

## Chapter 5

### USDA Forest Service Program Organization and Responsibilities

#### Introduction

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

#### Vision and Objectives for Fire Management

The vision of the Forest Service's Fire and Aviation Management Program is to safely and effectively extinguish fire, when needed; use fire where allowable; manage our natural resources; and as a nation, live with wildland fire. The following objectives support this vision:

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

#### Foundational Doctrine

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

- Take all response actions to ensure the safety of firefighters, other personnel, and the public regardless of cost or resource loss; no resource or facility is worth the loss of human life.
- The intent of wildfire response is to protect human life, property, and achieve protection and natural resource management objectives established in L/RMPs.

- 1 • Leadership principles are the foundational doctrine (*Leading in the*  
2 *Wildland Fire Service*, PMS 494-2) on which fire and aviation management  
3 operations will be based.
- 4 A doctrinal approach goes beyond strict compliance with procedural rules and  
5 promotes risk-based application of wildland fire management principles to  
6 improve decision making and firefighter safety. Foundational doctrine has been  
7 codified in Forest Service *Manual 5100* direction and will guide fundamental  
8 wildland fire management policy, practices, behaviors, and customs to be  
9 mutually understood at every level of command.
- 10 Under this doctrinal approach:
  - 11 • Employees are expected and empowered to be creative and decisive, to  
12 exercise initiative and accept responsibility, and to use their training,  
13 experience, and judgment in decision-making to carry out their leader's  
14 intent.
  - 15 • Employees are expected and empowered to make reasonable and prudent  
16 decisions to accomplish the agency mission while minimizing unnecessary  
17 risk.

### 18 **Mission**

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

### 33 **Wildland Fire Response Principles**

- 34 • Response to wildland fire is based on the ecological, social, and legal  
35 consequences of fire. The circumstances under which a fire occurs, and the  
36 likely consequences to firefighter and public safety and welfare, natural and  
37 cultural resources, and values to be protected dictate the appropriate  
38 management response to fire.
- 39 • Response to wildfire in the wilderness focuses on the natural ecological role  
40 of fire and activities are conducted in a manner compatible with overall  
41 wilderness management objectives (see FSM 2320).
- 42 • Success is achieving reasonable objectives with the least firefighter risk  
43 necessary while enhancing stakeholder support for our management efforts.

**1 Leadership and Accountability**

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

**11 The Operational Environment****12 Risk Management**

13 The wildfire response environment is complex and possesses inherent hazards.  
14 Even with reasonable risk mitigations, responses can result in harm to  
15 firefighters.

16 The Forest Service is committed to the aggressive management of risk.

- 17 • Apply a risk management process to minimize unnecessary risk in wildfire  
18 response while maximizing the opportunities to achieve management  
19 objectives.
- 20 • Maintaining state-of-the-art decision support systems based on the best  
21 available science is essential for making sound decisions on how to manage  
22 all wildland fire to achieve land and resource management plan (L/RMP)  
23 objectives, including public and agency personnel safety.
- 24 • The *Forest Service Guide to Risk Management* and other helpful risk  
25 management resources can be found on the USDA Forest Service website  
26 for risk management at <https://www.fs.usda.gov/managing-land/fire/safety>.

**27 Operations**

28 Every wildfire response operation is directed toward clearly defined, decisive,  
29 and obtainable objectives.

**30 Wildfire Response**

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

- 1 • Maintaining a high capability to ensure effective initial attack is essential to  
2 public and firefighter safety, accomplishment of management objectives,  
3 and cost containment.
- 4 • The interdependence of wildland fire jurisdictions requires the  
5 collaborative, proactive engagement of cooperators, partners, and the public  
6 in response activities.

### 7 **Risk Management Protocol**

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

#### 16 **I. Preseason**

17 Preseason preparedness work is critical to success when the fire starts.

- 18 • Build decision maker and key stakeholder capacity to manage the  
19 uncertainties and inherent risks of fires.
  - 20 ○ Increase understanding of risk management with key stakeholders and  
21 partner agencies.
  - 22 ○ Build agency administrator capacity to perform as risk managers.
- 23 • Determine what values-related spatial data is missing in Wildland Fire  
24 Decision Support System (WFDSS), if any, and develop a plan for  
25 incorporating it into the unit's fire planning map layers to ensure its  
26 availability to support future decisions.
- 27 • Assess risk at a landscape level, looking at National Forest System (NFS)  
28 lands and those adjoining lands that may be impacted by a fire leaving NFS  
29 land.
  - 30 ○ Develop a common understanding of values to be protected by  
31 answering four questions: 1) What is important? 2) Why is it  
32 important? 3) Who is it important to? and 4) How important is it?
  - 33 ○ Complete a risk analysis with key stakeholders and partner agencies to  
34 predetermine the optimal response strategies for protecting values at  
35 risk. Engage key stakeholders and partner agencies in tabletop  
36 exercises or other venues to ensure alignment.
  - 37 ○ Initiate dialogue with line officers and stakeholders aimed at  
38 understanding, acceptance, and support for alternative risk-based  
39 decisions. This is especially important where there is an expectation  
40 that a fire will become a long-term event because of an opportunity to  
41 use fire to achieve land management objectives, and/or the need to  
42 adjust the level of engagement based on risks to responders, lack of  
43 available resources, and the level of risk toward values to be protected.

