**Prescribed Fire Summary:**

**Before Ignition**

**April 2012**

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Policy for federal prescribed fire is found in “Interagency Prescribed Fire Planning and Procedures Guide,” which can be found at [www.nwcg.gov/pms/Rx**Fire**/rx**fireguide**.pdf](http://www.nwcg.gov/pms/RxFire/rxfireguide.pdf)

The guideline was published by the National Wildfire Coordinating Group in July 2008. It outlines responsibilities for more than a dozen positions with a role in prescribed fire, from agency administrators to prescribed fire burn boss to plastic sphere dispenser.

Every federal prescribed fire has planning steps or “elements” that must be completed before ignition. States generally follow a similar protocol. Among the steps are:

* A **signature page**, dated and signed by at least three people: the prescribed fire plan preparer; a technical reviewer; and the agency administrator.
* A **Go/No-Go checklist**, to ensure the pre-ignition checklist and other required compliances have been met. A daily Go/No-Go list is required for each day of active ignition.
* A **Complexity Analysis**
* A **description** of the prescribed fire area, including location, boundaries, size, topography, and vegetation/fuels.
* A public notification plan
* Resource and fire **objectives**
* **The prescription**, which is the measureable criteria that define a range of conditions during which the fire may be ignited and held.
* The **schedule**
* **Weather forecasts and fuel samplings** are completed.
* A **briefing and briefing checklists** are completed. Topics include burn organization and assignments; burn objectives and prescription; expected weather and fire behavior; ignition plan; holding plan; communications; safety and medical plan; and other topics.
* A **test fire**
* A **contingency plan** if the prescribed fire is not meeting or threatens not to meet the expected boundary, objectives, prescription parameter or other critical factors.
* **A monitoring plan and post-burn activities** are also required before ignition.

*Messages*

* Prescribed fires are ignited only after a thorough analysis is completed and strict procedures are followed.
* No fire organization can guarantee that all risk is removed from prescribed fires, but the overall record of federal agencies is excellent. Only about one-half one percent of prescribed fires become wildfires.
* Prescribed fires reduce fuels, thereby reducing the chance that unwanted severe wildfires will occur.
* Fire is an essential ecological process and natural change agent. Prescribed fires allow us to gain the benefits of a wildfire while minimizing the damage from them.