

2007 Preseason Talking Points

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Appropriate Management Response

- Appropriate Management Response (AMR) is used by fire managers and agency administrators to determine the most effective and efficient way to respond to a wildfire.
- AMR is part of the Federal Wildland Fire Management Policy developed by the federal agencies with state representation in 1995, validated in 2001, and fully implemented in 2003.
- AMR includes a continuum of suppression strategies and tactics that can be used on the same fire. For example, on one side of the fire burning in areas with minimum values at risk, the chosen tactic may be to monitor that flank of the fire until it reaches an area that allows a high probability of success with direct attack.
- The appropriate response to any fire is determined by fire managers and the local agency administrator. Fully considering all the options available empowers the local unit manager to minimize risk and reduce costs.
- For every fire, AMR decisions are made with the goal of using available firefighting resources to manage the fire as quickly as possible using the most effective, most efficient and the safest means available.
 - Safety is always the primary concern for a wildfire and is considered in the development of every suppression strategy. Fully considering the appropriate response may mean reduced risk to firefighters based on the projected success of the specific response.
 - Suppressing a fire effectively means we wisely pick our tactics. Incident managers constantly evaluate the fire situation and pick their strategies based on the likelihood that the selected suppression tactics will be successful and the risks can be mitigated.
 - Suppressing a fire efficiently means we must ensure no wasted efforts. Constant evaluation of the fire situation allows incident managers to ensure that firefighting resources are being used where they are needed most and where they are most likely to succeed.
- The AMR is balance between the fire's current and potential threats, and the agency's responsibility to safely control the fire using the most effective and economical means available. Potential threats include impacts to human health and safety, communities and structures, and high value natural resources such as watersheds and clean air.
- Decision support tools are being enhanced to help agency administrators and incident mangers make better decisions in determining the response to a wildfire. The Fire Spread Probability (FSPro) program assesses the probabilities and direction of fire spread over time and the Rapid Assessment Values At Risk (RAVAR) program assists managers in determining values at risk.

Aviation Assets

- The wildland firefighting agencies continue to employ the most optimum mix of fixed and rotor wing aircraft according to the characteristics of each fire. Both tools are valuable in fire management missions.
- We are confident that we have the assets in place or available to respond to the air support needs of the ground firefighters.

Key Fleet Components

- **Large Airtankers:** Sixteen civilian airtankers, nine P2Vs, and seven P3s, are on federal contract as airtankers in 2007.
- **Type 1 and 2 Helicopters:** For 2007, about 20 Type 1 and Type 2 exclusive use helicopters will be on national contracts and about 86 Type 3 helicopters on regional contracts. There are also nearly 500 CWN Type 1, 2 and 3 helicopters available for fire management support because of competing interests in the private sector.
- **CL-215 airtankers (water scoopers):** There will be two scooper airtankers on exclusive-use contracts and one additional call-when-needed scooper aircraft available this year. Additional scooper aircraft will be available through agreements with state and county firefighting agencies.
- **Single Engine Airtankers (SEATs):** 20 Single Engine Air Tankers (SEATs) will be on exclusive use contracts for the 2007 fire season. Approximately 80 SEATs are available as CWN contracts. Through a refinement in aviation management plan, the BLM is utilizing faster, higher-capacity SEATs on exclusive-use contracts and lengthening the terms of the contracts to ensure appropriate capability and support is achieved. Some states and local areas also contract their own SEATs.
- **Modular Airborne Fire Fighting System (MAFFS):** A total of eight MAFFS units will be available for use in military C-130 aircraft. Four units were refurbished in 2006, and the remaining four will be refurbished in a staggered schedule in early 2007 so that six will be available at any time.

Biomass

- The Secretaries of the Department of the Interior, Agriculture, and Energy support the utilization of woody biomass by-products from restoration and fuels treatment projects wherever ecologically and economically appropriate and in accordance with the law.
- Biomass fuels are accumulating faster than our ability to treat them. According to a 2004 Forest Service report, the net growth of forest biomass exceeded removals (harvest, disease, and fire) by 33 percent in 2001. This means the risk of abnormally high-intensity fires fueled by excess biomass will persist in the near term.
- The Woody Biomass Strategy promotes the use of forest and woodland materials produced as a by-product of vegetation treatments associated with reducing hazardous fuels and improving forest and rangeland health. The strategy has four primary components:
 - Making woody material available from vegetation management activities where it is environmentally appropriate and permitted in the land management plan;
 - Assisting both traditional and new emerging forest product industries to identify potential sources of raw material and gather other information needed to develop business plans;
 - Demonstrating success and helping other offices through the establishment of biomass demonstration sites;
 - Buying bio-based products within the agencies.
- To follow through with a commitment made by the Secretary of the Interior at the Biomass Conference in 2004, the Department has prepared a final rule that establishes a special contract provision to be used in vegetation management contracts that provides an option for contractors to purchase the woody biomass produced by their activities.
- Biomass for energy, especially biofuels, has positive attributes that contribute to a healthy environment and economy. Biomass utilization can reduce forest management costs, help mitigate climate change, reduce risks to life and property, and help provide a secure, competitive energy source. Shifting to a homegrown, renewable energy economy provides opportunities for growth and expansion, especially for rural communities as these renewable feedstocks are directly connected to the land, primarily agricultural and forestry lands.

