

Chapter 04

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service Program Organization & Responsibilities

A. Introduction

The purpose of the *Interagency Standards for Fire and Fire Aviation Operations* handbook is to provide program guidance to ensure safe, consistent, efficient and effective fire and aviation operations. This handbook supplements the policies, objectives, and standards for fire management presented in the *U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Manual* and the *Department of the Interior Departmental Manual*. This handbook will be reviewed and updated annually.

B. Agency Administrator Roles

The Secretary of the Interior, through the Directors of the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS), National Park Service (NPS) and the Deputy Commissioner of Indian Affairs (BIA) is responsible for wildland fire management activities of the Department (including such activities when contracted for, in whole or in part, with other agencies or tribes) under the statutes cited in *620 DM 1.1*.

1. Director

The Director of the Fish and Wildlife Service has overall responsibility for the service wildland fire management program. The Director will ensure that all regional fire management activities are formally evaluated.

2. Chief, National Wildlife Refuge System

The National Wildlife Refuge System under the Chief provides leadership for the wildland fire management program. The National Wildlife Refuge System also formally evaluates all regional fire activities at least every five years. The Assistant Director is authorized to promulgate and approve the *Fire Management Handbook* and other fire related handbooks as needed to provide guidance.

3. Regional Director

The Regional Director is responsible for the wildland fire management program in the region and for designating a qualified Regional Fire Management Coordinator. The Regional Director, through the Regional Fire Management Coordinator, will provide wildland fire management program support to service lands located within their geographic region. The Regional Director will identify and clarify the roles and responsibilities of other Regional Office staff that might provide oversight to the Fire Management Program.

4. Project Leader

The Project Leader is responsible for planning and implementing an effective wildland fire management program on service lands under his/her jurisdiction. The Project Leader, in conjunction with fire management specialists, determines the level of fire management effort required to meet wildland fire management objectives of each unit. The Project Leader will ensure that an approved FMP is prepared for service lands under their jurisdiction. This would include appropriate consultation with staff specialists such as the Regional Historic Preservation Officer or Service Archeologist if appropriate. If the fire management program warrants, the Project Leader will establish a position to function as the Fire Management Officer for the field office. Otherwise, the Project Leader will assign the fire management responsibilities to a staff member as a collateral duty. A staff member, assigned fire management responsibilities as a collateral duty, will meet fire management qualification requirements established by the service. Project Leaders are to ensure that personnel hired in dedicated, fire funded positions are made available for dispatch to off-refuge/interagency wildland and prescribed fire management operations. Project Leaders will meet fire management training requirements established by the service for their positions.

Management Performance Requirements for Fire Operations

PERFORMANCE REQUIRED	FWS Director	Regional Director	Project Leader
1. Take necessary and prudent actions to ensure firefighter and public safety.	T	T	T
2. Ensure sufficient qualified fire and non-fire personnel are available to support fire operations at a level commensurate with the local and national fire situations.	T	T	T
3. Ensure Fire Management Officers (FMOs) are fully qualified.	T	T	T
4. Provide a written delegation of Authority to FMOs that provides an adequate level of operational authority. Include Multi-Agency Coordinating (MAC) Group authority, as appropriate.	T	T	T
5. Identify resource management objectives to maintain a current fire management plan (FMP) that identifies an accurate and defensible Normal Year Readiness of funding and personnel.		T	T

PERFORMANCE REQUIRED	FWS Director	Regional Director	Project Leader
6. Develop protection and use standards and constraints that are in compliance with agency fire policies.		T	T
7. Ensure use of fire funds is in compliance with Department and Agency policies.	T	T	T
8. Management teams will 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 team transfers of command, periods of multiple fire activity, and Red Flag Warnings.	T	T	T
9. Review safety policies, procedures, and concerns with field fire and fire aviation personnel. Discussions should include issues that could compromise safety and effectiveness during the upcoming season.			T
10. Ensure timely follow-up actions to program reviews, fire preparedness reviews, fire and fire aviation safety reviews, fire critiques, and post-season reviews.	T	T	T
11. Ensure fire and fire aviation preparedness reviews are conducted in all unit offices each year. Personally participate in at least one review annually.		T	T
12. Ensure an approved burn plan is followed for each prescribed fire project, including follow-up monitoring and documentation to ensure management objectives are met.		T	T
13. Meet annually with major cooperators and review interagency agreements to ensure their continued effectiveness and efficiency (may be delegated by Regional Level).		T	T