## 1 II. During Incident Phase

2 During incident phase focuses on a seven-step risk management process:

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

## 25 III. Post-Incident Phase

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

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

40 The following risk assessment and risk decision questions are designed to  
41 inform fire management decisions by stimulating thinking and prompting  
42 dialogue, analyzing and assessing risk, recognizing shared risks, and  
43 communicating those risks within the agency and with partners and  
44 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; if so, what are
- 4 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 (exposure in terms of
- 14 numbers of responders needed, amount of commitment (time/days)
- 15 needed to accomplish the objectives, and the amount and types of risks
- 16 these responders will be asked to accept if the alternative is chosen) for
- 17 the alternatives being considered?
- 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.
- 28 • Knowledge of fire program management, including ability to integrate fire
  - 29 and fuels management across all program areas and functions;
  - 30 • Ability to implement fire management strategies and integrate natural
  - 31 resource concerns into collaborative community protection and ecosystem
  - 32 restoration strategies;
  - 33 • Knowledge to oversee a fire management program, including budget,
  - 34 preparedness, prevention, suppression, and hazardous fuels reduction;
  - 35 • Ability to serve as an agency administrator exercising authority to initiate
  - 36 prescribed fire and other hazardous fuel reduction activities;
  - 37 • Ability to serve as an agency administrator during an incident on an
  - 38 assigned unit; and
  - 39 • Ability to provide a fully staffed, highly qualified, and diversified
  - 40 firefighting workforce that exists in a “life first” and “readiness”
  - 41 environment.

#### 42 **Responsibilities**

- 43 • Line officers are responsible for all aspects of fire management.
- 44 • Integrate fire and fuels management across all functional areas.

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

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

### 15 **Preparedness**

16 Preparedness is a continuous process that includes all fire management activities  
17 conducted in advance of wildfire ignitions to ensure an appropriate, risk-  
18 informed, and effective wildfire response to meet national and agency goals.

- 19 • Take all necessary and prudent actions to ensure firefighter and public
- 20 safety.
- 21 • Ensure sufficient qualified fire and non-fire personnel are available to
- 22 support fire operations at a level commensurate with the local and national
- 23 fire situation.
- 24 • Ensure accurate position descriptions are developed and reflect the
- 25 complexity of the unit. Individual development plans (IDP) promote and
- 26 enhance fire management officer (FMO) currency and development.
- 27 • Provide a written delegation of authority to FMOs that provides an adequate
- 28 level of operational authority at the unit level. Include multi-agency
- 29 coordinating (MAC) group authority, as appropriate.
- 30 • Ensure the plans contained in the Fire Management Reference System
- 31 (FMRS) are based on resource objectives found in the land and resource
- 32 management plan (L/RMP).
- 33 • Ensure budget requests and allocations reflect preparedness requirements
- 34 from the program of work and support objectives from the L/RMP.
- 35 • Develop preparedness standards that are in compliance with agency fire
- 36 policies.
- 37 • Management teams meet once a year to review fire and aviation policies,
- 38 roles, responsibilities, and delegations of authority. Specifically address
- 39 oversight and management controls, critical safety issues, and high-risk
- 40 situations, such as transfers of incident command, periods of multiple fire
- 41 activity, and Red Flag Warnings.
- 42 • Ensure fire and aviation preparedness reviews are conducted each year and
- 43 include the key components of the record of decision for the nationwide
- 44 aerial application of fire retardant on NFS land.

- 1 • Meet annually with cooperators and review interagency agreements to  
2 ensure their continued effectiveness and efficiency.
- 3 • Meet annually with local U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the National  
4 Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) fisheries specialists to  
5 ensure the avoidance maps reflect changes during the year on additional  
6 species or changes made for designated critical habitat, and reporting and  
7 monitoring guidelines are still valid and being applied.

#### 8 **Wildfire Response**

- 9 • Ensure use of fire funds is in compliance with agency policies.
- 10 • The WFFDS will be used to develop, approve, and publish decisions on all  
11 fires. As appropriate, use analytical tools and products to inform and  
12 support decision-making. See chapter 11 for the fire criteria that require a  
13 published decision.
- 14 • Personally attend reviews on type 1 and type 2 fires. Ensure agency  
15 representatives are assigned and delegated authority when appropriate.
- 16 • Provide incident management objectives, written delegations of authority,  
17 leader's intent, and a complete agency administrator briefing to incident  
18 management teams (IMT).
- 19 • Ensure briefings include any applicable information for avoidance areas and  
20 waterways per the nationwide aerial application of fire retardant direction,  
21 mapping, and cultural resources. Include the reporting requirements in the  
22 briefing if a misapplication of fire chemical occurs. Provide resource  
23 advisors if the use of aerially applied fire retardant is expected and the unit  
24 has mapped avoidance areas (which include waterways and 300' or larger  
25 buffers) and otherwise evaluate the need for resource advisors for all other  
26 fires and assign, as appropriate.
- 27 • For all unplanned, human-caused fires where responsibility can be  
28 determined, ensure actions are initiated to recover cost of suppression  
29 activities, land rehabilitation, damages to the resource, and improvements.
- 30 • Ensure structure exposure protection principles are followed (FSM 5135).
- 31 • Ensure that a sufficient number of after action reviews are conducted for  
32 type 3, 4, and 5 wildfires to adequately assess the unit's wildfire response  
33 capability, performance, procedures and to enhance learning.
- 34 • Ensure smoke impacts to the public and fire personnel are addressed  
35 through IMTs ordering of air resource advisors (ARA, technical specialist)  
36 on type 1 fires to the maximum extent practicable. Consider ordering ARAs  
37 to type 2 fires (as per Public Law 116-9, the Dingell Act, 2019).

#### 38 **Wildfire Response Responsibilities and Oversight**

- 39 • Agency administrators will ensure that all Forest Service employees and  
40 employees of interagency partners working on Forest Service jurisdiction  
41 wildfires clearly understand direction.
- 42 • Agency administrators must approve and publish decisions in WFDSS in a  
43 timely manner and issue delegations of authority to the incident commander  
44 (IC) in accordance with FSM 5133.3.