Community Assistance

- The Department of the Interior and the Forest Service have programs and grant opportunities that directly assist communities that deal with risks from wildland fire. The programs and grants assist at risk communities to reduce losses from wildland fire on private lands, and improve basic firefighting safety and capacity that are critical to the safety and protection of these communities. There are many benefits to the interagency efforts to assist communities.
- Helping community partners plan for and mitigate hazards on private lands in the Wildland Urban Interface will reduce overall federal wildfire suppression costs.
- Wildland urban interface fuels funds can be used to develop wildfire hazard assessments, mitigation plans, and specific hazard reduction projects.
- The programs have also stimulated local economies by providing employment through contracting and other means to produce products for area markets (posts, poles, firewood).
- The Bureau of Land Management strives to spend 51 percent of its fuel budget through contracting.
- \$50 million has been awarded to rural fire departments since 2001.
- Community Wildfire Protection Plans (CWPPs) are an essential element for reducing the risk to communities from wildland fire. Since the inception of the National Fire Plan, the DOI agencies, Forest Service, and the State Foresters have assisted communities nationwide in completing CWPPs. The National Association of State Foresters recently surveyed states and report that around 1,100 CWPPs have been completed so far, covering about 3,300 communities. Approximately 450 additional CWPPs are in progress.
- Additionally, communities with Community Wildfire Protection Plans in place will be given priority for funding of hazardous fuels reduction projects carried out under the auspices of the Healthy Forest Restoration Act.
- To assist communities in developing their CWPPs, the Community Wildfire Protection Plan Handbook was developed and sponsored by Society of American Foresters, the National Association of Counties, the National Association of State Foresters, and the Western Governor's Association.

Ready Reserve, Volunteer Fire Assistance, and State Fire Assistance

- The Forest Service's Volunteer Fire Assistance (VFA) program provides Federal financial, technical, and other assistance through State Foresters or similar officials to organize, train, and equip fire departments in rural areas and rural communities of 10,000 or less, to prevent and suppress fires. The VFA program is sponsored and funded by the Forest Service and administered by the State Foresters through the state and private forestry system.

- The DOI agencies and their state partners initiated the Ready Reserve program in 2006. This program focuses on training rural and volunteer firefighters. Training for rural fire departments through Ready Reserve focuses on enhancement of firefighter safety, building wildland suppression skills, and improving overall cooperator effectiveness, particularly in WUI firefighting operations.
- The Forest Service State Fire Assistance program supports critical preparedness needs for firefighter safety, increased initial attack capability and training. Base levels of funding are distributed to the State Foresters based on recognition of the need for states to maintain and enhance coordination and communication with federal agencies.
- The Wyden Amendment (Public Law 109-54, Section 434), initially passed in 1998 and extended through the end of 2011, authorizes the Forest Service to enter into cooperative agreements to benefit resources within watersheds on National Forest System lands.
- Agreements under the Wyden Amendment may be with willing Federal, Tribal, State, and local governments, private and nonprofit entities, and landowners to conduct activities on public or private lands for the following purposes:
 - Protection, restoration, and enhancement of fish and wildlife habitat and other resources,
 - Reduction of risk for natural disaster where public safety is threatened, or
 - A combination of both.

Contract Crews

- Wildland fire management agencies have used contract fire crews since the 1980s.
- Among the challenges is providing adequate oversight for an industry that continues to grow and offer additional capability. Re-focusing the government workforce to provide oversight is challenging with many competing needs for employees' time. This adjustment is underway as contractors remain a portion of our workforce into the future.
- All firefighters have a voice where safety is concerned. All firefighters have the right and responsibility to speak up whenever safety concerns arise. Agencies are responsible to ensure performance related safety problems are immediately addressed as they are identified and the agencies notified.
- Both the federal and state agencies and other organizations that use contract wildland firefighters have systems in place to identify and remedy performance-based issues. Pre-season inspections target training records to ensure certified firefighters are working for the contractor. Contract requirements provide specific direction on how work is to be performed. On incidents, Incident Commanders and Safety Officers have the authority to pull any firefighters or crews off the line if they are not performing in a safe or effective manner - regardless of crew type or affiliation.

