

## 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 handbook 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 land and resource management plans.

- 1 • Leadership principles are the foundational doctrine on which fire and  
2 aviation management operations will be based (*Leading in the Wildland*  
3 *Fire Service*, PMS 494-2).
- 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  
40 role 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. It  
14 should be recognized that even with reasonable risk mitigations responses can  
15 result in harm to 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  
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. <https://www.fs.fed.us/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  
9 and stakeholders to identify values affected by fire (positively and negatively)  
10 and then forming clear and reasonable objectives around these values. The  
11 highest value is human life and thus the primary objective will always be  
12 protection of human life. Other objectives will be weighed against the amount of  
13 risk responders and the public must accept in order to accomplish the objectives  
14 as well as the likelihood of success. The Forest Service is committed to using a  
15 three phased risk management protocol:

### 16 **I. Pre-season**

17 Pre-season 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 WFDSS, if any,  
24 and develop a plan for incorporating it into the unit's fire planning map  
25 layers to ensure its availability to support future decisions.
- 26 • Assess risk at a landscape level, looking at National Forest System (NFS)  
27 lands and those adjoining lands that may be impacted by a fire leaving NFS  
28 land.
  - 29 ○ Develop a common understanding of values to be protected by  
30 answering four questions; 'What is important?' 'Why is it important?'  
31 'Who is it important to?' and 'How important is it?'
  - 32 ○ Complete a risk analysis, with key stakeholders and partner agencies, to  
33 predetermine the optimal response strategies for protecting values at  
34 risk. Engage key stakeholders and partner agencies in tabletop  
35 exercises or other venues to ensure alignment.
  - 36 ○ Initiate dialogue with line officers and stakeholders aimed at  
37 understanding, acceptance, and support for alternative risk-based  
38 decisions. This is especially important where there is an expectation  
39 that a fire will become a long-term event, because of an opportunity to  
40 use fire to achieve land management objectives, and/or the need to  
41 adjust the level of engagement based on risks to responders, lack of  
42 available resources and the level of risk toward values to be protected.

## II. During Incident Phase

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

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

## III. Post Incident Phase

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

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

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

**Responsibilities**

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

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

**Preparedness**

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

- Take all necessary and prudent actions to ensure firefighter and public safety.
- Ensure sufficient qualified fire and non-fire personnel are available to support fire operations at a level commensurate with the local and national fire situation.
- Ensure accurate position descriptions are developed and reflect the complexity of the unit. Individual Development Plans promote and enhance FMO currency and development.
- Provide a written delegation of authority to FMOs that provides an adequate level of operational authority at the unit level. Include Multi-Agency Coordinating (MAC) Group authority, as appropriate.
- Ensure the plans contained in the Fire Management Reference System (FMRS) are based on resource objectives found in the LRMP.
- Ensure budget requests and allocations reflect preparedness requirements from the program of work and support objectives from the LRMP.
- Develop preparedness standards that are in compliance with agency fire policies.
- Management teams meet once a year to review fire and aviation policies, roles, responsibilities, and delegations of authority. Specifically address oversight and management controls, critical safety issues, and high-risk situations such as transfers of incident command, periods of multiple fire 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 develop, approve and publish decisions on all fires.  
14 As appropriate, use analytical tools and products to INFORM and support  
15 decision-making. See chapter 11 for the fire criteria that require a published  
16 decision.
- 17 • Personally attend reviews on Type 1 and Type 2 fires. Ensure agency  
18 administrator representatives are assigned when appropriate.
- 19 • Provide incident management objectives, written delegations of authority,  
20 leader's intent and a complete agency administrator briefing to incident  
21 management teams.
- 22 • Ensure briefings include any applicable information for avoidance areas and  
23 waterways per the nationwide aerial application of fire retardant direction,  
24 mapping, and cultural resources. Include the reporting requirements in the  
25 briefing if a misapplication of fire chemical occurs. Provide resource  
26 advisors if the use of aerially applied fire retardant is expected and the unit  
27 has mapped avoidance areas (which include waterways and 300' or larger  
28 buffers) and otherwise evaluate the need for resource advisors for all other  
29 fires, and assign as appropriate.
- 30 • For all unplanned human-caused fires where responsibility can be  
31 determined, ensure actions are initiated to recover cost of suppression  
32 activities, land rehabilitation, damages to the resource, and improvements.
- 33 • Ensure structure exposure protection principles are followed (FSM 5135).
- 34 • Ensure that a sufficient number of incident after action reviews are  
35 conducted for Type 3, 4, and 5 wildfires to adequately assess the unit's  
36 wildfire response capability, performance, procedures and to enhance  
37 learning.
- 38 • Ensure smoke impacts to the public and fire personnel are addressed  
39 through incident management team ordering of Air Resource Advisors  
40 (THSP ARA) on Type 1 fires to the maximum extent practicable. Consider  
41 ordering ARAs to Type 2 fires (as per Public Law 116-9, the Dingell Act,  
42 2019).