PERFORMANCE REQUIRED	FWS Director	Regional Director	Project Leader
14. Ensure that a Wildland Fire Situation Analysis (WFSA) is completed and approved on all fires that escape initial attack.			T
15. Ensure reviews are conducted on all fires that require a WFSA. Personally attend reviews on Type 1 and Type 2 fires. (Regional Director may delegate)		T	T
16. Ensure that a Wildland Fire Implementation Plan (WFIP) is completed and implemented for all fires managed for resource benefits.			T
17. Provide management oversight by personally visiting wildland and prescribed fires each year.		T	T
18. Provide incident management objectives, written delegations of authority, and agency administrator briefings to incident management teams.			T
19. Monitor the fire situation and provide oversight during periods of critical fire activity/situations of high risk.	T	T	T
20. Evaluate the need for resource advisors for all fires, and assign as appropriate.			T
21. Convene and participate in annual pre- and post-season fire meetings.	T	T	T
22. Attend Fire Management Leadership Course.		T	T
23. Ensure appropriate investigations are conducted for incidents, entrapments, and serious accidents.	T	T	T
24. For all unplanned human-caused fires where liability can be determined, ensure trespass actions are initiated to recover cost of suppression activities, land rehabilitation, and damages to the resource and improvements.		T	T
25. Certify Wildland Fire Implementation Plan or Wildland Fire Situation Analysis on a daily basis.			T
26. Complete Go/No-Go checklist for prescribed fire.			T

PERFORMANCE REQUIRED	FWS Director	Regional Director	Project Leader
27. Ensure there is adequate direction in fire management plans to identify fire danger awareness with escalating fire potential.			T
28. Ensure compliance with National and Regional Office policy and direction for prescribed fire activities and ensure that periodic reviews and inspections of the prescribed fire program are completed.	T	T	T
29. Review Prescribed Fire Plans and recommend or approve the plans depending upon the delegated authority. Ensure that the Prescribed Fire Plan has been reviewed and recommended by a qualified technical reviewer who was not involved in the plan preparation.		T	T

C. Fire Management Staff Roles

1. National Office

Service Fire Management Coordinator (SFMC). The Service Fire Management Coordinator is the Chief of the Fire Management Branch in the National Wildlife Refuge System, and is the Service representative at the National Interagency Fire Center (NIFC). The SFMC, through *Service Manual 621 FW 1*, is delegated authority by the Director to represent the Service on the National Multi-Agency Coordinating Group (MAC Group). The SFMC is responsible for implementing the decisions of the MAC Group as they affect U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service areas. The decisions of the MAC Group include the prioritizing of incidents nationally and the allocation or reallocation of firefighting resources to meet national priorities.

The Fire Management Branch is responsible for providing technical direction and coordination of fire management planning, policy development, and procedures servicewide.

2. Regional Office

Regional Fire Management Coordinator (RFMC). The RFMC provides coordination, training, planning, evaluation, and technical guidance for the region and is available to provide assistance for intra-agency and interagency wildland fire management needs. The RFMC will meet qualification requirements established by the service for the position. The RFMC, through written delegation by the Regional Director, is delegated authority to represent the region on

the Geographic Multi-Agency Coordinating Group (GMAC Group). The RFMC is responsible for implementing the decisions of the MAC Group as they affect U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service areas. The decisions of the GMAC Group include the prioritizing of incidents and the allocation or reallocation of firefighting resources to meet wildland fire management priorities.

3. Refuge

Fire Management Officer (FMO). Fire Management Officers will be assigned where an individual refuge wildland fire management program requires wildland fire management expertise. An FMO may be assigned to provide wildland fire management support to a group of refuges (zone or district) when individually each refuge does not warrant a fulltime FMO. These are dedicated, fire funded positions, and as such are a regional and national resource. The FMO may be called upon to assist in both intra-agency and interagency wildland fire management needs. The FMO will meet qualification standards established or adopted by the Service for the position.