- All wildland firefighting crews must perform to standards set by the National Wildfire Coordinating Group. Federal agencies have the responsibility to offer annual refresher and safety training to agency firefighters. Wildland fire crew contractors are responsible for training and educating their employees to NWCG standards as well. Contract trainers are fully qualified as wildfire instructors and meet NWCG standards as well.
- The federal agencies consistently work with state partners in pursuing improvements in the current contracting programs to promote consistency. Agencies use “performance based contracts” which gives preference to the higher performing contractors.
- Several approaches have been enacted to improve performance of contract firefighting resources:
 - Strengthened contract training and performance requirements.
 - Increased inspections of equipment and reviews of documentation.
 - Identifying consistent high performing contractors and their crews.
 - Penalizing violators of contract specifications.
 - Requiring performance evaluations on all crews after each incident.

Establishment of the National BLM Radio Division

- Although changes in the structure of the program have occurred, current organizational roles from the State level down through Field Offices will stay the same, including staff reporting relationships.
- The division chief will consult with the States in developing a transition plan that will describe how the BLM will implement our unified, national radio communication program. Input and insight from the field will be essential to this transition plan. This transition plan will recognize the goals established in the recommendations to the ELT and will recognize any implications of a department-wide radio program that may result from implementation of the January 2007 audit report.
- Part of the transition plan will address a new program funding process that will begin in FY 2008. Currently, there is a proposal to continue using either the Bureau-wide or centrally funded line item to operate the program with funding for labor and operations going to NIFC. Funding for State radio personnel would be provided through the NRCD at NIFC.
- The NRCD will provide strong field support to field offices. Examples of this support will include providing consistent policy and guidance, and standardizing terms and processes that are responsive to the BLM’s business needs.
- The division chief will work with the States and Centers to identify immediate equipment needs.

- Consistency is a major goal within the radio management program. Toward that end, the BLM will pursue designating single makes and models of mobile and handheld radios.
- After assessing needs, the NRCD will develop a consistent radio training program for users and technicians. Field involvement will be a key in developing the content and scope of training.
- Within 24 months, a program review using as many members of the 2006 Executive Radio Oversight Task Group as possible, will be conducted.
- A Radio Steering committee, including business representatives from all major radio user groups in the BLM, will be formed. This steering committee's role will be to advise the division chief, and assist the division chief in program evaluation and futuring.

Fire Prevention

Firewise Defensible Space Concepts:

- Keep a clearing of at least 30 feet around your house for fire fighting equipment. Keep ample turnaround space near your house for fire equipment.
- Create a "fuelbreak" - - - driveways, gravel walkways, or lawns.
- Remove "ladder fuels." They link the grasses and the tree tops.
- Prune tree limbs so the lowest is between 6' - 10' from the ground. Dispose of cuttings and debris promptly, according to local regulations.
- Remove leaf clutter from your roof and yard. Remove dead or overhanging branches.
- Store firewood away from your house. Store and use flammable liquids properly.
- Don't keep combustible materials under decks or elevated porches.
- Mark your driveway and access roads clearly.
- Prevent sparks from entering your house by covering vents with wire mesh 1/8" or smaller.
- When possible, use construction materials that are fire-resistant or non-combustible.

Fire Program Analysis

- FPA is an interagency analysis system that will:
 - Be used to inform the budget formulation
 - Assist in the allocation of appropriated funds
 - Assist in trade-off evaluations for potential investments at both FPU and national scales of fire management program components.
- Participating federal agencies include the USDA Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management, National Park Service, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, and the Bureau of Indian Affairs.
- The FPA project recognizes that the state wildland fire agencies are distinct entities that have unique budgetary and planning requirements. With that in mind,

FPA is being designed to encourage participation from our nonfederal wildland fire partners.

- Considerable effort has gone into assembling a group of respected scientists who represent broad experience, diverse disciplines, and technical skills. Their expertise ensures the project's design is based on peer reviewed science.
- FPA is actively seeking advice from a variety of subject matter experts in wildland fire, economics, modeling, prevention and fuels.

Prototyping the FPA system

- On December 18, 2006, the Wildland Fire Leadership Council gave the Fire Program Analysis project the approval to develop an interagency system prototype.
 - The FPA tool will empower and enable wildland fire managers from different agencies to plan jointly, using the knowledge gained to make more effective decisions across agency boundaries.
- The FPA “proof of concept” prototype is due June 30, 2007. The development is a fast paced, ongoing, adaptive process. Concepts and theories are being generated, and repeatedly tested before inclusion in the system prototype.
- Seven Fire Planning Units in Alaska, Oregon, California, Utah, Montana, New Jersey and Florida have been invited to participate in the prototyping phase of the FPA project.
 - These “prototype” Fire Planning Units represent a mix of unit complexities such as, multiple federal and non federal partners, geographic areas, and diverse fire regimes.
 - Their feedback, suggestions, and testing efforts are critical to the evolutionary development of the FPA prototype.
- The FPA prototype includes an initial response simulator, a large fire module, and a decision support tool. Combined, they form the base of the FPA prototype.
 - The Initial Response Simulator (IRS) provides the ability to analyze different wildland fire initial response organizations.
 - A large fire module uses a geospatial analyses to help determine the likelihood of an acre burning.
 - A decision support system (Bayesian Decision Network) provides the “glue” that links expert opinion and modeled simulation results to performance measures.
- The effectiveness, efficiency and performance measures focus on answering questions related to:
 - Growing annual suppression costs for large fires.
 - Fires that occur and cause significant damage within the wildland urban interface (WUI).
 - Fires that cause severe impacts to highly valued resources.
 - Prevention and suppression of unwanted and unplanned fires.
 - Attaining fire and fuels management objectives on federal lands.