## 1 Wildfire Response Responsibilities and Oversight

- 2 • Agency administrators will ensure that all Forest Service employees and
- 3 employees of interagency partners working on Forest Service jurisdiction
- 4 wildfires clearly understand direction.
- 5 • Agency administrators must approve and publish decisions in WFDSS in a
- 6 timely manner and issue delegations of authority to the incident commander
- 7 in accordance with FSM 5133.3.
- 8 • Analytical tools and/or products both within WFDSS and outside of the
- 9 application should be used to inform and support strategic decision-making
- 10 and risk assessment inputs.
- 11 • Line officers will assign agency administrators to oversee incidents and
- 12 approve WFDSS decisions based on certification level according to incident
- 13 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.

- 14 • Critical long duration wildfire oversight roles include ensuring that:
  - 15 ○ Up-to-date Published Decisions are completed and documented in
  - 16 WFDSS.
  - 17 ○ Hazards are identified and risk assessments are incorporated into
  - 18 Published Decisions.
  - 19 ○ Coordination with partners and potentially affected parties is conducted
  - 20 (including smoke impacts); Unified Command is implemented early
  - 21 when appropriate.
  - 22 ○ Air Resource Advisors (THSP) are utilized on Type 1 fires to the
  - 23 maximum extent practicable and consideration of ordering for Type 2
  - 24 fires (as per Public Law 116-9, the Dingell Act, 2019).
  - 25 ○ Resource capacity and availability are adequately assessed to meet
  - 26 expectations.
- 27 • This oversight role should address concerns of the states, cooperators, and
- 28 the public including air quality impacts from multiple wildfires.

## 29 Safety

- 30 • Review safety policies, procedures, and concerns with field fire and
- 31 aviation personnel.
- 32 • Ensure timely follow-up actions to program reviews, fire preparedness
- 33 reviews, fire and aviation safety reviews, and management reviews.
- 34 • Monitor the fire situation and provide oversight during periods of critical
- 35 fire activity and situations of high risk.
- 36 • Ensure there is adequate direction in fire management plans to maintain fire
- 37 danger awareness.

- 1 • Take appropriate actions with escalating fire potential.
- 2 • Ensure appropriate investigation or Lessons Learned analyses are conducted
- 3 for incidents, entrapments, and serious accidents (see FSM 6730).

#### 4 **Fuels**

- 5 • Plan and implement a hazardous fuels management and prescribed fire
- 6 program applying principles and policy elements described in FSM 5100
- 7 and 5140 and guided by the goals described in the National Cohesive
- 8 Wildland Fire Strategy.
- 9 • Complete a fuels treatment effectiveness assessment on all wildfires which
- 10 start in or burn into a fuel treatment area.
- 11 • Enter results of the assessment into the Fuels Treatment Effectiveness
- 12 Monitoring (FTEM) database within 90 days of control of a fire. The FTEM
- 13 database is located within the Interagency Fuels Treatment Decision
- 14 Support System at the following website:
- 15 [https://iftdss.firenet.gov/landing\\_page/](https://iftdss.firenet.gov/landing_page/). Links to optional reporting
- 16 templates and other information related to the FTEM reporting requirement
- 17 can be found at: <http://fsweb.wo.fs.fed.us/fire/fam/fuels/hazardous.html>.
- 18 • Use the Interagency Fuels Treatment Decision Support System (IFTDSS) to
- 19 assist with fuels planning, prescribed burn development, risk analysis, etc.
- 20 [https://iftdss.firenet.gov/landing\\_page/](https://iftdss.firenet.gov/landing_page/).

