managers.
- 28 • Assess risk at a landscape level, looking at National Forest System (NFS)  
29 lands and those adjoining lands that may be impacted by a fire leaving NFS  
30 land.
  - 31 ○ Develop a common understanding of values to be protected by  
32 answering four questions; ‘What is important?’ ‘Why is it important?’  
33 ‘Who is it important to?’ and ‘How important is it?’
  - 34 ○ Complete a risk analysis, with key stakeholders and partner agencies, to  
35 predetermine the optimal response strategies for protecting values at  
36 risk. Engage key stakeholders and partner agencies in tabletop  
37 exercises or other venues to ensure alignment.
  - 38 ○ Initiate dialogue with line officers and stakeholders aimed at  
39 understanding, acceptance, and support for alternative risk-based  
40 decisions. This is especially important where there is an expectation  
41 that a fire will become a long-term event, because of an opportunity to  
42 use fire to achieve land management objectives, and/or the need to

1           adjust the level of engagement based on risks to responders, lack of  
2           available resources and the level of risk toward values to be protected.

### 3 **II. During Incident Phase**

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

- 5 1. Complete an incident risk assessment.
  - 6     • Develop an assessment of what is at risk (from preseason work or input  
7       from key stakeholders), and the associated probabilities and potential  
8       consequences.
- 9 2. Complete a risk analysis.
  - 10    • Consider alternatives (objectives, strategies and tactics) against desired  
11      outcomes, risks to human life (responders and the public), probability  
12      of success and values to be protected.
- 13 3. Complete two-way risk communications.
  - 14    • Engage community leaders, local government officials, partners, and  
15      other key stakeholders of the incident to share the risk picture and enlist  
16      input.
- 17 4. Conduct risk-sharing dialogue.
  - 18    • Engage appropriate senior line officers and political appointees (as  
19      necessary) regarding the potential decision aimed at obtaining  
20      understanding, acceptance, and support for the alternatives and likely  
21      decision.
- 22 5. Make the risk-informed decision.
- 23 6. Document the risk: assessment, analysis, communication, sharing and  
24     decision in WFDSS.
- 25 7. Continue monitoring and adjusting as necessary or as conditions change.

### 26 **III. Post Incident Phase**

27 As a learning organization we should always strive to improve how we conduct  
28 our business. We should endeavor to learn from each incident and apply those  
29 lessons.

- 30 • Complete an incident after action review.
  - 31    ○ Engage key stakeholders of the incident to be involved.
  - 32    ○ Review what worked, what did not work and suggestions for  
33      improvement.
- 34 • Conduct a peer review after action process.
  - 35    ○ Engage others who have had similar incidents to learn strategies for  
36      improvement.
- 37 • Implement plans for improvement.
  - 38    ○ Make use of lessons learned in real-time if possible.

39 The following Risk Assessment and Risk Decision questions are designed to  
40 inform fire management decisions by stimulating thinking and prompting  
41 dialogue, analyzing and assessing risk, and recognizing shared risks and  
42 communicating those risks within the Agency and with partners and  
43 stakeholders.

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

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

#### 25 **Level**

26 The Forest Service has developed core fire management competencies for Line  
27 Officers with oversight responsibilities over fire management programs. They  
28 are presented here for reference:

- 29 • Knowledge of fire program management including ability to integrate fire  
30 and fuels management across all program areas and functions;
- 31 • Ability to implement fire management strategies and integrate natural  
32 resource concerns into collaborative community protection and ecosystem  
33 restoration strategies;
- 34 • Knowledge to oversee a fire management program including budget,  
35 preparedness, prevention, suppression, and hazardous fuels reduction;
- 36 • Ability to serve as an Agency Administrator exercising authority to initiate  
37 prescribed fire and other hazardous fuel reduction activities;
- 38 • Ability to serve as an Agency Administrator during an incident on an  
39 assigned unit; and
- 40 • Ability to provide a fully staffed, highly qualified, and diversified  
41 firefighting workforce that exists in a “life first” and “readiness”  
42 environment.

**1 Responsibilities**

- 2 • Line Officers are responsible for all aspects of fire management.
- 3 • Integrate fire and fuels management across all functional areas.
- 4 • Implement fire management strategies and integrate natural resource
- 5 concerns into collaborative community protection and ecosystem restoration
- 6 strategies on the unit.
- 7 • Manage a budget that includes fire preparedness, prevention, suppression,
- 8 and hazardous fuels in an annual program of work for the unit.
- 9 • Perform duties of Agency Administrator and maintain those qualifications.
- 10 • Provide a fully staffed, highly qualified, and diverse workforce in a "safety
- 11 first" environment.
- 12 • Support and participate in wildfire prevention.
- 13 • Ensure operational fire management responsibilities remain separated from
- 14 agency administrator responsibilities in order to avoid collateral duty
- 15 conflicts.

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

**18 Preparedness**

19 Preparedness is a continuous process that includes all fire management activities  
20 conducted in advance of wildfire ignitions to ensure an appropriate, risk  
21 informed and effective wildfire response to meet National and Agency goals.