Fire Safety

Building and Putting Out a Campfire:

- Build campfires away from overhanging branches, steep slopes, rotten stumps, logs, dry grass and leaves. Pile any extra wood away from the fires.
- Keep plenty of water handy and have a shovel for throwing dirt on the fire if it gets out of control.
- Start with dry twigs and small sticks. Add larger sticks as the fire builds up.
- Put the largest pieces of wood on last, pointing them toward the center of the fire, and gradually push them into the flames.
- Keep the campfire small. A good bed of coals or a small fire surrounded by rocks gives plenty of heat. Scrape away litter, duff, and any burnable material within a 10-foot-diameter circle. This will keep a small campfire from spreading.
- Be sure your match is out. Hold it until it is cold. Break it so that you can feel the charred portion before discarding it. Make sure it is cold out.
- Never leave a campfire unattended. Even a small breeze could quickly cause the fire to spread.
- Drown the fire with water. Make sure all embers, coals, and sticks are wet. Move rocks around to check for burning embers underneath.
- Stir the remains, add more water, and stir again. Be sure all burned material has been extinguished and cooled. Use dirt if you do not have water. Mix enough soil or sand with the embers. Continue adding and stirring until all material is cooled.
- Feel all materials with your bare hand. Make sure that no roots are burning. Do not bury your coals because they can smolder and break out.
- Contact your local agency for fire restrictions and closures.

Charcoal Briquettes:

- After using the burning charcoal briquettes, "dunk 'em!" - don't sprinkle. Soak the coals with lots of water, stir them and soak again. Be sure they are out cold! Carefully feel the coals with your bare hands to be sure.

Smoking:

- When smoking is permitted outdoors, safe practices require at least a 3-foot clearing around the smoker. Grind out your cigarette, cigar, or pipe tobacco in the dirt. Never grind it on a stump or log. Use your ashtray while in your car.

Lanterns, Stoves, and Heaters:

- Cool all lanterns, stoves, and heaters before refueling. Place them on the ground in a cleared area to fill them. If fuel spills, move the appliance to a new clearing before lighting it. Recap and store flammable liquid containers in a safe place. Never light lanterns and stoves inside a tent, trailer or camper. If you use a lantern or stove inside a tent or trailer be sure to have adequate ventilation. Always read and follow instructions provided by the manufacturer.

Spark Arresters:

- All types of equipment and vehicles including chain saws, portable generators, cross-country vehicles, and trail bikes require spark arresters if used in or near grass, brush or a wooded area. To make sure that the spark arrester is functioning properly check with the dealer or contact your local Forest Service or State forestry office.

- Never park or drive your vehicle on dry grass.

Fireworks:

- Fireworks are not permitted on public lands.

Agricultural Residue, Debris and Forest Litter Burning:

- Consider the alternatives to burning. Some types of debris such as leaves, grass, and stubble may be of more value if used for compost. Household items such as plastics, glass, paper, and aluminum cans can be recycled or hauled to a local sanitary landfill.
- Be sure you are fully prepared before burning your field or garden spot. To control the fire, you will need a source of water, a bucket, and a shovel for tossing dirt on the fire.
- If possible, a fire line should be plowed around the area to be burned. Large fields should be separated into small plots for burning individually. Stay with your fire until it is out.
- Contact your local fire official before burning to obtain information about the burning regulations in your area. Some communities forbid burning debris, such as leaves, grass, brush, and trash--others allow burning only during specified hours.
- Contact your local forester before doing any burning in a wooded area. The forester will weigh all factors, explain them to you, and offer technical advice.

Fire Shelters

- Firefighter training will continue to stress entrapment avoidance and risk mitigation. Firefighters are taught that the shelter is the tool of last resort, and firefighters should do everything they can to avoid situations where they would need to use a fire shelter.
- The New Generation fire shelter provides better protection against radiant heat and direct flame, but is not a guarantee of survival in intense wildland fire conditions.
- The new generation fire shelter is one pound heavier and the packaged size 40% larger than the older style shelter.
- The fire shelter redesign project started in January 2000. The New Generation Fire Shelter was selected by Fire and Aviation Management in 2002. The new shelter system, which includes the fire shelter, training shelter, video and booklet, became available to firefighters in 2003.
- Although there is a sufficient supply of New Generation shelters available, the target dates for complete transition to the New Generation shelter are December 31, 2008, for federal agency firefighters and December 31, 2009, for all state and cooperator fire fighters.
- The old-style fire shelters can be carried until the transition date as long as they meet the refurbishment standards. Firefighters must inspect shelters before they are carried for fire use.