#### 21 **Prescribed Fire**

- 22 • Provide program leadership by visiting prescribed fire treatment projects
- 23 and providing leader's intent to prescribed fire personnel.
- 24 • Ensure compliance with National and Regional Office policy and direction
- 25 for prescribed fire activities and ensure that periodic reviews and
- 26 inspections of the prescribed fire program are completed.
- 27 • Coordinate prescribed fire program activities with regional air quality
- 28 specialists and federal, state, Tribal, air pollution control district or county
- 29 regulatory authorities to ensure compliance with their regulations supported
- 30 by the Clean Air Act.
- 31 • When multiple wildland fire events are occurring within an airshed, or any
- 32 airshed is impacted by ongoing wildland fire events, fire managers will
- 33 consider the cumulative impact to air quality. Initiation of new prescribed
- 34 fire must be in compliance with air quality regulations and standards.
- 35 • All prescribed fires should be conducted using Basic Smoke Management
- 36 Practices. USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service and Forest
- 37 Service Technical Note (2011).
- 38 <https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/national/air/>
- 39 • Ensure a prescribed fire plan is written and approved for each project prior
- 40 to implementation in accordance with the *Interagency Prescribed Fire*
- 41 *Planning and Implementation Procedures Guide* (PMS 484) available at
- 42 <https://www.nwcg.gov/publications/484>.
- 43 • Review and approve prescribed fire plans and ignitions:

- Engage in the development of the Complexity Analysis; review and approve the final complexity rating.
- Ensure that the prescribed fire plan has been reviewed and recommended by a qualified technical reviewer.
- Ensure that prescribed fire plans are designed to achieve desired conditions as described in Land and Resource Management Plans and project-specific NEPA decision document.
- Approve prescribed fire plan amendments and determine the need for additional technical review of proposed plan amendments prior to approval.
- If more than one year has elapsed since a prescribed fire plan was last approved, the plan will be reviewed, updated as necessary, and re-approved before implementation.
- Authorize ignition of prescribed fire as delegated and adhere to procedures as described in FSM 5140 for Regional and/or National level approvals for initiation of new and continued prescribed fire activities at National Preparedness levels 4 and 5 or when forecast National Fire Danger Rating System adjective ratings are at “Extreme” category.
- Use Analytical tools such as IFTDSS - Interagency Fuels Treatment Decision Support System, to assist with treatment options, fire behavior potential, prescribed burning prescriptions, and values at risk to help inform fuels planning efforts and implementation options.
- Report all instances of prescribed fires resulting in a wildfire declaration and/or air quality Notice-of-Violation as required in FSM 5140.

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

There are two separate and distinct certifications that agency administrators must attain related to fire management, one for wildfire decision making and one 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 Management
- Wildfire response and incident management processes
- WFDSS/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 fire management activities
- Collaboration with partners and stakeholders
- Fiscal management

1 These core competencies form the basis for the Agency Administrator Task  
 2 Book which is used to document that an individual has indeed demonstrated  
 3 these competencies while working toward certification. For access to the Task  
 4 Book, Pathways Chart and additional information on the Forest Service Agency  
 5 Administrator Fire Certification Programs, visit the Agency Administrator  
 6 Toolbox at <https://wfmrda.nwcg.gov>.

#### 7 **Definitions**

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

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

13 **Agency Administrator Trainee:** An agency administrator working on  
 14 certification at any given level by performing the role under the supervision and  
 15 authority of a fully qualified agency administrator.

16 **Coach:** A fully qualified agency administrator certified at an experience level  
 17 commensurate with the incident or project being managed (e.g., journey or  
 18 advanced for wildfire and moderate or high for prescribed fire). The role of the  
 19 coach is to advise and support the agency administrator trainee through various  
 20 aspects of a wildfire incident, prescribed fire or all hazard incident.

Incident or Project Type	Minimum Certification Level to Serve as AA Coach/Evaluator
Wildfire – Type 1	Advanced
Wildfire – Type 2	Journey
Wildfire – Type 3, 4, 5	Journey
Prescribed Fire – High Complexity	High
Prescribed Fire – Moderate Complexity	Moderate
Prescribed Fire – Low Complexity	Moderate

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

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

30 **Shadow:** A learning opportunity to observe various elements of a fire program.  
 31 This position does not perform the duties of an agency administrator but

1 observes a qualified AA during an incident for the purpose of increasing  
2 understanding of the duties. The shadow may participate as an individual or part  
3 of a group of trainees. It is an observational learning assignment; certification  
4 recommendations should be reserved for active trainee assignments where tasks  
5 are being performed, however certain aspects of the task book may be  
6 accomplished during the assignment.