- 1 • Analytical tools and/or products both within WFDSS and outside of the
- 2 application should be used to inform and support strategic decision-making
- 3 and risk assessment inputs.
- 4 • Line officers will assign agency administrators to oversee incidents and
- 5 approve WFDSS decisions based on qualification level according to
- 6 incident type.

Incident Type	USFS AA Qualification Level to Approve WFDSS Decisions and Provide Incident Oversight <sup>1</sup>
Type 1	Wildfire Agency Administrator Type 1, WFA1
Type 2	Wildfire Agency Administrator Type 2, WFA2
Type 3, 4, 5	Wildfire Agency Administrator Type 3, WFA3

<sup>1</sup>Authority may be retained at the regional forester level.

- 7 • Critical long duration wildfire oversight roles include ensuring that:
  - 8 ○ Up-to-date published decisions are completed and documented in
  - 9 WFDSS.
  - 10 ○ Hazards are identified and risk assessments are incorporated into
  - 11 published decisions.
  - 12 ○ Coordination with partners and potentially affected parties (including
  - 13 smoke impacts) is conducted; unified command is implemented early
  - 14 when appropriate.
  - 15 ○ Air resource advisors (ARA, technical specialist) are utilized on type 1
  - 16 fires to the maximum extent practicable and consideration of ordering
  - 17 for type 2 fires (as per Public Law 116-9, the Dingell Act, 2019).
  - 18 ○ Resource capacity and availability are adequately assessed to meet
  - 19 expectations.
- 20 • This oversight role should address concerns of the States, cooperators, and
- 21 the public, including air quality impacts from multiple wildfires.

#### 22 **Use of Wildfire to Achieve Land Management Objectives During**

#### 23 **Preparedness Levels 4 and 5**

- 24 • Wildfire response decisions that include objectives to improve or enhance
- 25 natural resources must be approved by the Regional Forester at Geographic
- 26 and/or National Preparedness Levels 4 and 5. Approving officials should
- 27 consider relative risks vs gains, organizational needs to adequately staff the
- 28 incident, the duration of those resource commitments, and the extents to
- 29 which the planned response might add to or relieve the strain on resource
- 30 availability nationally. Human-caused fires are not eligible for such
- 31 consideration. Only naturally occurring wildfires in areas where the Land
- 32 and Resource Management Plan has determined that fire does play a role in
- 33 managing natural systems are eligible for such consideration.
- 34 • The Regional Forester or designee will assume the role of the deciding
- 35 official for the decision in the WFDSS. This requirement does not apply to
- 36 long-duration events that are not in pursuit of natural resource objectives
- 37 such as those instances where it is too dangerous for responders or there are

- 1 insufficient resources available to mount an effective response, and a long-  
2 term control strategy is adopted out of managerial necessity rather than  
3 preference.
- 4 • To the extent practical, regions and forests should adopt pre-ignition  
5 practices and systems for determining relative risks and opportunities  
6 including the short-term (this year) and long-term (future years)  
7 implications of these decisions in such a way as to facilitate a meaningful  
8 yet timely discussion with the Regional Foresters office shortly after  
9 candidate fires are detected.

#### 10 **Safety**

- 11 • Review safety policies, procedures, and concerns with field fire and  
12 aviation personnel.
- 13 • Ensure timely follow-up actions to program reviews, fire preparedness  
14 reviews, fire and aviation safety reviews, and management reviews.
- 15 • Monitor the fire situation and provide oversight during periods of critical  
16 fire activity and situations of high risk.
- 17 • Ensure there is adequate direction in fire management plans to maintain fire  
18 danger awareness.
- 19 • Take appropriate actions with escalating fire potential.
- 20 • Ensure appropriate investigation or lessons learned analyses are conducted  
21 for incidents, entrapments, and serious accidents. See FSM 6730.

#### 22 **Fuels**

- 23 • Plan and implement a hazardous fuels management and prescribed fire  
24 program applying principles and policy elements described in FSM 5100  
25 and 5140 and guided by the goals described in the National Cohesive  
26 Wildland Fire Strategy.
- 27 • Complete a fuels treatment effectiveness assessment on all wildfires which  
28 start in or burn into a fuel treatment area.
- 29 • Enter results of the assessment into the Fuels Treatment Effectiveness  
30 Monitoring (FTEM) database within 90 days of control of a fire. The FTEM  
31 database is located within the Interagency Fuels Treatment Decision  
32 Support System (IFTDSS) at the following website:  
33 [https://iftdss.firenet.gov/landing\\_page/](https://iftdss.firenet.gov/landing_page/). Links to optional reporting  
34 templates and other information related to the FTEM reporting requirement  
35 can be found at <https://fsweb.wo.fs.fed.us/fire/fam/fuels/hazardous.html>.
- 36 • Use the IFTDSS to assist with fuels planning, prescribed burn development,  
37 risk analysis, etc.

#### 38 **Prescribed Fire**

- 39 • Provide program leadership by visiting prescribed fire treatment projects  
40 and providing leader's intent to prescribed fire personnel.
- 41 • Ensure compliance with national and regional office policy and direction  
42 for prescribed fire activities and ensure that periodic reviews and  
43 inspections of the prescribed fire program are completed.