- 22 • Take all necessary and prudent actions to ensure firefighter and public
- 23 safety.
- 24 • Ensure sufficient qualified fire and non-fire personnel are available to
- 25 support fire operations at a level commensurate with the local and national
- 26 fire situation.
- 27 • Ensure accurate position descriptions are developed and reflect the
- 28 complexity of the unit. Individual Development Plans promote and enhance
- 29 FMO currency and development.
- 30 • Provide a written Delegation of Authority to FMOs that provides an
- 31 adequate level of operational authority at the unit level. Include Multi-
- 32 Agency Coordinating (MAC) Group authority, as appropriate.
- 33 • Ensure the plans contained in the Fire Management Reference System
- 34 (FMRS) are based on resource objectives found in the LRMP.
- 35 • Ensure budget requests and allocations reflect preparedness requirements
- 36 from the program of work and support objectives from the LRMP.
- 37 • Develop preparedness standards that are in compliance with agency fire
- 38 policies.
- 39 • Management teams meet once a year to review fire and aviation policies,
- 40 roles, responsibilities, and delegations of authority. Specifically address
- 41 oversight and management controls, critical safety issues, and high-risk
- 42 situations such as transfers of incident command, periods of multiple fire
- 43 activity, and Red Flag Warnings.

- 1 • Ensure fire and aviation preparedness reviews are conducted each year and  
2 include the key components of the record of decision for the nationwide  
3 aerial application of fire retardant on National Forest System land.
- 4 • Meet annually with cooperators and review interagency agreements to  
5 ensure their continued effectiveness and efficiency.
- 6 • Meet annually with local US Fish and Wildlife Service and NOAA  
7 Fisheries specialists to ensure the avoidance maps reflect changes during  
8 the year on additional species or changes made for designated critical  
9 habitat, and reporting and monitoring guidelines are still valid and being  
10 applied.

#### 11 **Wildfire Response**

- 12 • Ensure use of fire funds is in compliance with Agency policies.
- 13 • WFDSS will be used to approve and publish decisions on all fires. See  
14 Chapter 11 for the fire criteria that require a published decision.
- 15 • Personally attend reviews on Type 1 and Type 2 fires. Ensure Agency  
16 Administrator representatives are assigned when appropriate.
- 17 • Provide incident management objectives, written delegations of authority,  
18 and a complete Agency Administrator briefing to Incident Management  
19 Teams.
- 20 • Ensure briefings include any applicable information for avoidance areas and  
21 waterways per the nationwide aerial application of fire retardant direction,  
22 mapping, and cultural resources. Include the reporting requirements in the  
23 briefing if a misapplication of fire chemical occurs. Provide resource  
24 advisors if the use of aerially applied fire retardant is expected and the unit  
25 has mapped avoidance areas (which include waterways and 300' or larger  
26 buffers) and otherwise evaluate the need for resource advisors for all other  
27 fires, and assign as appropriate.
- 28 • For all unplanned human-caused fires where responsibility can be  
29 determined, ensure actions are initiated to recover cost of suppression  
30 activities, land rehabilitation, damages to the resource, and improvements.
- 31 • Ensure structure exposure protection principles are followed (FSM 5135).
- 32 • Ensure that a sufficient number of incident after action reviews are  
33 conducted for Type 3, 4, and 5 wildfires to adequately assess the unit's  
34 wildfire response capability, performance, procedures and to enhance  
35 learning.

#### 36 **Wildfire Response Responsibilities and Oversight**

- 37 • Agency Administrators will ensure that all Forest Service employees and  
38 employees of interagency partners working on Forest Service jurisdiction  
39 wildfires clearly understand direction.
- 40 • Agency Administrators must approve and publish decisions in WFDSS in a  
41 timely manner and issue delegations of authority to the Incident  
42 Commander in accordance with FSM 5133.3.

- 1 • Line Officers will assign Agency Administrators to oversee incidents based
- 2 on Certification Level according to incident type.

Incident Type	USFS AA Certification Level to Approve WFDSS Decisions & Provide Incident Oversight <sup>1</sup>
Type 1	Advanced level
Type 2	Journey level
Type 3, 4, 5	Working level

<sup>1</sup>Authority may be retained at the Regional Forester level.

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

**15 Safety**

- 16 • Review safety policies, procedures, and concerns with field fire and
- 17 aviation personnel.
- 18 • Ensure timely follow-up actions to program reviews, fire preparedness
- 19 reviews, fire and aviation safety reviews, and management reviews.
- 20 • Monitor the fire situation and provide oversight during periods of critical
- 21 fire activity and situations of high risk.
- 22 • Ensure there is adequate direction in fire management plans to maintain fire
- 23 danger awareness.
- 24 • Take appropriate actions with escalating fire potential.
- 25 • Ensure appropriate investigation or Lessons Learned analyses are conducted
- 26 for incidents, entrapments, and serious accidents (see FSM 6730).