#### 7 **Agency Administrator Wildfire Certification Program**

8 The following principles will guide certification of agency administrators in  
9 wildfire management:

- 10 • Regional foresters are accountable for annual certification of agency  
11 administrators by review process established by regional forester, such as  
12 regional line officer team;
- 13 • Agency administrator evaluation includes standards for training,  
14 background and experience, demonstrated ability, and utilizing the task  
15 book and Wildfire Pathways Chart which will result in a qualitative  
16 evaluation of readiness by the regional forester;
- 17 • When the complexity level of a wildfire exceeds an agency administrator's  
18 certification, a coach will be assigned;
- 19 • Care should be taken when assigning acting AAs to ensure operational fire  
20 management responsibilities remain separated from agency administrator  
21 responsibilities in order to avoid collateral duty conflicts;
- 22 • Agency administrator competencies (aka certification level) supersedes  
23 position (e.g., a district ranger certified at the Advanced Level may be the  
24 AA for a Type I incident);
- 25 • This certification program will be periodically evaluated and updated as  
26 needed. When changes are made in training requirements, the regional  
27 forester may choose to "grandfather" agency administrators thereby  
28 maintaining their existing certification level; however, the updated training  
29 requirements must be met before advancement to the next level or before  
30 recertification after a lapse in currency;
- 31 • Assistance with decision documentation and analysis can be requested  
32 through the Wildland Fire Management RD&A – National Fire Decision  
33 Support Center (NFDSC); and
- 34 • The coaching/shadowing functions, to be administered by each region, is an  
35 integral part of this certification program.

#### 36 **Agency Administrators will be evaluated in three basic areas:**

- 37 • Training;
- 38 • Background and experience; and
- 39 • Demonstrated understanding of concepts and principles as outlined in the  
40 Task Book.

41 This certification program is a multi-level process where agency administrators  
42 demonstrate competence in one of three levels of managing wildfires. Those  
43 levels would be Working, Journey, and Advanced.

**1 Guidelines**

2 In consideration of the appropriate level (Working, Journey, Advanced) to  
3 assign an agency administrator, the regional forester should consider the  
4 following guidelines:

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

8 **Working Level** – The agency administrator could manage a Type 3, 4 or 5  
9 wildfire or similar complexity incident. The agency administrator must meet the  
10 following in order to be certified at the Working Level:

- 11 • **Required Training:** *Risk Management 101*; M-581, *Fire Program*  
12 *Management, an Overview*, and WFDSS training – WFDSS Refresher  
13 Topics located on the Agency Administrator Toolbox.  
14 <https://wfmrda.nwcg.gov>
- 15 • **Required Background and Experience:**
  - 16 ○ Successful management of a minimum of one Type 3 or higher fire.  
17 Consider duration, complexity and size of the fire.
- 18 • **Other Background, Experience, and Training That Supports:**
  - 19 ○ Applicable experience in prescribed fire, wildfire, all-hazard or other  
20 incident oversight may also be considered in addition to other  
21 guidelines.
  - 22 ○ Management oversight of a moderate-high complexity fire program as  
23 defined by Interagency Fire Program Management standards.
- 24 • **Demonstrated Ability:** Successful evaluation by a coach (including  
25 feedback from ICs or ACs) that the candidate has demonstrated  
26 understanding and application of the responsibilities of an agency  
27 administrator trainee. Use AA Task Book to document.

28 **Journey Level** – The Agency administrator could manage Type 2 or lower  
29 complexity fires or similar incidents. The Agency administrator needs to be  
30 certified at the Working Level and meet the following to become certified at the  
31 Journey Level:

- 32 • **Required Training:** At least one continuing education course in fireline  
33 leadership/decision-making. Pathways diagram and resources can be found  
34 on the Agency Administrator Toolbox. <https://wfmrda.nwcg.gov>
- 35 • **Required Background and Experience:**
  - 36 ○ Successful management of a minimum of one Type 2 fire or similar  
37 complexity incident. Duration, complexity and size of the fire should  
38 be considered.
- 39 • **Other Background, Experience, and Training That Supports:**
  - 40 ○ Applicable experience in prescribed fire, wildfire, all-hazard or other  
41 incident oversight may also be considered in addition to other  
42 guidelines.
  - 43 ○ Management oversight of a moderate-high complexity fire program as  
44 defined by Interagency Fire Program Management standards.