- 1 • Coordinate prescribed fire program activities with regional air quality  
2 specialists and Federal, State, Tribal, air pollution control district or county  
3 regulatory authorities to ensure compliance with their regulations supported  
4 by the Clean Air Act.
- 5 • When multiple wildland fire events are occurring within an airshed, or any  
6 airshed is impacted by ongoing wildland fire events, fire managers will  
7 consider the cumulative impact to air quality. Initiation of new prescribed  
8 fire must be in compliance with air quality regulations and standards.
- 9 • All prescribed fires should be conducted using basic smoke management  
10 practices. USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service and Forest  
11 Service Technical Note (2011); refer to  
12 [https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/conservation-basics/natural-resource-](https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/conservation-basics/natural-resource-concerns/air)  
13 [concerns/air](https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/conservation-basics/natural-resource-concerns/air).
- 14 • Ensure a prescribed fire plan is written and approved for each project prior  
15 to implementation in accordance with the *Interagency Prescribed Fire*  
16 *Planning and Implementation Procedures Guide* (PMS 484) which is  
17 available at <https://www.nwcg.gov/publications/484>.
- 18 • Review and approve prescribed fire plans and ignitions.
  - 19 ○ Engage in the development of the complexity analysis; review and  
20 approve the final complexity rating.
  - 21 ○ Ensure that the prescribed fire plan has been reviewed and  
22 recommended by a qualified technical reviewer.
  - 23 ○ Ensure that prescribed fire plans are designed to achieve desired  
24 conditions as described in L/RMPs and project-specific NEPA decision  
25 documents.
  - 26 ○ Approve prescribed fire plan amendments and determine the need for  
27 additional technical review of proposed plan amendments prior to  
28 approval.
  - 29 ○ If more than one year has elapsed since a prescribed fire plan was last  
30 approved, the plan will be reviewed, updated as necessary, and re-  
31 approved before implementation.
  - 32 ○ Authorize ignition of prescribed fire as delegated and adhere to  
33 procedures as described in FSM 5140 for regional- and/or national-  
34 level approvals for initiation of new and continued prescribed fire  
35 activities at national preparedness levels 4 and 5 or when forecast  
36 National Fire Danger Rating System (NFDRS) adjective ratings are at  
37 “extreme” category.
- 38 • Use analytical tools, such as IFTDSS (Interagency Fuels Treatment  
39 Decision Support System), to assist with treatment options, fire behavior  
40 potential, prescribed burning prescriptions, and values at risk to help inform  
41 fuels planning efforts and implementation options.
- 42 • Report all instances of prescribed fires resulting in a wildfire declaration  
43 and/or air quality notice-of-violation as required in FSM 5140.

## Agency Administrator Training and Qualifications for Wildland Fire Management

There are six separate and distinct qualifications for agency administrators related to fire management—three for wildfire decision making and three for prescribed fire. The training and experience requirements and certification process for both wildfire and prescribed fire are described below.

### Agency Administrator Core Competencies

Core competencies that must be demonstrated by agency administrators exercising decision-making authority for wildfires or prescribed fires include:

- Risk-informed decision-making
- Wildfire response and incident management processes
- WFDRS/IFTDSS and other decision support tools
- Fuels management and prescribed fire processes
- Fire prevention, mitigation, and education processes
- Social, political, economic, and environmental impacts of wildland and prescribed fire management activities
- Collaboration with partners and stakeholders
- Fiscal management

These core competencies form the basis for the agency administrator position task book which is used to document that an individual has indeed demonstrated these competencies while working toward certification. For access to the position task book, Wildfire Pathways Diagram, and additional information on the Forest Service agency administrator fire qualification programs, visit the Agency Administrator Toolbox at <https://wfmrda.nwcg.gov>.

### Definitions

**Agency administrator (AA):** A general term meaning the official with the delegated authority, responsibility, and qualifications for decision-making on incidents or prescribed fires within a particular administrative unit.

**Agency representative (AREP):** The AREP facilitates coordination, cooperation, and dialogue between the incident management team (IMT) and host agency administrator (AA). The AREP is delegated by the host unit AA or designee and works with the command functional area.

**Agency administrator trainee:** An AA working on qualification at any given level by performing the role under the supervision and authority of a fully qualified AA.

**Coach:** An AA qualified at a level commensurate with the incident or project being managed (e.g., WFA2 or WFA1 for wildfire and RXA2 or RXA1 for prescribed fire). The role of the coach is to advise and support the agency administrator trainee through various aspects of a wildfire incident, prescribed fire, or all-hazards incident.

Incident or Project Type	Minimum Qualification Level to Serve as Agency Administrator Coach/Evaluator
Wildfire – type 1	Wildfire Agency Administrator Type 1, WFA1
Wildfire – type 2	Wildfire Agency Administrator Type 2, WFA2
Wildfire – type 3, 4, 5	Wildfire Agency Administrator Type 3, WFA3
Prescribed Fire – High Complexity	Prescribed Fire Agency Administrator Type 1, RXA1
Prescribed Fire – Moderate Complexity	Prescribed Fire Agency Administrator Type 2, RXA2
Prescribed Fire – Low Complexity	Prescribed Fire Agency Administrator Type 3, RXA3

1 **Coach/shadow team:** A team comprised of a qualified coach and group of  
2 shadows who may travel to multiple incidents and support sites to increase their  
3 level of understanding.

4 **Line officer:** A Forest Service official who serves in a direct line of command  
5 from the chief and has been delegated authority to make and execute decisions  
6 for their administrative unit(s). Examples are the deputy chiefs, director of law  
7 enforcement and investigations, regional foresters, station directors, forest  
8 supervisors, deputy forest supervisors, district rangers, and deputy district  
9 rangers. Line officers have authority to issue direction within delegated levels.