Fire Management Staff Performance Requirements for Fire Operations

PERFORMANCE REQUIRED	Fire Director	RFMC	FMO
1. Maintain safety first as the foundation for all aspects of fire and fire aviation management.	T	T	T
2. Ensure completion of a job hazard analysis (JHA) for fire and fire aviation activities so mitigation measures are taken to reduce risk.			T
3. Ensure work/rest and R&R guidelines are followed during all fire and fire aviation activities. Deviations are approved and documented.	T	T	T
4. Ensure that only trained and qualified personnel are assigned to fire and fire aviation duties.	T	T	T
5. Develop, implement, evaluate, and document fire and fire aviation training program to meet current and anticipated needs.	T	T	T
6. Establish an effective process to gather, evaluate, and communicate information to managers, supervisors, and employees. Ensure clear and concise communications are maintained at all levels.	T	T	T
7. Develop and maintain an open line of communication with public and cooperators.	T	T	T

PERFORMANCE REQUIRED	Fire Director	RFMC	FMO
8. Ensure that the fire and fire aviation management staff understand their role, responsibilities, authority, and accountability.	T	T	T
9. Based on allocated funding level, provide a safe, effective, and efficient fire protection and use program.	T	T	T
10. Organize, train, equip, and direct a qualified work force. An Individual Development Plan must be provided for incumbents who do not meet new standards. Establish qualification review committees.	T	T	T
11. Take appropriate action when performance is exceptional or deficient.	T	T	T
12. Ensure fire and fire aviation policies are understood, followed, and coordinated with other agencies as appropriate.	T	T	T
13. Monitor to recognize when complexity levels exceed program capabilities. Increase managerial and operational resources to meet the need.	T	T	T
14. Initiate, conduct, and/or participate in fire management related reviews and investigations.	T	T	T
15. Provide for and personally participate in periodic site visits to individual incidents and projects.	T	T	T
16. Utilize the incident complexity analysis to ensure the proper level of management is assigned to all incidents.		T	T
17. Review and evaluate performance of the fire management organization and take appropriate actions.	T	T	T
18. Ensure incoming personnel and crews are briefed prior to fire and fire aviation assignments.	T	T	T
19. Ensure a Wildland Fire Situation Analysis (WFSA) is completed and retained for all fires that escape initial attack.		T	T
20. Monitor fire season severity predictions, fire behavior, and fire activity levels. Take appropriate actions to ensure safe, efficient, and effective operations.	T	T	T
21. Ensure that adequate resources are available to implement fire management operations.	T	T	T

PERFORMANCE REQUIRED	Fire Director	RFMC	FMO
22. Provide fire personnel with adequate guidance, training and decision-making authority to ensure timely decisions.		T	T
23. Ensure a written, approved burn plan exists for each prescribed fire project.		T	T
24. Ensure all escaped prescribed fires receive a review at the proper level.	T	T	T
25. Ensure effective transfer of command of incident management occurs and oversight is in place.	T	T	T
26. Develop and maintain agreements, annual operating plans, and contracts on an interagency basis to increase effectiveness and efficiencies	T	T	T
27. Provide the expertise and skills to fully integrate fire and fire aviation management into interdisciplinary planning efforts.	T	T	T
28. Work with cooperators to identify processes and procedures for providing fire safe communities within the wildland urban interface.	T	T	T
29. Develop, maintain, and annually evaluate the FMP to ensure accuracy and validity.		T	T
30. Ensure budget requests and allocations reflect Normal Year Readiness in the FMP.	T	T	T
31. Develop and maintain current operational plans, e.g., dispatch, pre-attack, prevention.	T	T	T
32. Ensure that reports and records are properly completed and maintained.	T	T	T
33. Ensure fiscal responsibility and accountability in planning and expenditures.	T	T	T
34. Assess, identify, and implement program actions that effectively reduce unwanted wildland fire ignitions and mitigate risks to life, property, and resources.		T	T
35. Effectively communicate the “natural role” of wildland fire to internal and external agency audiences.	T	T	T
36. Complete trespass actions when unplanned human-caused fires occur.		T	T

PERFORMANCE REQUIRED	Fire Director	RFMC	FMO
37. Ensure compliance with National and Regional Office policy and direction for prescribed fire activities and ensure that periodic reviews and inspections of the prescribed fire program are completed.	T	T	T