- 1 • **Demonstrated Ability:** Successful evaluation by a coach (including  
2 feedback from ICs or ACs) that the candidate has demonstrated  
3 understanding and application of the responsibilities of an agency  
4 administrator. Use AA Task Book to document.
- 5 **Advanced Level** – The agency administrator could manage one or more Type 1  
6 wildfire or similar complexity incidents. The agency administrator needs to be  
7 certified at the Journey Level, and meet the following to become certified at the  
8 Advanced Level:
  - 9 • **Required Training:** M-582, *Fire Program Management, Leading Complex*  
10 *Fire Programs* and at least one additional continuing education course in  
11 fireline leadership/decision-making. Pathways diagram and resources can  
12 be found on the Agency Administrator Toolbox. <https://wfmrda.nwcg.gov>
  - 13 • **Required Background and Experience:**
    - 14 ○ Successful management of one Type 1 wildfire or similar complexity  
15 incident. Duration, complexity, and size of the fires should be  
16 considered.
  - 17 • **Other Background, Experience, and Training That Supports:**
    - 18 ○ Applicable experience in prescribed fire, wildfire, all-hazard or other  
19 incident oversight may also be considered in addition to other  
20 guidelines.
    - 21 ○ Management oversight of a moderate to high-complexity fire program  
22 as defined by Interagency Fire Program Management standards.
  - 23 • **Demonstrated Ability:** Successful evaluation by a coach (including  
24 feedback from ICs or ACs) that the candidate has demonstrated  
25 understanding and application of the responsibilities of an agency  
26 administrator on large complex fires. Use AA Task Book to document.
- 27 **Evaluation Process**
  - 28 • Every trainee will receive an evaluation from a certified agency  
29 administrator/agency administrator representative or coach using the  
30 Agency Administrator Task Book identified in the *Line Officer/Agency*  
31 *Administrator Desk Reference for Fire Program Management*.
  - 32 • Individuals involved in a shadow assignment should receive creditable  
33 experience through documentation.
  - 34 • The purpose of the Task Book is to provide consistency for the agency  
35 administrator coach/evaluator to evaluate trainees and document their  
36 demonstrated abilities to achieve the core competencies, which will be used  
37 as a component to achieve the next level certification.
  - 38 • Every trainee will complete a Task Book for evaluation from an agency  
39 administrator.
- 40 Training opportunities and work experiences to achieve and maintain core  
41 competencies:
  - 42 • Refer to the pathways chart found in the Agency Administrator Toolbox.  
43 <https://wfmrda.nwcg.gov>

**1 Currency**

2 Currency is certified annually by the regional forester for frequency of  
3 demonstrated exercise of core competencies through activities such as those  
4 described above or assignments as agency administrator on incidents of  
5 appropriate level within a five-year interval.

6 WFDSS refresher training is recommended annually, but at a minimum must be  
7 attended at least once within the 5-year currency period.

**8 Agency Administrator Prescribed Fire Certification**

9 The following principles will guide certification of agency administrators (AA)  
10 for prescribed fire:

- 11 • Regional foresters are accountable for annual certification of AAs to  
12 approve and authorize prescribed fire.
- 13 • Agency administrator evaluation includes standards for training,  
14 background and experience, and demonstrated ability, which will result in a  
15 qualitative evaluation of readiness by the regional forester.
- 16 • When the complexity level of a prescribed fire exceeds an AAs  
17 certification, an appropriately certified AA will be assigned and must  
18 approve the complexity analysis and the burn plan along with the AA being  
19 mentored/coached.
- 20 • The authorization to ignite a prescribed fire must be approved by an  
21 appropriately certified AA; however, the line officer with authority over  
22 their assigned unit will also retain authority to prohibit the ignition based on  
23 their judgement regardless of their certification level.
- 24 • Care should be taken when assigning Acting AAs to ensure operational fire  
25 management responsibilities remain separate from AA responsibilities in  
26 order to avoid collateral duty conflicts.
- 27 • This certification program will be periodically evaluated and updated as  
28 needed; when changes are made in training requirements, the regional  
29 forester may choose to “grandfather” AAs thereby maintaining their  
30 existing certification level, however the updated training requirements must  
31 be met before advancement to the next level or before recertification after a  
32 lapse in currency.
- 33 • The Coach/Shadow functions, to be administered by each region, is an  
34 integral part of this certification program.

**35 Agency administrators will be evaluated in three basic areas:**

- 36 • Training;
- 37 • Background and experience; and
- 38 • Demonstrated understanding of concepts and principles.

39 This certification program is a multi-level process where agency administrators  
40 demonstrate competence in one of three levels of prescribed fire complexity.

