

Chapter 01**Federal Wildland Fire Management Policy ~~XXX~~ and Guidance Overview****Scope**

The *Interagency Standards for Fire and Fire Aviation Operations* states, references, or supplements policy for Bureau of Land Management, Forest Service, Fish and Wildlife Service and National Park Service fire and fire aviation program management. Original source policy is stated or referenced throughout this handbook. This handbook attempts to quote verbatim, rather than to paraphrase policy that is stated elsewhere. It also attempts to limit duplication of source policy when a reference will suffice. *Interagency Standards for Fire and Fire Aviation Operations* is intended to comply with and support the ~~XXX 2009 Implementation Strategy for the Federal Wildland Fire Policy Review and Update of the 1995 Federal Wildland Fire Management Policy (January 2001)~~ and the *Guidance for Implementation of Federal Wildland Fire Management Policy (February 13, 2009)* and other existing federal policy.

Purpose

The *Interagency Standards for Fire and Fire Aviation Operations* provides fire and fire aviation program management direction for Bureau of Land Management, Forest Service, Fish and Wildlife Service and National Park Service managers. Employees engaged in fire management activities will continue to comply with all agency-specific health and safety policy. ~~XXX documents. XXX and with fire operations standards stated in the Other~~ references, such as the *NWGC Incident Response Pocket Guide (PMS 461, NFES 1077)* and the *NWCG Fireline Handbook (PMS 410-1, NFES 0065)*, provide operational guidance.

~~XXX 2009 Implementation Strategy for the Federal Wildland Fire Policy Review and Update of the 1995 Federal Wildland Fire Management Policy (January 2001)~~

The ~~XXX 2009 Implementation Strategy for the Federal Wildland Fire Policy~~ comprises *Review and Update of the 1995 Federal Wildland Fire Management Policy (January 2001)* is comprised of the following guiding principles and discreet policies. As a whole these principles and policy statements guide the philosophy, direction and implementation of fire management planning, activities and projects on federal lands.

Guiding Principles of the Federal Wildland Fire Management Policy

1. Firefighter and public safety is the first priority in every fire management activity.
2. The role of wildland fire as an essential ecological process and natural change agent will be incorporated into the planning process. Federal

- 1 agency land and resource management plans set the objectives for the use
2 and desired future condition of the various public lands.
- 3 **3.** Fire Management Plans (FMP)s, programs and activities support land and
4 resource management plans and their implementation.
- 5 **4.** Sound risk management is a foundation for all fire management activities.
6 Risks and uncertainties relating to fire management activities must be
7 understood, analyzed, communicated and managed as they relate to the cost
8 of either doing or not doing an activity. Net gains to the public benefit will
9 be an important component of decisions.
- 10 **5.** Fire management programs and activities are economically viable, based
11 upon values to be protected, costs and land and resource management
12 objectives. Federal agency administrators are adjusting and reorganizing
13 programs to reduce costs and increase efficiencies. As part of this process,
14 investments in fire management activities must be evaluated against other
15 agency programs in order to effectively accomplish the overall mission, set
16 short and long term priorities and clarify management accountability.
- 17 **6.** FMPs and activities are based upon the best available science. Knowledge
18 and experience are developed among all wildland fire management
19 agencies. An active fire research program combined with interagency
20 collaboration provides the means to make these tools available to all fire
21 managers.
- 22 **7.** FMPs and activities incorporate public health and environmental quality
23 considerations.
- 24 **8.** Federal, state, tribal, local, interagency and international coordination and
25 cooperation are essential. Increasing costs and smaller work forces require
26 that public agencies pool their human resources to successfully deal with
27 the ever-increasing and more complex fire management tasks. Full
28 collaboration among federal agencies and between the federal agencies and
29 international, state, tribal and local governments and private entities results
30 in a mobile fire management work force available for the full range of
31 public needs.
- 32 **9.** Standardization of policies and procedures among federal agencies is an
33 ongoing objective. Consistency of plans and operations provides the
34 fundamental platform upon which federal agencies can cooperate, integrate
35 fire activities across agency boundaries and provide leadership for
36 cooperation with state, tribal and local fire management organizations.