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

#### 18 **Agency Administrator Wildfire Qualification Program**

19 The following principles will guide qualification of AAs in wildfire  
20 management:

- 21 • Regional foresters are accountable for certification of AA qualifications by  
22 a review process established by regional forester, such as regional line  
23 officer team;
- 24 • AA evaluation includes standards for training, background and experience,  
25 demonstrated ability, and utilizing the position task book and Wildfire  
26 Pathways Diagram which will result in a qualitative evaluation of readiness  
27 by the regional forester;
- 28 • When the complexity level of a wildfire exceeds an AA's qualification, a  
29 coach will be assigned;
- 30 • Care should be taken when assigning acting AAs to ensure operational fire  
31 management responsibilities remain separated from AA responsibilities in  
32 order to avoid collateral-duty conflicts. Consider delegating authority in  
33 writing to ensure expectations and responsibilities are clearly delineated;

- 1 • Agency administrator competencies (aka, qualification level) supersedes  
2 position (e.g., a district ranger qualified as a WFA1 may be the AA for a  
3 type 1 incident);
- 4 • Assistance with decision documentation and analysis can be requested  
5 through the Wildland Fire Management Research, Development and  
6 Application – National Fire Decision Support Center (NFDSC); and
- 7 • The coaching/shadowing functions, to be administered by each region, is an  
8 integral part of this qualification program.

9 AAs will be evaluated in three basic areas:

- 10 • Training;
- 11 • Experience; and
- 12 • Demonstrated understanding of concepts and principles as outlined in the  
13 position task book.

14 This qualification program is a multi-level process where AAs demonstrate  
15 competence in one of three levels of managing wildfires: WFA3, WFA2, and  
16 WFA1.

### 17 ***Guidelines***

18 In consideration of the appropriate level (WFA3, WFA2, and WFA1) to assign  
19 an AA, the regional forester should consider the following guideline:

- 20 • For individuals that do not meet at least the working level, a coach will be  
21 assigned to support that agency administrator in managing type 3 or higher  
22 wildfire incidents.

### 23 ***Wildfire Agency Administrator Type 3 (WFA3)***

24 The WFA3 could manage a type 3, 4 or 5 wildfire or similar complexity  
25 incident. The WFA3 must meet the following in order to be certified at the  
26 working level:

- 27 • **Required training and experience:** Refer to the Federal Wildland  
28 Fire Qualifications Supplement at <https://iqcsweb.nwcg.gov/>.
- 29 • **Other background, experience, and training that supports:**
  - 30 ○ Applicable experience in prescribed fire, wildfire, all-hazards, or other  
31 incident oversight may also be considered in addition to other  
32 guidelines.
  - 33 ○ Management oversight of a moderate-high complexity fire program as  
34 defined by Interagency Fire Program Management (IFPM) standards.
- 35 • **Demonstrated ability:** Successful evaluation by a coach (including  
36 feedback from IC or area commanders [AC]) and Regional Line Officer  
37 Team and subsequent certification by the Regional Forester that the  
38 candidate has demonstrated understanding and application of the  
39 responsibilities of an WFA3 trainee. Use the WFA3 position task book to  
40 document.

### 41 ***Wildfire Agency Administrator Type 2 (WFA2)***

42 The WFA2 could manage type 2 or lower complexity fires or similar incidents.

- 1 • **Required training and experience:** Refer to the Federal Wildland Fire  
2 Qualifications Supplement at <https://iqcsweb.nwcg.gov/>.
- 3 • **Other background, experience, and training that supports:**
  - 4 ○ Applicable experience in prescribed fire, wildfire, all-hazards, or other  
5 incident oversight may also be considered in addition to other  
6 guidelines.
  - 7 ○ Management oversight of a moderate-high complexity fire program as  
8 defined by IFPM standards.
- 9 • **Demonstrated ability:** Successful evaluation by a coach (including  
10 feedback from ICs or ACs) that the candidate has demonstrated  
11 understanding and application of the responsibilities of an WFA2. Use the  
12 WFA2 position task book to document.

13 *Wildfire Agency Administrator Type 1 (WFA1)*

14 The WFA1 could manage one or more type 1 wildfire or similar complexity  
15 incidents.

- 16 • **Required training and experience:** Refer to the Federal Wildland Fire  
17 Qualifications Supplement at <https://iqcsweb.nwcg.gov/>.
- 18 • **Other background, experience, and training that supports:**
  - 19 ○ Applicable experience in prescribed fire, wildfire, all-hazards, or other  
20 incident oversight may also be considered in addition to other  
21 guidelines.
  - 22 ○ Management oversight of a moderate to high-complexity fire program  
23 as defined by IFPM standards.
- 24 • **Demonstrated ability:** Successful evaluation by a coach (including  
25 feedback from ICs or ACs) and Regional Line Officer Team and subsequent  
26 certification by the Regional Forester that the candidate has demonstrated  
27 understanding and application of the responsibilities of an WFA1 on large  
28 complex fires. Use the WFA1 position task book to document.

29 ***Evaluation Process***

- 30 • Every trainee will receive an evaluation from a qualified AA/AREP or  
31 coach using the AA position task book identified in the *Line Officer/Agency*  
32 *Administrator Desk Reference for Fire Program Management*.
- 33 • Individuals involved in a shadow assignment should receive creditable  
34 experience through documentation.
- 35 • The purpose of the position task book is to provide consistency for the AA  
36 coach/evaluator to evaluate trainees and document their demonstrated  
37 abilities to achieve the core competencies, which will be used as a  
38 component to achieve next-level qualification.
- 39 • Every trainee will complete a position task book for evaluation from an AA.

40 Training opportunities and work experiences to achieve and maintain core  
41 competencies:

- 42 • Refer to the Wildfire Pathways Diagram found in the Agency Administrator  
43 Toolbox at <https://wfmrda.nwcg.gov>.

1 ***Currency***

2 The requirement to perform satisfactorily in a specified position within the last  
3 five years in order to maintain qualification for the position.

4 ***Certifying Official***

5 The certifying official for all Agency Administrator qualifications will be at the  
6 Regional Forester level and shall not be delegated to Forest Supervisors or  
7 Regional Fire Directors.