41 Those levels are Low, Moderate, and High.



## 1 Guidelines

2 In consideration of the appropriate qualification level (Low, Moderate, or High)  
3 to certify an agency administrator, the regional forester should consider the  
4 following guidelines:

### 5 Low Complexity Level

6 The agency administrator can review, approve, authorize and provide oversight  
7 for the management of low complexity prescribed fires. The agency  
8 administrator trainee must meet the following in order to be certified at the Low  
9 Complexity level:

- 10 • **Required Training:** *Risk Management 101*; M-581, *Fire Program*  
11 *Management, an Overview* OR Prescribed Fire Workshop at the Prescribed  
12 Fire Training Center (recommended for AAs seeking more hands-on  
13 prescribed fire experience).
- 14 • **Required Background and Experience:** Successful management of a  
15 minimum of one (1) Low Complexity prescribed fire, or one or more low  
16 complexity wildfires (Type 4 or 5).
- 17 • **Other Background, Experience, and Training That Supports:**
  - 18 ○ Applicable experience in prescribed fire, wildfire, all-hazard or other  
19 incident or project oversight may also be considered in addition to other  
20 guidelines.
  - 21 ○ Management oversight of a low-complexity fire program.
- 22 • **Demonstrated Ability:** Successful evaluation by a coach (including  
23 feedback from FMO/fire staff/director) that the candidate has demonstrated  
24 understanding and application of the responsibilities of an agency  
25 administrator on smaller low-complexity prescribed fires with a basic  
26 understanding of the elements of the core competencies. Use AA Task Book  
27 to document.

### 28 Moderate Complexity Level

29 The agency administrator can review, approve, authorize and provide oversight  
30 for the management of moderate complexity prescribed fires. The agency  
31 administrator trainee needs to meet the required training for the Low Complexity  
32 Level and meet the following to become certified at the Moderate Complexity  
33 level:

- 34 • **Required Training:** At least one continuing education course in fireline  
35 leadership/decision-making. Pathways diagram and resources can be found  
36 on the Agency Administrator Toolbox. <https://wfmrda.nwcg.gov>
- 37 • **Required Background and Experience:** Successfully review and approve  
38 one (1) or more prescribed fire plans at a moderate complexity level and  
39 authorize and provide oversight for the ignition of three (3) or more  
40 individual burn units under a moderate complexity plan, and complete a  
41 minimum of (1) post-burn review of a moderate complexity prescribed fire.
- 42 • **Other Background, Experience, and Training That Supports:**
  - 43 ○ Applicable experience in wildfire, all-hazard or other incident oversight  
44 may also be considered in lieu of other guidelines.

- Management oversight of a moderately complex prescribed fire program, providing for a workforce with appropriate training and equipment, NEPA compliance and project planning, social/political considerations, smoke management, public information, etc.
- **Demonstrated Ability:** Successful evaluation by a supervisor or coach (including feedback from FMO/fire staff/director) that the candidate has demonstrated understanding and application of the responsibilities of an agency administrator on moderate complexity prescribed fires with an understanding of the core competencies and other elements that may be relevant. Use AA Task Book to document.

### High Complexity Level

The agency administrator can review, approve, authorize and provide oversight for the management of high complexity prescribed fires. The agency administrator trainee needs to be certified at the Moderate Complexity Level, and meet the following to become certified at the High Complexity Level:

- **Required Training:** M-582, *Fire Program Management, Leading Complex Fire Programs* OR Agency Administrators Prescribed Fire Workshop at the Prescribed Fire Training Center (recommended for AAs seeking more hands-on prescribed fire experience AND at least one additional continuing education course in fireline leadership/decision-making. Pathways diagram and resources can be found on the Agency Administrator Toolbox. <https://wfmrda.nwcg.gov>
- **Required Background and Experience:** Successfully review and approve one (1) or more prescribed fire plans at a high complexity level and authorize and provide oversight for the ignition of one (1) or more burn units under a high complexity prescribed fire plan and, complete a minimum of one (1) post-burn review of a high complexity prescribed fire.
- **Other Background, Experience, and Training That Supports:**
  - Applicable experience in prescribed fire, wildfire, all-hazard or other incident oversight may also be considered in lieu of other guidelines.
  - Management oversight of a moderate to high complexity prescribed fire program, providing for a workforce with appropriate training and equipment, NEPA compliance and project planning, social/political considerations, smoke management, public information, etc.
- **Demonstrated Ability:** Successful evaluation by an agency administrator or coach (including feedback from FMO/fire staff/director) that the candidate has demonstrated understanding and application of the responsibilities of an agency administrator on large complex fires in the core competencies, and other elements that may be relevant. Use AA Task Book to document.

### Evaluation Process

- Every trainee will receive an evaluation from a certified Agency Administrator or coach using the agency administrator task book.