- The original fire shelters have been used since the 1960s, and have saved the lives of more than 300 firefighters, and prevented hundreds more serious injuries. Fire shelters are designed for deployment where fuels are sparse or can be removed and the ground cleared where they will be deployed. The shelters are not designed to withstand direct flame.
- A new large-sized New Generation fire shelter is now available through GSA. It is recommended that people over 6'1" in height obtain and carry a large-size fire shelter. The large shelter will provide better protection to bigger people by allowing less contact of the shelter material with an occupant's body, by providing more air space between the shelter and an occupant, and by reducing the stress on the shelter material caused when a larger person stretches out inside the shelter.

Firefighter Liability

- Unprecedented legal proceedings associated with the deaths of four firefighters on the 2001 ThirtyMile Fire have caused the interagency fire community to reexamine issues and concerns related to the accident investigation process and employee and firefighter liability.
- Recent criminal litigation has posed both real and potential threats to firefighter morale, recruitment, retention, and safety procedures; impacts are being felt at all levels of the national fire community.
- As a result, a senior-level steering group representing federal and state fire agencies has been created to develop a strategy addressing these threats and to provide critical support and timely information to the field.
- To address these concerns, the interagency fire community is working with the administration and congress to provide clarification and support to the fire community in three specific areas:
 1. Seeking legislative support to amend Public Law 104-208 sec. 636 to reimburse federal firefighters for 50% of Professional Liability Insurance (PLI) premiums, while seeking opportunities for non-federal employees to obtain affordable liability insurance.
 - PLI provides coverage for legal liability of damages due to injuries towards other persons, their property or other damage (for example, expenses of litigation and settlement) resulting from any acts, errors or omissions of the covered individual while performing official duties.
 - PLI does not cover criminal liability damages or associated fees.
 - Individuals must have PLI at the time the incident took place, as well as the time a claim is placed.
 2. Clarify Public Law 107-203 to reflect the original intent of the legislation so internal investigations to obtain lessons learned are independent from OIG's administrative and criminal investigations.
 3. The interagency fire community must seek legislative support to incorporate 'Privilege' in investigation protocols which will promote complete and

candid information intended for learning lessons and improving safety and risk management practices, while keeping these investigations separate and discreet from administrative and criminal investigations.

- This would create a “Firewall” between accident investigations and criminal investigations.
- Privilege is a concept widely used in other professions and has been used in military and NASA accident investigations for over forty (40) years.
- In spite of the urgency of these threats and support at the Department level, achieving some resolution will require action by the Congress and the Administration and may not be accomplished in the near-term.
- If successful, long-term benefits will provide a safer, less-encumbered fire working environment and greater support for firefighters in the field.

Firewise

- The national Firewise Communities program is intended to serve as a resource for agencies, tribes, organizations, fire departments, and communities across the U.S. that are working toward reducing the loss of lives, property, and resources to wildland fire by building and maintaining communities in a way that is compatible with our natural surroundings.
- The national Firewise Communities program is a multi-agency effort designed to reach beyond the fire service by involving homeowners, community leaders, planners, developers, and others in the effort to protect people, property, and natural resources from the risk of wildland fire - before a fire starts.
- The Firewise Communities approach emphasizes community responsibility for planning in the design of a safe community as well as effective emergency response, and individual responsibility for safer home construction and design, landscaping, and maintenance.
- The Firewise Communities/USA recognition program is an interagency approach to enable communities across the nation to achieve a high level of protection against wildland/urban interface fire as well as sustainable ecosystem balance.
- Firewise Communities/USA uses a simple template that is easily adapted to different locales. It works in the following way:
 - Wildland fire staff from federal, state or local agencies provides a community with information about coexisting with wildfire along with mitigation information tailored to that specific area.
 - The community assesses its risk and creates its own network of cooperating homeowners, agencies and organizations
- More information can be found at www.firewise.org