37
38 *XXX Review and Update of the 1995 Federal Wildland Fire Management*
39 *Policy (January 2001)*
40

41 **Elements of the Federal Wildland Fire Management Policy**

42 **1. Safety**

43 Firefighter and public safety is the first priority. All FMPs and activities
44 must reflect this commitment.
45
46

- 1 **2. Fire Management and Ecosystem Sustainability**
2 The full range of fire management activities will be used to help achieve
3 ecosystem sustainability, including interrelated ecological, economic and
4 social components.
- 5 **3. Response to Wildland Fire**
6 Fire, as a critical natural process, will be integrated into land and resource
7 management plans and activities on a landscape scale across agency
8 boundaries. Response to wildland fires is based on ecological, social and
9 legal consequences of the fire. The circumstances under which a fire
10 occurs, the likely consequences on firefighter and public safety and welfare,
11 the natural and cultural resources and the values to be protected dictate the
12 appropriate response to fire.
- 13 **4. Use of Wildland Fire**
14 Wildland fire will be used to protect, maintain and enhance resources and,
15 as nearly as possible, be allowed to function in its natural ecological role.
16 Use of fire will be based on approved FMPs and will follow specific
17 prescriptions contained in operational plans.
- 18 **5. Rehabilitation and Restoration**
19 Rehabilitation and restoration efforts will be undertaken to protect and
20 sustain ecosystems, public health, safety and to help communities protect
21 infrastructure.
- 22 **6. Protection Priorities**
23 The protection of human life is the single overriding suppression priority.
24 Setting priorities among protecting public communities and community
25 infrastructure, other property and improvements and natural and cultural
26 resources will be done based on the values to be protected, public health
27 and safety and the costs of protection. Once people have been committed to
28 an incident, these human resources become the highest value to be
29 protected.
- 30 **7. Wildland Urban Interface**
31 The operational roles of the federal agencies as partners in the wildland
32 urban interface are wildland firefighting, hazard reduction, cooperative
33 prevention, education and technical assistance. Structural fire suppression
34 is the responsibility of tribal, state or local governments. Federal agencies
35 may assist with exterior structural fire protection activities under formal fire
36 protection agreements that specify the mutual responsibilities of the
37 partners, including funding. (Some federal agencies have full structural
38 protection authority for their facilities on lands they administer and may
39 also enter into formal agreements to assist state and local governments with
40 structural protection.)
- 41 **8. Planning**
42 Every area with burnable vegetation must have an approved FMP. FMPs
43 are strategic plans that define a program to manage wildland and prescribed
44 fires based on the area's approved land management plan (LMP). FMPs
45 must provide for firefighter and public safety; include fire management
46 strategies, tactics and alternatives; address values to be protected and public

- 1 health issues; and be consistent with resource management objectives,
2 activities of the area and environmental laws and regulations.
- 3 **9. Science**
4 FMPs and fire programs will be based on a foundation of the best available
5 science. Research will support ongoing efforts to increase our scientific
6 knowledge of biological, physical and sociological factors. Information
7 needed to support fire management will be developed through an integrated
8 interagency fire science program. Scientific results must be made available
9 to managers in a timely manner and must be used in the development of
10 LMPs, FMPs and implementation plans.
- 11 **10. Preparedness**
12 Agencies will ensure their capability to provide safe, cost-effective fire
13 management programs in support of land and resource management plans
14 through appropriate planning, staffing, training, equipment and
15 management oversight.
- 16 **11. Suppression**
17 Fires are suppressed at minimum cost, considering firefighter and public
18 safety, benefits and all values to be protected consistent with resource
19 objectives.
- 20 **12. Prevention**
21 Agencies will work together with their partners, other affected groups and
22 individuals to prevent unauthorized ignition of wildland fires.
- 23 **13. Standardization**
24 Agencies will use compatible planning processes, funding mechanisms,
25 training and qualification requirements, operational procedures, values-to-
26 be protected methodologies and public education programs for all fire
27 management activities.
- 28 **14. Interagency Cooperation and Coordination**
29 Fire management planning, preparedness, prevention, suppression,
30 restoration and rehabilitation, monitoring, research and education will be
31 conducted on an interagency basis with the involvement of cooperators and
32 partners.
- 33 **15. Communication and Education**
34 Agencies will enhance knowledge and understanding of wildland fire
35 management policies and practices through internal and external
36 communication and education programs. These programs will be
37 continuously improved through the timely and effective exchange of
38 information among all affected agencies and organizations.
- 39 **16. Agency Administrator and Employee Roles**
40 Agency administrators will ensure their employees are trained, certified and
41 made available to participate in the wildland fire program locally, regionally
42 and nationally as the situation demands. Employees with operational,
43 administrative, or other skills will support the wildland fire programs as
44 necessary. Agency administrators are responsible and will be held
45 accountable for making employees available.
46

1 **17. Evaluation**

2 Agencies will develop and implement a systematic method of evaluation to
3 determine effectiveness of projects through implementation of the *2001*
4 *Federal Wildland Fire Management Policy*. The evaluation will assure
5 accountability, facilitate resolution in areas of conflict and identify resource
6 shortages and agency priorities. XXX See *2001 Federal Wildland Fire*
7 *Management Policy, pages 22-24*.