**27 Fuels**

- 28 • Plan and implement a hazardous fuels management and prescribed fire
- 29 program applying principles and policy elements described in FSM 5100
- 30 and 5140 and guided by the goals described in the National Cohesive
- 31 Wildland Fire Strategy.
- 32 • Complete a fuels treatment effectiveness assessment on all wildfires which
- 33 start in or burn into a fuel treatment area.

- 1 • Enter results of the assessment in the Fuels Treatment Effectiveness  
2 Monitoring (FTEM) database found at [www.nwportal.fs.usda.gov](http://www.nwportal.fs.usda.gov) within 90  
3 days of control of the fire. Reference FSM 5140.

#### 4 **Prescribed Fire**

- 5 • Provide program leadership by visiting prescribed fire treatment projects  
6 and providing leader's intent to prescribed fire personnel.
- 7 • Ensure compliance with National and Regional Office policy and direction  
8 for prescribed fire activities and ensure that periodic reviews and  
9 inspections of the prescribed fire program are completed.
- 10 • Coordinate prescribed fire program activities with Regional air quality  
11 specialists and federal, state, Tribal, air pollution control district or county  
12 regulatory authorities to ensure compliance with their regulations supported  
13 by the Clean Air Act.
- 14 • When multiple wildland fire events are occurring within an airshed, or any  
15 airshed is impacted by ongoing wildland fire events, fire managers will  
16 consider the cumulative impact to air quality. Initiation of new prescribed  
17 fire must be in compliance with air quality regulations and standards.
- 18 • All prescribed fires should be conducted using Basic Smoke Management  
19 Practices. USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service and Forest  
20 Service Technical Note (2011).  
21 <https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/national/air/>
- 22 • Ensure a Prescribed Fire Plan is written and approved for each project prior  
23 to implementation in accordance with the *Interagency Prescribed Fire*  
24 *Planning and Implementation Procedures Guide* (PMS 484) available at  
25 <https://www.nwcg.gov/publications/484>.
- 26 • Review and approve Prescribed Fire Plans and ignitions:
- 27 ○ Engage in the development of the Complexity Analysis; review and  
28 approve the final complexity rating.
- 29 ○ Ensure that the prescribed fire plan has been reviewed and  
30 recommended by a qualified technical reviewer.
- 31 ○ Ensure that prescribed fire plans are designed to achieve desired  
32 conditions as described in Land and Resource Management Plans and  
33 project-specific NEPA decision document.
- 34 ○ Approve prescribed fire plan amendments and determine the need for  
35 additional technical review of proposed plan amendments prior to  
36 approval.
- 37 ○ If more than one year has elapsed since a prescribed fire plan was last  
38 approved, the plan will be reviewed, updated as necessary, and re-  
39 approved before implementation.
- 40 ○ Authorize ignition of prescribed fire as delegated and adhere to  
41 procedures as described in FSM 5140 for Regional and/or National  
42 level approvals for initiation of new and continued prescribed fire  
43 activities at National Preparedness levels 4 and 5 or when forecast

- 1 National Fire Danger Rating System adjective ratings are at “Extreme”  
2 category.
- 3 • Report all instances of prescribed fires resulting in a wildfire declaration  
4 and/or air quality Notice-of-Violation as required in FSM 5140.

### 5 **Agency Administrator Training and Certifications for Wildland Fire** 6 **Management**

7 There are two separate and distinct certifications that agency administrators  
8 must attain related to fire management, one for wildfire decision making and  
9 one for prescribed fire. The training and experience requirements and  
10 certification process for both wildfire and prescribed fire are described below.

#### 11 **Agency Administrator Core Competencies**

12 Core competencies that must be demonstrated by Agency Administrators  
13 exercising decision-making authority for wildfires or prescribed fires include:

- 14 • Risk Management
- 15 • Wildfire response and incident management processes
- 16 • WFDSS/IFTDSS and other decision support tools
- 17 • Fuels management and prescribed fire processes
- 18 • Fire Prevention, mitigation, and education processes
- 19 • Social, political, economic and environmental impacts of wildland fire  
20 management activities
- 21 • Collaboration with partners and stakeholders
- 22 • Fiscal management

23 These core competencies form the basis for the Agency Administrator Task  
24 Book which is used to document that an individual has indeed demonstrated  
25 these competencies while working toward certification. For access to the Task  
26 Book, Pathways Chart and additional information on the Forest Service Agency  
27 Administrator Fire Certification Programs, visit the Decision Support Toolbox at  
28 <https://wfmrda.nwcg.gov>.

#### 29 **Definitions**

30 **Agency Administrator:** A general term meaning the official with the delegated  
31 authority, responsibility, and qualifications for decision-making on incidents or  
32 prescribed fire within a particular administrative unit.

33 **Agency Administrator Representative:** A representative that carries out  
34 Agency Administrator roles and responsibilities as delegated.

35 **Agency Administrator Trainee:** An Agency Administrator working on  
36 certification at any given level by performing the role under the supervision and  
37 authority of a fully qualified Agency Administrator.

38 **Coach:** A fully qualified Agency Administrator certified at an experience level  
39 commensurate with the incident or project being managed (e.g., journey or  
40 advanced for wildfire and moderate or high for prescribed fire). The role of the

1 coach is to advise and support the agency administrator trainee through various  
2 aspects of a wildfire incident, prescribed fire or all hazard incident.