Hazardous Fuels

- The President's Healthy Forests Initiative, the 10-Year Comprehensive Strategy, the Healthy Forests Restoration Act, the National Fire Plan, direct all the wildland firefighting agencies to collaborate with our partners in State, Tribal, and local governments and communities to establish goals and implement projects for reducing hazardous fuels. Reducing risk to firefighters, communities, important watersheds and restoring the health of public and tribal lands are the central themes of these initiatives.
- The most effective way to reduce large fire suppression costs, protect community values, restore forest and grassland health, and improve firefighter and public safety is through an aggressive hazardous fuels treatment program using a wide variety of tools and methodologies.
- Hazardous fuels are treated using a wide range of tools with the goals of reducing the risk of wildland fire to communities and the environment. Fire managers use mechanical equipment, prescribed fire, chemicals, and/or a combination of different techniques and methods to efficiently reduce hazardous fuels. The selected method is based on what is appropriate to achieve the resource benefits on each landscape based on the resource or fire management plan.
- Prescribed fire is an effective tool for hazardous fuel reduction. Over the last three years, the Forest Service and DOI agencies have managed more than 5,000 prescribed fires to treat over 3 million acres per year. Of these, less than one percent escaped to become wildfires.
- Hazardous fuel treatments are especially important in fire-dependent ecosystems, where prolonged fire exclusion has resulted in over-accumulated fuels. The agencies continue to emphasize fuels projects in high priority areas identified in a collaborative setting where communities, watersheds, and critical resources are most at risk.
- The U.S. Forest Service and the Department of the Interior agencies treated 3.6 million acres in 2006. Of those, 1.6 million of these acres were in the wildland/urban interface.
- In fire-dependent ecosystems, the management and use of wildland fire at appropriate intensities is an essential method of restoring forest health conditions. Mechanical hazardous fuels treatments may often be required before wildland fire use projects can be implemented within the planned and acceptable limits of social, economic, and ecological risk that has been defined in the local agency resource plan.
- Local communities and citizens can contribute to the safety of firefighters, the public, and their belongings by ensuring they have provided defensible space by clearing flammable fuels and vegetation away from their homes and businesses.

Healthy Forest Initiative (HFI) and Healthy Forest Restoration Act (HFRA)

- President Bush announced the Healthy Forests an Initiative for Wildfire Prevention and Stronger Communities, known as the HFI, in August 2002. The HFI focuses on improving regulatory processes and looking for legislative actions to ensure more timely decisions, greater efficiency, and better results in reducing the risk of catastrophic wildfires by restoring forest and rangeland health. More information is available at www.healthyforests.gov
- The Healthy Forests Restoration Act was passed by Congress in the fall of 2003. The Act provided new authorities to the BLM and the Forest Service to expedite NEPA processes and provided for improved judicial review of projects challenged in court. The Healthy Forests Restoration Act also emphasizes work on Federal lands near communities and high-risk municipal watersheds, resources threatened by insects and disease, and threatened and endangered species habitat.
- The HFI and the HFRA both provide tools to the federal agencies to ensure more timely decisions, greater efficiency, and better results in reducing the risk of catastrophic wildfires by restoring forest and rangeland health.
- An interagency field guide has been developed to carry out the Healthy Forest Initiative and the Healthy Forests Restoration Act's objectives of reducing wildfire threats on lands managed by BLM and Forest Service. The field guide is located on the web at www.fs.fed.us/projects/hfi/field-guide/web/

Management Efficiencies (Forest Service)

- Over the last 20 years the Forest Service has been persistently challenged by fire management costs.
- Contributing factors to these cost challenges include climate changes, the expanding WUI, and general forest health conditions resulting in larger more intense fires.
- In 2006, fire suppression expenditures accounted for 40% of the agency budget or \$1.5 billion.
- In 2007, 41% of the Forest Service budget is allocated to fire management, and in 2008 that percentage climbs to 48%.
- Because of these escalating costs, other agency programs are suffering and our ability to care for the land and serve the people is compromised.
- Various internal and external groups have studied these costs and have provided over 300 recommendations intended to curb increasing suppression costs if implemented.

- The Chief directed a small group of Forest Service subject matter experts to review and consolidate these recommendations and develop actions the Forest Service can take over the short and long term to support sound decision making and ensure prudent choices are made when spending. The resulting recommendations have been titled Management Efficiencies.
- These actions were categorized into Leadership, Operations, and Management and when implemented serve to ensure the following:
 - Clear and concise understanding of Appropriate Management Response – choosing the best suppression strategy for the resources and values at risk.
 - Expanded Knowledge, Skill, and Ability for Agency Administrators responsible for managing large or nationally significant fires.
 - Increased oversight from the Regional and Washington offices on incidents of national significance in support of the agency administrator.
 - Severity funds are used within limits.
 - Establishment of a definite budget for each incident (use of SCI).
 - Critical resources (Type 1 firefighting crews & aircraft) are managed nationally for maximum flexibility.
 - Revision of the current aviation strategy ensuring the safe and financially prudent use of firefighting aircraft.
- The details of the proposed management efficiencies are being formulated and expected implementation of the short-term actions will begin in the 2007 fire season.
- These recommendations go hand-in-hand with the variety of business processes the Forest Service has changed in recent years to more efficiently manage its resources.

Department of Defense Support

National Guard: Although much of the Department of Defense assets, including National Guard and Reserves are fulfilling an important mission overseas, there is no indication those forces will not be available to assist in firefighting efforts should the need arise. There is no way of knowing at this time when, where, and if they'll be needed.

- Three Air National Guard and one Air Force Reserve unit that provide aerial support to firefighting with the eight MAFFs units will be available this summer as needed.
- National Guard assets may be activated within each state by the governor and they do provide a valuable service when needed during wildfire operations, but they are rarely used as firefighters in suppression operations. Rather, they

generally provide logistical support in the form of transportation for crews and equipment.