8
9 *Review and Update of the 1995 Federal Wildland Fire Management Policy*
10 *(January 2001)*

11
12 ~~XXX Guidance for Implementation of Federal Wildland Fire Management~~
13 ~~Policy—Guidance for Implementation of Federal Wildland Fire Management~~
14 ~~Policy (February 13, 2009)~~

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16 XXX In February, 2009, the Fire Executive Council (the fire directors of the
17 DOI—OWFC, BLM, BIA, USFWS and the USDA—USFS) issued the *2009*
18 *Guidance for Implementation of Federal Fire Policy* which was intended to “be
19 used to provide consistent implementation of federal wildland fire policy.” On
20 February 13, 2009, the Fire Executive Council (FEC) approved guidance for the
21 implementation of federal wildland fire management policy. This guidance
22 provides for consistent implementation of the *Review and Update of the 1995*
23 *Federal Wildland Fire Management Policy (January 2001)*, as directed by the
24 Wildland Fire Leadership Council.

25
26 *Guidance for Implementation of Federal Wildland Fire Management Policy*
27 *(February 13, 2009), page 3.*

28
29 XXX The key statements from XXX that this document are: The following
30 guidelines should be used to provide consistent implementation of federal
31 wildland fire policy.

- 32 **1.** Wildland fire management agencies will use common standards for all
33 aspects of their fire management programs to facilitate effective
34 collaboration among cooperating agencies.
- 35 **2.** Agencies and bureaus will review, update and develop agreements that
36 clarify the jurisdictional inter-relationships and define the roles and
37 responsibilities among local, state, tribal and federal fire protection entities.
- 38 **3.** Responses to wildland fire will be coordinated across levels of government
39 regardless of the jurisdiction at the ignition source.
- 40 **4.** Fire Management Plans will be intergovernmental in scope and developed
41 on a landscape scale.
- 42 **5.** Wildland fire is a general term describing any non-structure fire that occurs
43 in the wildland. Wildland fires are categorized into two distinct types:
 - 44 a. Wildfires - Unplanned ignitions or prescribed fires that are
45 declared wildfires.
 - 46 b. Prescribed Fires - Planned ignitions.

- 1 6. A wildland fire may be concurrently managed for one or more objectives
2 and objectives can change as the fire spreads across the landscape.
3 Objectives are affected by changes in fuels, weather, topography; varying
4 social understanding and tolerance; and involvement of other governmental
5 jurisdictions having different missions and objectives.
- 6 7. Management response to a wildland fire on federal land is based on
7 objectives established in the applicable Land/Resource Management Plan
8 and/or the Fire Management Plan.
- 9 8. Initial action on human-caused wildfire will be to suppress the fire at the
10 lowest cost with the fewest negative consequences with respect to
11 firefighter and public safety.
- 12 9. Managers will use a decision support process to guide and document
13 wildfire management decisions. The process will provide situational
14 assessment, analyze hazards and risk, define implementation actions and
15 document decisions and rationale for those decisions.

16 See *XXX Guidance for Implementation of Federal Wildland Fire Management*
17 *Policy, February 13, 2009*;

18 *Guidance for Implementation of Federal Wildland Fire Management Policy*
19 *(February 13, 2009)*, page 7.

22 Fire Management Objectives

- 23
- 24 Federal agency fire management programs should help resource managers
25 protect, maintain and enhance federal lands in a cost effective manner.
26 Wildland fire management objectives are:
- 27 • Protect human life, property and natural/cultural resources both within and
28 adjacent to agency administered lands.
 - 29 • Minimize damages and maximize overall benefits of wildland fire within
30 the framework of land use objectives and Resource Management Plans.
 - 31 • Manage the wildland fire program in accordance with congressional intent
32 as expressed in the annual appropriations act and enabling legislation and
33 comply with applicable departmental manual and agency policies and
34 procedures.
 - 35 • Promote an interagency approach to managing fires on an ecosystem basis.
 - 36 • Employ strategies to manage wildland fires that provide for firefighter and
37 public safety, minimize cost and resource damage and are consistent with
38 values to be protected and management objectives.
 - 39 • Stabilize and rehabilitate resources and improvements lost or damaged by
40 fire or suppression activities.
 - 41 • Minimize and where necessary, mitigate human-induced impacts to
42 resources, natural processes, or improvements attributable to wildland fire
43 activities.
 - 44 • Promote public understanding of fire management programs and objectives.