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

6 **Line Officer:** A Forest Service official who serves in a direct line of command  
7 from the Chief and has been delegated authority to make and execute decisions  
8 for their administrative unit(s). Examples are the deputy chiefs, Director of Law  
9 Enforcement and Investigations, regional foresters, station directors, forest  
10 supervisors, and district rangers. Line officers have authority to issue direction  
11 within delegated levels.

12 **Shadow:** A learning opportunity to observe various elements of a fire program.  
13 This position does not perform the duties of an Agency Administrator but  
14 observes a qualified AA during an incident for the purpose of increasing  
15 understanding of the duties. The shadow may participate as an individual or part  
16 of a group of trainees. It is an observational learning assignment; certification  
17 recommendations should be reserved for active trainee assignments where tasks  
18 are being performed, however certain aspects of the task book may be  
19 accomplished during the assignment.

#### 20 **Agency Administrator Wildfire Certification Program**

21 The following principles will guide certification of Agency Administrators in  
22 wildfire management:

- 23 • Regional Foresters are accountable for annual certification of Agency  
24 Administrators by review process established by Regional Forester, such as  
25 Regional Line Officer Team;
- 26 • Agency Administrator evaluation includes standards for training,  
27 background and experience, demonstrated ability, and utilizing the Task  
28 Book and Wildfire Pathways Chart which will result in a qualitative  
29 evaluation of readiness by the Regional Forester;
- 30 • When the complexity level of a wildfire exceeds an Agency Administrator's  
31 certification, a coach will be assigned;
- 32 • Care should be taken when assigning Acting AAs to ensure operational fire  
33 management responsibilities remain separated from agency administrator  
34 responsibilities in order to avoid collateral duty conflicts;
- 35 • Agency Administrator competencies (aka certification level) supersedes  
36 position (e.g., a District Ranger certified at the Advanced Level may be the  
37 AA for a Type I Incident);
- 38 • This certification program will be periodically evaluated and updated as  
39 needed. When changes are made in training requirements, the Regional  
40 Forester may choose to "grandfather" Agency Administrators thereby  
41 maintaining their existing certification level; however, the updated training  
42 requirements must be met before advancement to the next level or before  
43 recertification after a lapse in currency;

- 1 • Assistance with decision documentation and analysis can be requested
- 2 through the Wildland Fire Management RD&A – National Fire Decision
- 3 Support Center (NFDSC); and
- 4 • The Coaching/Shadowing functions, to be administered by each region, is
- 5 an integral part of this certification program.

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

- 7 • Training;
- 8 • Background and experience; and
- 9 • Demonstrated understanding of concepts and principles as outlined in the
- 10 Task Book.

11 This certification program is a multi-level process where Agency Administrators

12 demonstrate competence in one of three levels of managing wildfires. Those

13 levels would be Working, Journey, and Advanced.

14 **Guidelines**

15 In consideration of the appropriate level (Working, Journey, Advanced) to

16 assign an Agency Administrator, the Regional Forester should consider the

17 following guidelines:

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

21 **Working Level** –The Agency Administrator could manage a Type 3, 4 or 5

22 wildfire or similar complexity incident. The Agency Administrator must meet

23 the following in order to be certified at the Working Level:

- 24 • **Required Training:** *Risk Management 101*; M-581, *Fire Program*
- 25 *Management, an Overview*, or Agency Administrators Prescribed Fire
- 26 Workshop at the Prescribed Fire Training Center (recommended for AAs
- 27 seeking more hands-on prescribed fire experience), and WFDSS training –
- 28 WFDSS Refresher Topics located on the Decision Support Toolbox.
- 29 [https://wfmrda.nwcg.gov/line\\_officer\\_resources.php](https://wfmrda.nwcg.gov/line_officer_resources.php)
- 30 • **Required Background and Experience:**
  - 31 ○ Successful management of a minimum of one Type 3 or higher fire.
  - 32 Consider duration, complexity and size of the fire.
- 33 • **Other Background, Experience, and Training That Supports:**
  - 34 ○ Applicable experience in prescribed fire, wildfire, all-hazard or other
  - 35 incident oversight may also be considered in addition to other
  - 36 guidelines.
  - 37 ○ Management oversight of a moderate-high complexity fire program.
- 38 • **Demonstrated Ability:** Successful evaluation by a coach (including
- 39 feedback from ICs or ACs) that the candidate has demonstrated
- 40 understanding and application of the responsibilities of an Agency
- 41 Administrator Trainee. Use AA Task Book to document.