- With some exceptions, such as in Montana, where crews of National Guard troops were specifically trained for fireline operations, and in California, where National Guard helicopters are trained specifically for coordinated aerial firefighting operations, National Guard troops generally provide valuable ground and logistical support functions for firefighting efforts.
- The deployment of National Guard troops overseas will not significantly impact fireline operations. The transportation and support function filled as needed by National Guard forces may be contracted from resources in the private sector.
- Open lines of communication between federal firefighting agencies, governors, and military leaders are maintained continuously throughout year as the fire season progresses.

Active Duty:

- The Department of Defense has not indicated to the federal wildland firefighting agencies there will be any problems providing up to two task forces for firefighting if needed through the existing cooperative agreement. The availability of DoD assets is always based on the national situation at the time of the request.

National Response Plan

- The National Response Plan (NRP) is an all-discipline, all-hazards plan that establishes a single, comprehensive framework for the management of domestic incidents. It provides the structure and mechanisms for the coordination of Federal support to Tribal, State and local incident managers and for exercising direct Federal authorities and responsibilities.
- The NRP is designed to provide seamless cooperation among all levels of government. It addresses federal agency to federal agency support including letters of agreement and Memorandums of Understanding.
- The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) is responsible for coordinating NRP activities and provides Mission Assignments, sometimes referred to as “taskings” to the federal agencies. The agencies respond using their own funds and seek reimbursement from FEMA.
- The NRP includes full “life cycle” guidance for an incident:
 - Awareness
 - Prevention
 - Preparedness
 - Response
 - Recovery

- The National Incident Management System (NIMS) Command and Management Section establishes the Incident Command System as the national standard to be used by all responders for incident management in implementing the NRP. It was developed by the federally funded FIRESCOPE Program supported by federal, state, and local government personnel.
- There are fifteen Emergency Support Functions (ESFs) outline in NRP. The ESFs are detailed descriptions of the missions, policies, and responsibilities of federal agencies under each ESF. The U.S. Forest Service and the Department of the Interior agencies are assigned coordination, primary response and support roles throughout the ESFs.
- The Forest Service is the Primary and Coordinating agency for implementing the Firefighting ESF #4 and DOI is a Primary Agency along with USDA for implementing the Agriculture and Natural Resources ESF #11 under the NRP. DOI is the primary agency under ESF #9 which is Search and Rescue.
- The National Response Plan and a full description of the ESFs and assignments is located at www.dhs.gov/interweb/assetlibrary/nrpbaseplan.pdf
- Currently, NIMS and the NRP are both under revision. There could be some major changes and other minor changes to both. The draft NRP will be out for comment starting mid-March and the final document expected in early June.

Radio Communications - Narrowbanding

- As of January 1, 2005, all federal agencies were mandated by National Telecommunications Information Administration (NTIA), the frequency management oversight group for federal agencies, to operate radios in the narrowband mode when using federally assigned frequencies. Some of the more progressive states have already made the narrowband conversion, the rest of the states are required to convert by 2013.
- If communications interruptions occur, firefighters must emphasize their Situational Awareness to make sure they are still fighting fire safely.
- All radios purchased by the federal agencies in the last 10 years are narrowband/wideband capable. That is, they have the ability to operate in the narrowband mode or the wideband mode on a per channel basis. Since about 2000, many of the agencies have been purchasing radios that are P25 compliant (operate in the analog wideband mode, analog narrowband mode, or digital mode on a per channel basis). At this time the DOI agencies and FS are purchasing P25 compliant radios only.
- All aviation radios used for air-to-ground contact to firefighters are narrowband capable radios. All federal aviation contracts currently require a radio with both narrowband and wideband capability. Most forests, districts, parks, and refuges have converted to a narrowband communication system.

- Contractors are responsible for supplying their own narrowband capable radios according the specifications in their contract.
- Locally assigned frequencies from the home units are typically assigned during the initial stages of an incident. If the incident requires additional radio frequencies to operate safely, additional frequencies may be obtained and assigned to allow the incident to operate independently. When this occurs, the local home unit assigned frequencies will be available for the local unit's regular day to day operations.
- Both short and long-term action items to address the radio communications issues were created in 2005. Most problems with the radio communications on incidents are either related to inadequate maintenance or training (short-term). All agencies have fewer field-going radio technicians than in previous years due to reorganization and budget cuts.
 - Training:
 - Many firefighters have attended narrowband/wideband training. There is an established website that offers programming and user training for a variety of radios <http://www.fireradios.net>
 - Communications Unit Leaders assigned to incidents have attended the narrowband/wideband training or the COML/COMT refresher courses.
 - Maintenance:
 - All radios must be properly maintained which includes current software upgrades and patches. Contact the radio manufactures for current information pertaining to software upgrades and versions.
- Any questions regarding types and manufacturers of radios for purchase, or other support issues can be addressed to the Communications Duty Officer at NIFC: 208-387-5644.
- The BLM is in the process of moving the management of its national radio program, including fire, resource management and law enforcement, from Washington to NIFC. This will result in improvements to the overall program.