8 ***Incident Qualification Card***

9 Incident qualification cards for any responder with Agency Administrator  
10 qualifications will be signed by the Regional Forester and shall not be delegated  
11 to Forest Supervisors or Regional Fire Directors regardless of other  
12 qualifications. An electronic incident qualification card utilizing the IQCS  
13 portable document format (PDF) is authorized.

14 **Agency Administrator Prescribed Fire Qualification**

15 The following principles will guide qualification of AAs for prescribed fire:

- 16 • Regional foresters are accountable for annual certification of AAs to  
17 approve and authorize prescribed fire.
- 18 • AA evaluation includes standards for training, background and experience,  
19 and demonstrated ability, which will result in a qualitative evaluation of  
20 readiness by the regional forester.
- 21 • When the complexity level of a prescribed fire exceeds an AA's  
22 qualification, an appropriately qualified AA will be assigned and must  
23 approve the complexity analysis and the burn plan along with the AA being  
24 mentored/coached.
- 25 • The authorization to ignite a prescribed fire must be approved by an  
26 appropriately qualified AA; however, the line officer with authority over  
27 their assigned unit will also retain authority to prohibit the ignition based on  
28 their judgement regardless of their qualification level.
- 29 • Care should be taken when assigning acting AAs to ensure operational fire  
30 management responsibilities remain separate from agency administrator  
31 responsibilities in order to avoid collateral-duty conflicts.
- 32 • The coach/shadow functions, to be administered by each region, is an  
33 integral part of this qualification program.

34 AAs will be evaluated in three basic areas:

- 35 • Training;
- 36 • Experience; and
- 37 • Demonstrated understanding of concepts and principles.

38 This qualification program is a multi-level process where AAs demonstrate  
39 competence in one of three levels of prescribed fire qualifications: RXA3,  
40 RXA2, RXA1.



1 **Guidelines**

2 In consideration of the appropriate qualification level (low, moderate, or high) to  
3 certify qualifications of an AA, the regional forester should consider the  
4 following guidelines:

5 Prescribed Fire Agency Administrator Type 3 (RXA3)

6 The RXA3 can review, approve, authorize, and provide oversight for the  
7 management of low-complexity prescribed fires. The RXA3 trainee must meet  
8 the following in order to be qualified as an RXA3:

- 9 • **Required training and experience:** Refer to the Federal Wildland Fire  
10 Qualifications Supplement at <https://iqcsweb.nwcg.gov/>.
- 11 • **Other background, experience, and training that supports:**
  - 12 ○ Applicable experience in prescribed fire, wildfire, all-hazards, or other  
13 incident or project oversight may also be considered in addition to other  
14 guidelines.
  - 15 ○ Management oversight of a low-complexity fire program.
- 16 • **Demonstrated ability:** Successful evaluation by a coach (including  
17 feedback from FMO/fire staff/director) that the candidate has demonstrated  
18 understanding and application of the responsibilities of an RXA3 on  
19 smaller, low-complexity prescribed fires with a basic understanding of the  
20 elements of the core competencies. Use the RXA3 position task book to  
21 document.

22 Prescribed Fire Agency Administrator Type 2 (RXA2)

23 The RXA2 can review, approve, authorize, and provide oversight for the  
24 management of moderate-complexity prescribed fires.

- 25 • **Required training and experience:** Refer to the Federal Wildland Fire  
26 Qualifications Supplement at <https://iqcsweb.nwcg.gov/>.
- 27 • **Other background, experience, and training that supports:**
  - 28 ○ Applicable experience in wildfire, all-hazards, or other incident  
29 oversight may also be considered in lieu of other guidelines.
  - 30 ○ Management oversight of a moderately-complex prescribed fire  
31 program, providing for a workforce with appropriate training and  
32 equipment, NEPA compliance and project planning, social/political  
33 considerations, smoke management, public information, etc.
- 34 • **Demonstrated ability:** Successful evaluation by a supervisor or coach  
35 (including feedback from FMO/fire staff/director) that the candidate has  
36 demonstrated understanding and application of the responsibilities of an  
37 RXA2 on moderate-complexity prescribed fires with an understanding of  
38 the core competencies and other elements that may be relevant. Use the  
39 RXA2 position task book to document.

40 Prescribed Fire Agency Administrator Type 1 (RXA1)

41 The RXA1 can review, approve, authorize, and provide oversight for the  
42 management of high-complexity prescribed fires.

- 43 • **Required training and experience:** Refer to the Federal Wildland Fire  
44 Qualifications Supplement at <https://iqcsweb.nwcg.gov/>.

- 1 • **Other background, experience, and training that supports:**
  - 2 ○ Applicable experience in prescribed fire, wildfire, all-hazards, or other
  - 3 incident oversight may also be considered in lieu of other guidelines.
  - 4 ○ Management oversight of a moderate- to high-complexity prescribed
  - 5 fire program, providing for a workforce with appropriate training and
  - 6 equipment, NEPA compliance and project planning, social/political
  - 7 considerations, smoke management, public information, etc.
- 8 • **Demonstrated ability:** Successful evaluation by an RXA1 or coach
- 9 (including feedback from FMO/fire staff/director) that the candidate has
- 10 demonstrated understanding and application of the responsibilities of an
- 11 RXA1 on large complex fires in the core competencies, and other elements
- 12 that may be relevant. Use the agency administrator position task book to
- 13 document.

#### 14 ***Evaluation Process***

- 15 • Every trainee will receive an evaluation from a qualified AA or coach using
- 16 the AA position task book.
- 17 • Individuals involved in a shadow assignment should receive creditable
- 18 experience through documentation.