1 **Journey Level** –The Agency Administrator could manage Type 2 or lower  
2 complexity fires or similar incidents. The Agency Administrator needs to be  
3 certified at the Working Level and meet the following to become certified at the  
4 Journey Level:

- 5 • **Required Training:** *Risk Management 101*; M-581, *Fire Program*  
6 *Management, an Overview*, or Agency Administrators Prescribed Fire  
7 Workshop at the Prescribed Fire Training Center (recommended for AAs  
8 seeking more hands-on prescribed fire experience).
- 9 • **Required Background and Experience:**
  - 10 ○ Successful management of a minimum of one Type 2 fire or similar  
11 complexity incident. Duration, complexity and size of the fire should  
12 be considered.
- 13 • **Other Background, Experience, and Training That Supports:**
  - 14 ○ Applicable experience in prescribed fire, wildfire, all-hazard or other  
15 incident oversight may also be considered in addition to other  
16 guidelines.
  - 17 ○ Management oversight of a moderate-high complexity fire program.
- 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. Use AA Task Book to document.

22 **Advanced Level** – The Agency Administrator could manage one or more Type  
23 1 wildfire or similar complexity incidents. The Agency Administrator needs to  
24 be certified at the Journey Level, and meet the following to become certified at  
25 the Advanced Level:

- 26 • **Required Training:** *Risk Management 101*; M-582, *Fire Program*  
27 *Management, Leading Complex Fire Programs*, or Agency Administrators  
28 Prescribed Fire Workshop at the Prescribed Fire Training Center  
29 (recommended for AAs seeking more hands-on prescribed fire experience);  
30 at least one continuing education course in fireline leadership/decision-  
31 making. Pathways diagram and resources can be found on the Decision  
32 Support Toolbox. [https://wfmrda.nwcg.gov/line\\_officer\\_resources.php](https://wfmrda.nwcg.gov/line_officer_resources.php)
- 33 • **Required Background and Experience:**
  - 34 ○ Successful management of one Type 1 wildfire or similar complexity  
35 incident. Duration, complexity, and size of the fires should be  
36 considered.
- 37 • **Other Background, Experience, and Training That Supports:**
  - 38 ○ Applicable experience in prescribed fire, wildfire, all-hazard or other  
39 incident oversight may also be considered in addition to other  
40 guidelines.
  - 41 ○ Management oversight of a moderate to high-complexity fire program.
- 42 • **Demonstrated Ability:** Successful evaluation by a coach (including  
43 feedback from ICs or ACs) that the candidate has demonstrated

- 1 understanding and application of the responsibilities of an Agency  
2 Administrator on large complex fires. Use AA Task Book to document.

### 3 **Evaluation Process**

- 4 • Every trainee will receive an evaluation from a certified Agency  
5 Administrator/Agency Administrator Representative or coach using the  
6 Agency Administrator Task Book identified in the *Line Officer/Agency*  
7 *Administrator Desk Reference for Fire Program Management*.  
8 • Individuals involved in a shadow assignment should receive creditable  
9 experience through documentation.  
10 • The purpose of the Task Book is to provide consistency for the Agency  
11 Administrator Coach/Evaluator to evaluate trainees and document their  
12 demonstrated abilities to achieve the core competencies, which will be used  
13 as a component to achieve the next level certification.  
14 • Every trainee will complete a Task Book for evaluation from an Agency  
15 Administrator.

16 Training opportunities and work experiences to achieve and maintain core  
17 competencies:

18 Refer to the pathways chart found in Decision Support Toolbox.

19 [https://wfmrda.nwcg.gov/line\\_officer\\_resources.php](https://wfmrda.nwcg.gov/line_officer_resources.php)

### 20 **Currency**

21 Currency is certified annually by the Regional Forester for frequency of  
22 demonstrated exercise of Core Competencies through activities such as those  
23 described above or assignments as Agency Administrator on incidents of  
24 appropriate level within a three-year interval.

### 25 **Guidance on the Selection of Coaches**

26 See Coach/Shadow guide in the Decision Support Toolbox.

27 [https://wfmrda.nwcg.gov/line\\_officer\\_resources.php](https://wfmrda.nwcg.gov/line_officer_resources.php)

### 28 **Agency Administrator Prescribed Fire Certification**

29 The following principles will guide certification of Agency Administrators (AA)  
30 for prescribed fire:

- 31 • Regional Foresters are accountable for annual certification of AAs to  
32 approve and authorize prescribed fire.  
33 • Agency Administrator evaluation includes standards for training,  
34 background and experience, and demonstrated ability, which will result in a  
35 qualitative evaluation of readiness by the Regional Forester.  
36 • When the complexity level of a prescribed fire exceeds an AAs  
37 certification, an appropriately certified AA will be assigned and must  
38 approve the complexity analysis and the burn plan along with the AA being  
39 mentored/coached.  
40 • The authorization to ignite a prescribed fire must be approved by an  
41 appropriately certified AA; however, the Line Officer with authority over

- 1 their assigned unit will also retain authority to authorize or prohibit the  
2 ignition based on their judgement regardless of their certification level.
- 3 • Care should be taken when assigning Acting AAs to ensure operational fire  
4 management responsibilities remain separate from AA responsibilities in  
5 order to avoid collateral duty conflicts.
  - 6 • This certification program will be periodically evaluated and updated as  
7 needed; when changes are made in training requirements, the Regional  
8 Forester may choose to “grandfather” AAs thereby maintaining their  
9 existing certification level, however the updated training requirements must  
10 be met before advancement to the next level or before recertification after a  
11 lapse in currency.
  - 12 • The Coach/Shadow functions, to be administered by each region, is an  
13 integral part of this certification program.