- 1 • Individuals involved in a shadow assignment should receive creditable
- 2 experience through documentation.
- 3 Refer to the pathways chart found in the Agency Administrator Toolbox.
- 4 <https://wfmrda.nwcg.gov>
- 5 Training opportunities to achieve and maintain core competencies:
- 6 • Upper levels of fire leadership and fire management courses;
- 7 • Function as the agency administrator in sand table exercises and training
- 8 simulations;
- 9 • Participate in prescribed fire and fire management training such as RX-410
- 10 and RX-510;
- 11 • Act as a member or leader for a team assigned to review a Declared
- 12 Wildfire or Violation of Air Quality Standards;
- 13 • Attendance/Participation in RT-300, *Prescribed Fire Burn Boss Refresher*
- 14 training;
- 15 • Participate in prescribed fires and/or attend prescribed fire training; and
- 16 • Participate in other leadership and/or decision-making training.

### 17 **Currency**

18 Currency is certified annually by the regional forester for frequency of  
19 demonstrated exercise of Core Competencies through activities such as those  
20 described above or assignments as agency administrator on incidents of  
21 appropriate level within a five-year interval.

## 22 **Specific Fire Management Staff Responsibilities for Fire Operations at the**

### 23 **Field Level**

### 24 **Preparedness**

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

- 1 • Take appropriate action when performance is exceptional or deficient.
- 2 • Ensure fire and aviation policies are understood, followed, and coordinated
- 3 with other agencies as appropriate.
- 4 • Ensure that adequate resources are available to implement fire management
- 5 operations.
- 6 • Provide fire personnel with adequate guidance, training, and decision-
- 7 making authority to ensure timely decisions.
- 8 • Develop and maintain agreements, operating plans, and contracts on an
- 9 interagency basis to increase effectiveness and efficiencies.
- 10 • Develop, maintain, and annually evaluate both the FMRS and Spatial Fire
- 11 Planning in WFDSS to ensure accuracy and validity.
- 12 • Ensure budget requests and allocations reflect preparedness requirements
- 13 from the program of work and support objectives from the LRMP.
- 14 • Develop and maintain current operational plans (e.g., dispatch, pre-attack,
- 15 prevention).
- 16 • Ensure that reports and records are properly completed and maintained.
- 17 • Ensure fiscal responsibility and accountability in planning and expenditures.
- 18 • Assess, identify, and implement program actions that effectively reduce
- 19 unwanted wildland fire ignitions and mitigate risks to life, property, and
- 20 resources.
- 21 • Work with cooperators to identify processes and procedures for providing
- 22 fire adapted communities within the wildland urban interface.

### 23 **Wildfire Response**

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

- 1 • Ensure all assessments of impacts to threatened and endangered species or
- 2 cultural resources are conducted by trained and qualified resource
- 3 personnel.

#### 4 **Safety**

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

#### 15 **Prescribed Fire**

- 16 • Ensure a written, approved burn plan exists for each prescribed fire project.
- 17 • Prepare and implement all prescribed fire plans in accordance with the
- 18 *Interagency Prescribed Fire Planning and Implementation Procedures*
- 19 *Guide* (PMS 484) available at <https://www.nwcg.gov/publications/484>.
- 20 • Ensure that the prescribed fire burn boss assigned to each project is
- 21 qualified at the appropriate level as determined by project complexity (see
- 22 the *Interagency Prescribed Fire Planning and Implementation Procedures*
- 23 *Guide* at <https://www.nwcg.gov/publications/484> for specific guidance).
- 24 • Responsibility for prescribed fires in patrol/mop-up status may be assigned
- 25 to the unit duty officer (see below) until declared “out.” The DO may assign
- 26 either a burn boss or incident commander at a level commensurate with
- 27 expected activities to coordinate on-site actions (e.g., ICT5 for 1 engine to
- 28 patrol). In the event that elements of the burn plan other than patrol/mop-up
- 29 (e.g., holding or contingency) become necessary, then an appropriately
- 30 qualified burn boss will be assigned to continue implementation of the
- 31 approved burn plan.
- 32 • Review and update all prescribed fire plans as necessary to comply with
- 33 policy or procedures and submit to agency administrator for review and
- 34 approval.
- 35 • Submit amendments to prescribed fire plans to the agency administrator for
- 36 approval.
- 37 • If more than one year has elapsed since approval, a prescribed fire plan will
- 38 be reviewed to ensure assumptions are still valid and conditions have not
- 39 changed, updated as necessary, and resubmitted to the agency administrator
- 40 for approval.