19 Refer to the Prescribed Fire Pathways Diagram found in the Agency  
20 Administrator Toolbox at <https://wfmrda.nwcg.gov>.

21 Training opportunities to achieve and maintain core competencies:

- 22 • Upper levels of fire leadership and fire management courses;
- 23 • Function as the agency administrator during sand table exercises and
- 24 training simulations;
- 25 • Participate in prescribed fire and fire management training, such as RX-410
- 26 and RX-510;
- 27 • Act as a member or leader for a team assigned to review a declared wildfire
- 28 or violation of air quality standards;
- 29 • Attendance/participation in *Prescribed Fire Burn Boss Refresher* training,
- 30 RT-300;
- 31 • Participate in prescribed fires and/or attend prescribed fire training; and
- 32 • Participate in other leadership and/or decision-making training.

#### 33 ***Currency***

34 The requirement to perform satisfactorily in a specified position within the last  
35 five years in order to maintain qualification for the position.

#### 36 ***Certifying Officials***

37 The certifying official for all Agency Administrator qualifications will be at the  
38 Regional Forester level and shall not be delegated to Forest Supervisors or  
39 Regional Fire Directors.

#### 40 ***Incident Qualification Card***

41 Incident qualification cards for any responder with Agency Administrator  
42 qualifications will be signed by the Regional Forester and shall not be delegated

- 1 to Forest Supervisors or Regional Fire Directors regardless if they have other  
2 qualifications or not. An electronic incident qualification card utilizing the IQCS  
3 portable document format (PDF) is authorized.

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 workforce. 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 L/RMP.
- 38 • Develop and maintain current operational plans (e.g., dispatch, preattack,  
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 NFS land is
- 27 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 (RA)
- 33 for fire and fire aviation activities and implement applicable risk mitigation
- 34 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.

#### 42 **Prescribed Fire**

- 43 • Ensure a written, approved burn plan exists for each prescribed fire project.

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

#### 25 **Fire and Aviation Management Duty Officer**

26 Each forest or grassland fire management officer or assistant fire management  
27 officer will perform the duties of a Fire and Aviation (FAM) duty officer (DO)  
28 for their unit, or will provide a delegated DO, during any periods of predicted or  
29 actual incident activity. Individuals performing as DO must have the approval of  
30 the unit’s agency administrator and meet the minimum NWCG qualifications as  
31 identified in the *Forest Service Fire and Aviation Qualifications Guide*  
32 (FSFAQG), chapter 4, at [https://www.fs.usda.gov/managing-](https://www.fs.usda.gov/managing-land/fire/publications)  
33 [land/fire/publications](https://www.fs.usda.gov/managing-land/fire/publications).

34 The required duties for all DOs are:

- 35 • Serve as the unit’s primary contact with dispatch for both on and off-unit
- 36 assignments.
- 37 • Monitor unit incident activity for compliance with Forest Service risk
- 38 management practices.
- 39 • Coordinate and set priorities for unit suppression actions and resource
- 40 allocation.
- 41 • Keep agency administrators, suppression resources, and information
- 42 officers informed of the current and expected situation.
- 43 • Plan for and implement actions required for future needs.
- 44 • Document key decisions and actions.

- 1 DOs will perform the above duties in addition to any unit specific duties
- 2 assigned by the unit's agency administrators or fire managers through a
- 3 delegation of authority or unit operating plan.
- 4 In the event that the DO is required to accept an incident assignment, the
- 5 outgoing DO must transition with another qualified and approved DO.
- 6 Use of district/zone DOs is intended to manage span of control. When assigned
- 7 to the DO role, DOs will not concurrently perform any Incident Command
- 8 System (ICS) command or operational functions directly connected to an
- 9 incident.
- 10 DO staffing levels may vary based on locally determined metrics, such as fire
- 11 danger, local area planning level, predicted incident activity, prescribed fire
- 12 implementation, and/or span of control.

### 13 **Fire Management Position Requirements**

- 14 The *Interagency Fire Program Management Qualifications Standards and*
- 15 *Guide* and *Forest Service Fire Program Management Standard (FS-FPM)* will
- 16 be used in conjunction with specific agency requirements when filling vacant
- 17 fire program positions and as an aid in developing individual development plans
- 18 (IDPs) for employees.

### 19 **Structure Exposure Protection Principles**

#### 20 **Mission and Role**

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

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

#### 37 **Strategic Principles**

- 38 • The Forest Service actively supports creation of Firewise and fire-adapted
- 39 communities and structures that can survive wildfire without intervention.
- 40 We support the concept that property owners have primary responsibility
- 41 for reducing wildfire risks to their lands and assets.

- 1 • The Forest Service will actively work toward applying Firewise concepts to  
2 all Forest-Service-owned structures, facilities, and permitted use to serve as  
3 a model to publics and communities.
- 4 • The Forest Service will apply strategy and tactics to keep wildfires from  
5 reaching structures, as prudent to do so, considering risk to firefighters and  
6 publics, fire behavior, values at risk including natural resources, availability  
7 of firefighting resources, and jurisdictional authorities.
- 8 • The use of wildland tactics in the WUI, when risks are mitigated, will be  
9 based on the objectives of preventing wildfire from reaching areas of  
10 structures and/or reducing the intensity of fire that does reach structures.
- 11 • Structure protection will be limited to the use of standard wildfire response  
12 tactics, including the use of standard equipment, fire control lines, and the  
13 extinguishment of spot fires near or on the structure when safe and  
14 practical.
- 15 • The Forest Service will be proactive in developing agreements with  
16 interagency partners to clarify its structure protection policy.
- 17 • The Forest Service structure protection role is based on the assumption that  
18 other departments and agencies will fulfill their primary roles and  
19 responsibilities. The Forest Service will not usurp individual, local, or State  
20 responsibility for structure protection.
- 21 • Prior to task implementation, a specific structure protection role briefing  
22 will be accomplished.