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

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

18 This certification program is a multi-level process where Agency Administrators  
19 demonstrate competence in one of three levels of prescribed fire complexity.  
20 Those levels are Low, Moderate, and High.

21 **Guidelines**

22 In consideration of the appropriate qualification level (Low, Moderate, or High)  
23 to certify an Agency Administrator, the Regional Forester should consider the  
24 following guidelines:

25 **Low Complexity Level**

26 The Agency Administrator can review, approve, authorize and provide oversight  
27 for the management of low complexity prescribed fires. The Agency  
28 Administrator Trainee must meet the following in order to be certified at the  
29 Low Complexity level:

- 30 • **Required Training:** M-581, *Fire Program Management, an Overview*, or  
31 Agency Administrators Prescribed Fire Workshop at the Prescribed Fire  
32 Training Center (recommended for AAs seeking more hands-on prescribed  
33 fire experience).
- 34 • **Required Background and Experience:** Successful management of a  
35 minimum of one (1) Low Complexity prescribed fire, or one or more low  
36 complexity wildfires (Type 4 or 5).
- 37 • **Other Background, Experience, and Training That Supports:**
  - 38 ○ Applicable experience in prescribed fire, wildfire, all-hazard or other  
39 incident or project oversight may also be considered in addition to other  
40 guidelines.
  - 41 ○ Management oversight of a low-complexity fire program.

- 1 • **Demonstrated Ability:** Successful evaluation by a coach (including  
2 feedback from FMO/Fire Staff/Director) that the candidate has  
3 demonstrated understanding and application of the responsibilities of an  
4 Agency Administrator on smaller low-complexity prescribed fires with a  
5 basic understanding of the elements of the core competencies. Use AA Task  
6 Book to document.

#### 7 **Moderate Complexity Level**

8 The Agency Administrator can review, approve, authorize and provide oversight  
9 for the management of moderate complexity prescribed fires. The Agency  
10 Administrator Trainee needs to be certified at the Low Complexity Level and  
11 meet the following to become certified at the Moderate Complexity level:

- 12 • **Required Training:** *Risk Management 101*. Pathways diagram and  
13 resources can be found on the Decision Support Toolbox.  
14 [https://wfmrda.nwcg.gov/line\\_officer\\_resources.php](https://wfmrda.nwcg.gov/line_officer_resources.php)
- 15 • **Required Background and Experience:** Successfully review and approve  
16 one (1) or more prescribed fire plans at a moderate complexity level and  
17 authorize and provide oversight for the ignition of three (3) or more  
18 individual burn units under a moderate complexity plan, and complete a  
19 minimum of (1) post-burn review of a moderate complexity prescribed fire.
- 20 • **Other Background, Experience, and Training That Supports:**
- 21 ○ Applicable experience in wildfire, all-hazard or other incident oversight  
22 may also be considered in lieu of other guidelines.
- 23 ○ Management oversight of a moderately complex prescribed fire  
24 program, providing for a workforce with appropriate training and  
25 equipment, NEPA compliance and project planning, social/political  
26 considerations, smoke management, public information, etc.
- 27 • **Demonstrated Ability:** Successful evaluation by a supervisor or coach  
28 (including feedback from FMO/Fire Staff/Director) that the candidate has  
29 demonstrated understanding and application of the responsibilities of an  
30 Agency Administrator on moderate complexity prescribed fires with an  
31 understanding of the core competencies and other elements that may be  
32 relevant.

#### 33 **High Complexity Level**

34 The Agency Administrator can review, approve, authorize and provide oversight  
35 for the management of high complexity prescribed fires. The Agency  
36 Administrator Trainee needs to be certified at the Moderate Complexity Level,  
37 and meet the following to become certified at the High Complexity Level:

- 38 • **Required Training:** *Risk Management 101*; M-582, *Fire Program*  
39 *Management, Leading Complex Fire Programs*; at least one continuing  
40 education course in fireline leadership/decision-making. Pathways diagram  
41 and resources can be found on the Decision Support Toolbox.  
42 [https://wfmrda.nwcg.gov/line\\_officer\\_resources.php](https://wfmrda.nwcg.gov/line_officer_resources.php)
- 43 • **Required Background and Experience:** Successfully review and approve  
44 one (1) or more prescribed fire plans at a high complexity level and

- 1 authorize and provide oversight for the ignition of one (1) or more burn  
2 units under a high complexity prescribed fire plan and, complete a  
3 minimum of one (1) post-burn review of a high complexity prescribed fire.
- 4 • **Other Background, Experience, and Training That Supports:**
    - 5 ○ Applicable experience in prescribed fire, wildfire, all-hazard or other  
6 incident oversight may also be considered in lieu of other guidelines.
    - 7 ○ Management oversight of a moderate to high complexity prescribed fire  
8 program, providing for a workforce with appropriate training and  
9 equipment, NEPA compliance and project planning, social/political  
10 considerations, smoke management, public information, etc.
  - 11 • **Demonstrated Ability:** Successful evaluation by an Agency Administrator  
12 or coach (including feedback from FMO/Fire Staff/Director) that the  
13 candidate has demonstrated understanding and application of the  
14 responsibilities of an Agency Administrator on large complex fires in the  
15 core competencies, and other elements that may be relevant.