#### 41 **Fire and Aviation Management (FAM) Duty Officer**

42 Each forest or grassland fire management officer or assistant fire management  
43 officer will perform the duties of a FAM duty officer (DO) for their unit, or will

1 provide a delegated DO, during any periods of predicted or actual incident  
2 activity. Individuals performing as DO must have the approval of the unit's  
3 agency administrator and meet the minimum NWCG qualifications as identified  
4 in the FS-FAQG chapter 4. [https://www.fs.fed.us/managing-](https://www.fs.fed.us/managing-land/fire/publications)  
5 [land/fire/publications](https://www.fs.fed.us/managing-land/fire/publications)

6 The required duties for all DOs are:

- 7 • Serve as the unit's primary contact with Dispatch for both on and off-unit  
8 assignments.
- 9 • Monitor unit incident activity for compliance with Forest Service risk  
10 management practices.
- 11 • Coordinate and set priorities for unit suppression actions and resource  
12 allocation.
- 13 • Keep agency administrators, suppression resources, and information  
14 officers informed of the current and expected situation.
- 15 • Plan for and implement actions required for future needs.
- 16 • Document key decisions and actions.

17 DOs will perform the above duties in addition to any unit specific duties  
18 assigned by the unit's agency administrators or fire managers through a  
19 delegation of authority or unit operating plan.

20 In the event that the DO is required to accept an incident assignment, the  
21 outgoing DO must transition with another qualified and approved DO.

22 Use of district/zone DOs is intended to manage span of control. When assigned  
23 to the DO role, DOs will not concurrently perform any ICS command or  
24 operational functions directly connected to an incident.

25 DO staffing levels may vary based on locally determined metrics such as fire  
26 danger, local area planning level, predicted incident activity, prescribed fire  
27 implementation, and/or span of control.

#### 28 **Fire Management Position Requirements**

29 The *Interagency Fire Program Management Qualifications Standard (IFPM)*  
30 and *Forest Service Fire Program Management Standard (FS-FPM)* will be used  
31 in conjunction with specific agency requirements when filling vacant fire  
32 program positions, and as an aid in developing individual development plans  
33 (IDPs) for employees.

#### 34 **Structure Exposure Protection Principles**

##### 35 **Mission and Role**

36 A significant role of the Forest Service is to manage natural resources on public  
37 land, and management of wildfire is a primary mission in that role. Wildland  
38 firefighter training, tools, and personal protective equipment are based on the  
39 wildland environment. This does not prevent using wildland tactics in the  
40 Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) when risks are mitigated. Wildland firefighter  
41 training for the WUI, however, is centered on the concepts of preventing

1 wildfire from reaching areas of structures and/or reducing the intensity of fire  
2 that does reach structures. Fire suppression actions on structures that are outside  
3 federal jurisdiction, outside the scope of wildland firefighting training, or  
4 beyond the capability of wildland firefighting resources are not appropriate roles  
5 for the Forest Service.

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

## 12 **Strategic Principles**

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

## 39 **Tactical Applications**

### 40 ***Structure Protection Definition***

41 Actions taken in advance of a fire reaching structures or other improvements are  
42 intended to safely prevent the fire from damaging or destroying these values at  
43 risk. For the Forest Service, structure protection involves the use of standard  
44 wildland fire suppression tactics and control methods; including the use of

- 1 standard equipment, fire control lines, and the extinguishing of spot fires near or
- 2 on the structure when safe and practical.

### 3 *USFS Role*

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

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

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

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

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

- 38 • “Wrap” or set up and administer sprinklers around privately owned  
39 structures.
- 40 • Remove fuels immediately surrounding a structure such as brush,  
41 landscaping, or firewood.

42 As addressed above, the Forest Service will apply strategy and tactics to keep  
43 wildfires from reaching structures, as prudent to do so, considering risk



1 management for firefighters and publics, fire behavior, values at risk including  
2 natural resources, availability of firefighting resources, and jurisdictional  
3 authorities.

4 The Forest Service shall not:

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

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

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

#### 22 ***Local Government Role***

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

#### 27 ***Cost***

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

#### 33 ***Tactical Operating Principles***

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

- 36 • The first priority for all risk-decisions is human survival, both of firefighters  
37 and the public.
- 38 • Incident containment strategies specifically address and integrate protection  
39 of defendable improved property and wildland values.
- 40 • Direct protection of improved property is undertaken when it is safe to do  
41 so, when there are sufficient time and appropriate resources available, and  
42 when the action directly contributes to achieving overall incident objectives.

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