- 1 • Organize a fire staff that can apply the highest standards of professional and
- 2 technical expertise.
- 3 • Encourage research to advance the understanding of fire behavior, effects,
- 4 ecology and management.
- 5 • Integrate fire management through all levels of the planning process.
- 6 • Prevent and investigate all unplanned human-caused fires.

7

8 **Fire Operations Doctrine**

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10 **Purpose of Fire Operations Doctrine**

11 Fire operations doctrine states the fundamental principles on the subject of fire
12 operations. This doctrine establishes a particular way of thinking about fire
13 operations. It provides a philosophy for leading firefighters in fire operations, a
14 mandate for professionalism and a common language. Fire operations doctrine
15 does not consist of procedures to be applied to specific situations so much as it
16 sets forth general guidance that requires judgment in application.

17

18 **The Nature of Fire Operations**

19 Fire is a complex, dynamic and often unpredictable phenomenon. Fire
20 operations require mobilizing a complex organization that includes
21 management, command, support and firefighting personnel, as well as aircraft,
22 vehicles, machinery, and communications equipment. While the magnitude and
23 complexity of the fire itself and of the human response to it will vary, the fact
24 that fire operations are inherently dangerous will never change. A firefighter
25 utilizing the best available science, equipment and training and working within
26 the scope of agency doctrine and policy, can still suffer serious injury or death.

27

28 **Wildland Fire Operations Risk Management**

29 The primary means by which we prevent accidents in wildland fire operations is
30 through aggressive risk management. Our safety philosophy acknowledges that
31 while the ideal level of risk may be zero, a hazard free work environment is not
32 a reasonable or achievable goal in fire operations. Through organized,
33 comprehensive and systematic risk management, we will determine the
34 acceptable level of risk that allows us to provide for safety yet still achieve fire
35 operations objectives. Risk management is intended to minimize the number of
36 injuries or fatalities experienced by wildland firefighters.

37

38 **Fire Preparedness**

39 Fire preparedness is the state of being ready to provide an appropriate response
40 to wildland fires based on identified objectives. Preparedness is the result of
41 activities that are planned and implemented prior to fire ignitions. Preparedness
42 requires identifying necessary firefighting capabilities and implementing
43 coordinated programs to develop those capabilities. Preparedness requires a
44 continuous process of developing and maintaining firefighting infrastructure,
45 predicting fire activity, identifying values to be protected, hiring, training,
46 equipping, pre-positioning and deploying firefighters and equipment, evaluating

1 performance, correcting deficiencies and improving operations. All
2 preparedness activities should be focused on developing fire operations
3 capabilities and on performing successful fire operations.

4 5 **Fire Operations Command Philosophy**

6 It is essential that our philosophy of command support the way we conduct fire
7 operations. First and foremost, in order to generate effective decision making in
8 fire operations and to cope with the unpredictable nature of fire, commanders'
9 intent must be lucid and unambiguous and lines of authority must be clearly
10 articulated and understood. Subordinate commanders must make decisions on
11 their own initiative based on their understanding of their commander's intent. A
12 competent subordinate commander who is at the point of decision may
13 understand a situation more clearly than a senior commander some distance
14 removed. In this case, the subordinate commander must have the freedom to
15 take decisive action directed toward the accomplishment of operational
16 objectives. However, this does not imply that unity of effort does not exist, or
17 that actions are not coordinated. Unity of effort requires coordination and
18 cooperation among all forces toward a commonly understood objective.
19 Unified, coordinated action, whether between adjacent single resources on the
20 fireline or between the highest command level and the most subordinate
21 firefighter, is critical to successful fire operations.

22 23 **Fire Leadership**

24 Leadership is the art of influencing people in order to achieve a result. The most
25 essential element for success in the wildland fire service is good leadership.
26 Good leaders provide purpose, direction and motivation for wildland firefighters
27 working to accomplish difficult tasks under dangerous, stressful circumstances.
28 Leaders often face difficult problems to which there are no simple, clear-cut, by-
29 the-book solutions. In these situations, leaders must use their knowledge, skill,
30 experience, education, values and judgment to make decisions and to take or
31 direct action - in short, to provide leadership. All firefighters, regardless of
32 position, must provide leadership.