#### 16 **Evaluation Process**

- 17 • Every trainee will receive an evaluation from a certified Agency  
18 Administrator or coach using the Agency Administrator Task Book.
- 19 • Individuals involved in a shadow assignment should receive creditable  
20 experience through documentation.

21 Refer to the pathways chart found in Decision Support Toolbox.

22 [https://wfmrda.nwcg.gov/line\\_officer\\_resources.php](https://wfmrda.nwcg.gov/line_officer_resources.php)

23 Training opportunities to achieve and maintain core competencies:

- 24 • Upper levels of fire leadership and fire management courses;
- 25 • Function as the Agency Administrator in sand table exercises and training  
26 simulations;
- 27 • Participate in prescribed fire and fire management training such as RX-410  
28 and RX-510;
- 29 • Act as a member or leader for a team assigned to review a Declared  
30 Wildfire or Violation of Air Quality Standards;
- 31 • Attendance/Participation in RT-300, *Prescribed Fire Burn Boss Refresher*  
32 training;
- 33 • Participate in prescribed fires and/or attend prescribed fire training; and
- 34 • Participate in other leadership and/or decision-making training.

#### 35 **Currency**

36 Currency is certified annually by the Regional Forester for frequency of  
37 demonstrated exercise of Core Competencies through activities such as those  
38 described above or assignments as Agency Administrator on incidents of  
39 appropriate level within a three-year interval.

**1 Guidance on the Selection of Coaches**

2 Refer to the pathways chart found in Decision Support Toolbox.

3 [https://wfmrda.nwcg.gov/line\\_officer\\_resources.php](https://wfmrda.nwcg.gov/line_officer_resources.php)

**4 Specific Fire Management Staff Responsibilities for Fire Operations at the  
5 Field Level****6 Preparedness**

- 7 • Use sound risk management practices as the foundation for all aspects of  
8 fire and aviation management.
- 9 • Ensure that only trained and qualified personnel are assigned to fire and  
10 aviation duties.
- 11 • Develop, implement, evaluate, and document fire and aviation training  
12 program to meet current and anticipated needs.
- 13 • Establish an effective process to gather, evaluate, and communicate  
14 information to managers, supervisors, and employees. Ensure clear concise  
15 communications are maintained at all levels.
- 16 • Ensure fire and aviation management staffs understand their roles,  
17 responsibilities, authority, and accountability.
- 18 • Develop and maintain effective communication with the public and  
19 cooperators.
- 20 • Regardless of funding level, provide a safe, effective, and efficient fire  
21 management program.
- 22 • Organize, train, equip, and direct a qualified work force. An Individual  
23 Development Plan (IDP) must be provided for incumbents who do not meet  
24 new standards. Establish qualification review process.
- 25 • Take appropriate action when performance is exceptional or deficient.
- 26 • Ensure fire and aviation policies are understood, followed, and coordinated  
27 with other agencies as appropriate.
- 28 • Ensure that adequate resources are available to implement fire management  
29 operations.
- 30 • Provide fire personnel with adequate guidance, training, and decision-  
31 making authority to ensure timely decisions.
- 32 • Develop and maintain agreements, operating plans, and contracts on an  
33 interagency basis to increase effectiveness and efficiencies.
- 34 • Develop, maintain, and annually evaluate both the FMRS and Spatial Fire  
35 Planning in WFDSS to ensure accuracy and validity.
- 36 • Ensure budget requests and allocations reflect preparedness requirements  
37 from the program of work and support objectives from the LRMP.
- 38 • Develop and maintain current operational plans (e.g., dispatch, pre-attack,  
39 prevention).
- 40 • Ensure that reports and records are properly completed and maintained.
- 41 • Ensure fiscal responsibility and accountability in planning and expenditures.

- 1 • Assess, identify, and implement program actions that effectively reduce  
2 unwanted wildland fire ignitions and mitigate risks to life, property, and  
3 resources.
- 4 • Work with cooperators to identify processes and procedures for providing  
5 fire adapted communities within the wildland urban interface.

#### 6 **Wildfire Response**

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

#### 31 **Safety**

- 32 • Ensure completion of a Job Hazard Analysis (JHA) or Risk Assessment  
33 (RA) for fire and fire aviation activities, and implement applicable risk  
34 mitigation measures.
- 35 • Ensure work/rest and Length of Assignment guidelines are followed during  
36 all fire and aviation activities. Deviations are approved and documented.
- 37 • Initiate, conduct, and/or participate in fire management related reviews and  
38 investigations.
- 39 • Monitor fire season severity predictions, fire behavior, and fire activity  
40 levels. Take appropriate actions to ensure safe, efficient, and effective  
41 operations.