### 23 **Tactical Applications**

#### 24 ***Structure Protection Definition***

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

#### 31 ***USFS Role***

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

37 Pursuant to this “structure protection” policy provided above, Forest Service  
38 personnel may engage support from other cooperators in structure protection  
39 activities when 1) requested by local government under terms of an approved  
40 cooperative agreement or 2) when operating within a unified command. The  
41 agency is permitted, without agreement, to render emergency assistance to a  
42 local government in suppressing wildland fires, and in preserving life and  
43 property from the threat of fire, when properly trained and equipped agency  
44 resources are the closest to the need, and there is adequate leadership to do so

- 1 safely. The agency will not routinely provide primary emergency response  
2 (medical aids, fire suppression, HAZMAT, etc., as identified on “run cards” or  
3 preplanned dispatch scenarios) nor will the agency supplant the local  
4 government responsibility to do so.
- 5 The contents of a cooperative agreement will clearly define the responsibilities  
6 of partners. Regarding structural fire protection, typical Forest Service  
7 responsibilities in the case of mutual aid, initial attack, extended attack, or large  
8 fire support include:
- 9 • To provide initial attack through extended-attack actions consistent with  
10 application of wildland fire strategy and tactics.
  - 11 • To supply water in support of Tribal, State, or local agencies having  
12 jurisdictional responsibility for the fire. This would include the use of water  
13 tenders, portable pumps, hose, tanks, and supporting draft sites.
  - 14 • To assist or supply foam or chemical suppressant capability with engines or  
15 aerial application.
  - 16 • To assist local authorities in the event of evacuations.
  - 17 • To assist local authorities by assessing (triaging) structures for defensibility  
18 from wildfire.
  - 19 • To coordinate with local authorities on actions taken by private structure  
20 protection companies.
- 21 As such, there should not be an expectation that the Forest Service will:
- 22 • “Wrap” or set up and administer sprinklers around privately owned  
23 structures.
  - 24 • Remove fuels immediately surrounding a structure, such as brush,  
25 landscaping, or firewood.
- 26 As addressed above, the Forest Service will apply strategy and tactics to keep  
27 wildfires from reaching structures, as prudent to do so, considering risk  
28 management for firefighters and publics, fire behavior, values at risk including  
29 natural resources, availability of firefighting resources, and jurisdictional  
30 authorities.
- 31 The Forest Service shall not:
- 32 • Take direct suppression actions on structures other than those that tactically  
33 reduce the threat of fire spread to them.
  - 34 • Enter structures or work on roofs of structures for the purpose of direct  
35 suppression actions.
- 36 In consideration of Forest-Service-owned or leased structures outside of  
37 structure fire protection areas these same policies apply. The use of Firewise  
38 principles and aggressive fire prevention measures will be employed for Forest  
39 Service structures at every opportunity.
- 40 If a Forest Service structure is determined to be at risk, “wrapping” or other  
41 indirect protection methods for the structure can be authorized by the agency  
42 administrator. Documentation of these decisions needs to be placed in the fire



1 documentation package and the unit files. Any employee engaged in “wrapping”  
2 or other indirect methods of protection operations will be thoroughly briefed and  
3 trained in correct safety and personal protection equipment procedures,  
4 especially if the use of ladders or climbing on the structure is necessary. In any  
5 case, the Forest Service holds that no structure is worth the risk of serious injury  
6 to an employee in an attempt to protect that structure or facility from fire.

#### 7 ***Local Government Role***

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

#### 12 ***Cost***

13 Local governments assume the financial responsibility for emergency response  
14 activities, including structure protection, within their jurisdictions. Local  
15 government will order resources deemed necessary to protect structures within  
16 their jurisdiction. Local agencies will not be reimbursed for performing their  
17 responsibilities within their jurisdiction.

#### 18 ***Tactical Operating Principles***

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

- 21 • The first priority for all risk decisions is human survival, both of firefighters  
22 and the public.
- 23 • Incident containment strategies specifically address and integrate protection  
24 of defensible improved property and wildland values.
- 25 • Direct protection of improved property is undertaken when it is safe to do  
26 so, when there are sufficient time and appropriate resources available, and  
27 when the action directly contributes to achieving overall incident objectives.
- 28 • Firefighter decision to accept direction to engage in structure protection  
29 actions is based on the determination that the property is defensible and the  
30 risk to firefighters can be safely mitigated under the current or potential fire  
31 conditions.
- 32 • A decision to delay or withdraw from structure protection operations is the  
33 appropriate course of action when made in consideration of firefighter  
34 safety, current or potential fire behavior, or defensibility of the structure or  
35 groups of structures.
- 36 • Firefighters at all levels are responsible to make risk decisions appropriate  
37 to their individual knowledge, experience, training, and situational  
38 awareness.
- 39 • Every firefighter is responsible to be aware of the factors that affect their  
40 judgment and the decision-making process, including a realistic perception  
41 of their own knowledge, skills, and abilities; the presence of life threat or  
42 structures; fire behavior; availability of resources; social/political pressures;  
43 mission focus; and personal distractions, such as home, work, health, and  
44 fatigue.

- 1 • An individual's ability to assimilate all available factors affecting  
2 situational awareness is limited in a dynamic wildland urban interface fire  
3 environment. Every firefighter is responsible to understand and recognize  
4 these limitations, and to apply experience, training, and personal judgment  
5 to observe, orient, decide, and act in preparation for the "worst case."
- 6 • Every firefighter is responsible for participating in the flow of information  
7 with supervisors, subordinates, and peers. Clear and concise communication  
8 is essential to overcome limitations in situational awareness.