33 34 **Fire Suppression**

35 The purpose of fire suppression is to put the fire out in a safe, effective and
36 efficient manner. Fires are easier and less expensive to suppress when they are
37 small. When the management goal is full suppression, aggressive initial attack
38 is the single most important method to ensure the safety of firefighters and the
39 public and to limit suppression costs. Aggressive initial attack provides the
40 Incident Commander maximum flexibility in suppression operations.
41 Successful initial attack relies on speed and appropriate force. All aspects of fire
42 suppression benefit from this philosophy. Planning, organizing and
43 implementing fire suppression operations should always meet the objective of
44 directly, quickly and economically contributing to the suppression effort. Every
45 firefighter, whether in a management, command, support, or direct suppression
46 role, should be committed to maximizing the speed and efficiency with which

1 the most capable firefighters can engage in suppression action. When the
2 management goal is other than full suppression, or when conditions dictate a
3 limited suppression response, decisiveness is still essential and an aggressive
4 approach toward accomplishment of objectives is still critical.

5

6 **Principles of Suppression Operations**

7 The primary means by which we implement command decisions and maintain
8 unity of action is through the use of common principles of suppression
9 operations. These principles guide our fundamental fire suppression practices,
10 behaviors and customs, and are mutually understood at every level of command.
11 They include Risk Management, Standard Firefighting Orders and Watch Out
12 Situations, LCES and the Downhill Line Construction Checklist. These
13 principles are fundamental to how we perform fire suppression operations and
14 are intended to improve decision making and firefighter safety. They are not
15 absolute rules. They require judgment in application.

16

17 **Principles of Fire Suppression Action**

18 The principles of fire suppression action provide a framework for developing
19 fire suppression strategy and for conducting fire suppression operations. Again,
20 these are not absolute, immutable rules. These five principles provide a
21 consistent set of considerations with which to evaluate decisions, plans, and
22 actions in different situations.

23

24 **1. Objective**

25 The principle of the objective is to direct every fire suppression operation
26 toward a clearly defined, decisive and obtainable objective. The purpose of
27 fire suppression operations is to achieve the suppression objectives that
28 support the overall management goals for the fire.

29 **2. Speed and Focus**

30 Speed is rapidity of action. Focus is the convergence of appropriate
31 resources at the desired position to initiate action. The principle of speed
32 and focus maintains that rapidly deploying and concentrating firefighting
33 resources, in a calculated fashion, at the decisive time and place increases
34 the likelihood of successful suppression actions.

35 **3. Positioning**

36 The principle of positioning maintains that rapid, flexible and opportunistic
37 movement increases the effectiveness of fire suppression resources.
38 Positioning ranges from single resource offensive or defensive reactions to
39 dynamic fire conditions, to pre-positioning of multiple resources based on
40 predicted activity and values at risk. Positioning should always be
41 undertaken with speed and focus in mind and with sufficient time for
42 positioning to occur before operations begin.

43 **4. Simplicity**

44 The principle of simplicity is that clear, uncomplicated plans and concise
45 orders maximize effectiveness and minimize confusion. Simplicity
46 contributes to successful actions.

1 **5. Safety**

2 The principle of safety maintains that ensuring the safety of firefighters and
3 other persons affected by fire operations is fundamental to successful
4 suppression action. Safety not only contributes to successful actions, it is
5 indispensable to them.

6
7 **Cost Effective Fire Operations**

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9 Maximizing the cost effectiveness of any fire operation is the responsibility of
10 all involved; including those that authorize, direct or implement those
11 operations. Cost effectiveness is the most economical use of the suppression
12 resources necessary to accomplish mission objectives. Accomplishing fire
13 operations objectives safely and efficiently will not be sacrificed for the sole
14 purpose of “cost savings.” Care will be taken to ensure that suppression
15 expenditures are commensurate with values to be protected, while understanding
16 that other factors may influence spending decisions, including the social,
17 political, economic and biophysical environments.

18
19 **XXX Professional Liability Insurance**

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21 With the signing of Public Law 110-161 on December 26, 2007 temporary fire
22 line managers, in addition to management officials and law enforcement
23 officers, may be reimbursed for up to one half of the cost incurred for
24 professional liability insurance including any administrative processing cost
25 charged by the insurance company. To qualify, these “temporary fire line
26 managers” must meet one of the following three criteria:

- 27 • Provide temporary supervision or management of personnel engaged in
28 wildland fire activities;
- 29 • Provide analysis or information that affects a supervisor’s or manager’s
30 decision about a wildland fire;
- 31 • Direct the deployment of equipment for a wildland fire, such as a base camp
32 manager, an equipment manager, a helicopter coordinator, or an initial
33 attack dispatcher.

34
35 Refer to agency specific policies for reimbursement.

36 **MOVED TO CHAPTER 10**