**1 Prescribed Fire**

- 2 • Ensure a written, approved burn plan exists for each prescribed fire project.
- 3 • Prepare and implement all prescribed fire plans in accordance with the
- 4 *Interagency Prescribed Fire Planning and Implementation Procedures*
- 5 *Guide* (PMS 484) available at <https://www.nwcg.gov/publications/484>.
- 6 • Ensure that the Prescribed Fire Burn Boss assigned to each project is
- 7 qualified at the appropriate level as determined by project complexity (see
- 8 the *Interagency Prescribed Fire Planning and Implementation Procedures*
- 9 *Guide* at <https://www.nwcg.gov/publications/484> for specific guidance).
- 10 • Responsibility for prescribed fires in patrol/mop-up status may be assigned
- 11 to the unit Duty Officer (see below) until declared “out.” The DO may
- 12 assign either a Burn Boss or Incident Commander at a level commensurate
- 13 with expected activities to coordinate on-site actions (e.g., ICT5 for 1
- 14 engine to patrol). In the event that elements of the burn plan other than
- 15 patrol/mop-up (e.g., holding or contingency) become necessary, then an
- 16 appropriately qualified Burn Boss will be assigned to continue
- 17 implementation of the approved burn plan.
- 18 • Review and update all prescribed fire plans as necessary to comply with
- 19 policy or procedures and submit to agency administrator for review and
- 20 approval.
- 21 • Submit amendments to prescribed fire plans to the agency administrator for
- 22 approval.
- 23 • If more than one year has elapsed since approval, a prescribed fire plan will
- 24 be reviewed to ensure assumptions are still valid and conditions have not
- 25 changed, updated as necessary, and resubmitted to the agency administrator
- 26 for approval.

**27 Fire and Aviation Management (FAM) Duty Officer**

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

35 The required duties for all DOs are:

- 36 • Serve as the unit’s primary contact with Dispatch for both on and off-unit
- 37 assignments.
- 38 • Monitor unit incident activity for compliance with Forest Service risk
- 39 management practices.
- 40 • Coordinate and set priorities for unit suppression actions and resource
- 41 allocation.
- 42 • Keep Agency Administrators, suppression resources, and information
- 43 officers informed of the current and expected situation.

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

#### 14 **Fire Management Position Requirements**

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

#### 20 **Structure Exposure Protection Principles**

##### 21 **Mission and Role**

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

33 Forest Service leadership will express clear and concise "leader's intent" to  
34 ensure structure protection assignments are managed safely, effectively, and  
35 efficiently. Leaders are expected to operate under existing policies and doctrine  
36 under normal conditions. Where conflicts occur, employees will be expected to  
37 weigh the risk versus gain, and operate within the intent of Agency policy and  
38 doctrine.

## 1 **Strategic Principles**

- 2 • The Forest Service actively supports creation of Firewise and Fire Adapted  
3 Communities and structures that can survive wildfire without intervention.  
4 We support the concept that property owners have primary responsibility  
5 for reducing wildfire risks to their lands and assets.
- 6 • The Forest Service will actively work toward applying Firewise concepts to  
7 all Forest Service owned structures, facilities, and permitted use to serve as  
8 a model to publics and communities.
- 9 • The Forest Service will apply strategy and tactics to keep wildfires from  
10 reaching structures, as prudent to do so, considering risk to firefighters and  
11 publics, fire behavior, values at risk including natural resources, availability  
12 of firefighting resources, and jurisdictional authorities.
- 13 • The use of wildland tactics in the WUI, when risks are mitigated, will be  
14 based on the objectives of preventing wildfire from reaching areas of  
15 structures and/or reducing the intensity of fire that does reach structures.
- 16 • Structure protection will be limited to the use of standard wildfire response  
17 tactics including the use of standard equipment, fire control lines, and the  
18 extinguishment of spot fires near or on the structure when safe and  
19 practical.
- 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 wildfires 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.

39 The Forest Service shall not:

- 40 • Take direct suppression actions on structures other than those that tactically  
41 reduce the threat of fire spread to them.

- 1 • Enter structures or work on roofs of structures for the purpose of direct  
2 suppression actions.
- 3 In consideration of Forest Service owned or leased structures outside of  
4 structure fire protection areas these same policies apply. The use of Firewise  
5 principles and aggressive fire prevention measures will be employed for Forest  
6 Service structures at every opportunity.
- 7 If a Forest Service structure is determined to be at risk, “wrapping” or other  
8 indirect protection methods for the structure can be authorized by the Agency  
9 Administrator. Documentation of these decisions needs to be placed in the fire  
10 documentation package and the unit files. Any employee engaged in “wrapping”  
11 or other indirect methods of protection operations will be thoroughly briefed and  
12 trained in correct safety and personal protection equipment procedures,  
13 especially if the use of ladders or climbing on the structure is necessary. In any  
14 case, the Forest Service holds that no structure is worth the risk of serious injury  
15 to an employee in an attempt to protect that structure or facility from fire.

#### 16 ***Local Government Role***

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

#### 21 ***Cost***

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

#### 27 ***Tactical Operating Principles***

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

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

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