Retardant

- Retardant does not put fires out. It blocks oxygen from the fire. It slows down the rate of spread to give crews on the ground a chance to build a line around the fire. In some situations it can help protect structures, especially when dropped from helicopters with pinpoint accuracy hovering directly above the fire or building.
- The phase-out of long-term retardants containing sodium ferrocyanide (YPS) has begun and 2006 is the final year the Forest Service and Department of the Interior wildland firefighting agencies purchased products containing this ingredient. YPS was a corrosion inhibitor in the retardant necessary to protect tanks and equipment.

- The Forest Service, which administers the contract for Long-Term Retardants, is undergoing additional specification changes that will be more favorable to the environment.
- In 2004 the Forest Service Employees for Environmental Ethics (FSEEE) organization, which represents 2 to 3 percent of Forest Service employees, filed a lawsuit against the Forest Service relative to not performing NEPA on the use of fire retardant and failure to engage in formal consultation with the Fish and Wildlife Service and the National Marine Fisheries Service under the Endangered Species Act. The federal court in Montana found in favor of FSEEE in a decision issued October 24, 2005.
 - The Forest Service Fire and Aviation, Ecosystem Management Coordination, and Watershed, Fish, Air and Rare Plants leadership are working on an Environmental Assessment expected to be completed in the Spring, 2007.
 - The Court did not issue an injunction against the use of long-term retardants but directed the Forest Service to comply with NEPA and begin formal consultation with the Fish and Wildlife Service as required by Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act.
 - If retardants do enter waterways and adverse effects to T&E species occur, the Forest Service and the FWS/NMFS (National Marine Fisheries Service) use emergency consultation to identify, evaluate and document the effects of the action.
- The Court noted final agency action could be found in several agency documents – guidance for retardant use, contracts, and firefighting manuals. The Court left to the Forest Service’s discretion whether to do an environmental assessment or environmental impact statement to comply with NEPA.
- The interagency “Guidelines for Aerial Application of Retardants and Foams in Waterways” will continue to be followed regardless of the types of long-term retardants used. The guidelines require a 300 foot buffer around lakes, streams and ponds.
- This process is working. Out of hundreds of thousands of retardant drops since the 1990s, there have only been eight known cases of retardant getting into water. Not all of those eight resulted in fish kills.

Safety

Communications

- The National Interagency Incident Communications NIIC) radio cache is now operating according to legal mandate on narrowband frequencies. Firefighters should be skilled in operating radios between narrowband and wide-band on incidents.
- If communications are interrupted, firefighters must rely on situational awareness to make decisions and appropriately maintain or alter tactics.

Driving Operations

- No driver will drive more than ten hours (behind the wheel) within any duty day. Multiple drivers in a single vehicle may drive up to the duty day limit as long as no one person exceeds the ten hour limitation.
- A driver will only drive if he/she had at least eight consecutive hours off duty before beginning a shift. Exceptions apply only to immediate and critical needs for suppression objectives or for firefighter and public safety.

Refresher

- The 2007 revisions to the Wildland Fire Safety Training Annual Refresher (WFSTAR) website are available at <http://www.nifc.gov/wfstar/>.
- Updates for 2007 include a new National Emphasis Topic and Hot Topics. The 2007 National Emphasis Topic is Conducting Effective Briefings. The 2007 Hot Topics include Firing/Ignition Techniques, Hazard Trees/Tree Felling, Working Around Equipment, and All-Hazard Incident Assignments. A Human Factors web page was also added.
- The “What’s New” section includes information on Human Factors, additional Tactical Decision Games, a new fire behavior assessment website for fireline safety (FLAME), a new firefighter fitness program website (FireFit), and recently approved NWCG qualification requirements for instructors of annual fireline safety refresher training.

Work-Rest Guidelines

- The Work-Rest Guidelines have not changed. The 2:1 work to rest ratio is still valid and will be followed. The guidelines state that for every two hours worked, one hour of rest will be provided to incident personnel. In addition, two days of R&R are required after 14 working days.
- Flexibility to exceed the guidelines is allowed when warranted under specific circumstances. Narrow exemptions will be granted by agreement of the incident management personnel and the responsible agency administrator.
- Work-Rest Guidelines apply to all federal wildland firefighting agencies, state personnel and cooperators.

Federal Interagency Wildland Fire Management Policy

- Protection of human lives is our first priority. Protection of property and natural and cultural resources follows. These priorities, in order, serve as a guide for the commitment of resources for wildland fire management actions. Some basic principles are:
- “Firefighter and Public Safety is the first priority.” ALL wildland fire management plans, strategies and tactics must reflect this commitment.
- Firefighter safety comes first on every fire every time.

- Every firefighter has the right to a safe assignment.
- Every agency administrator, every fire manager, every fireline supervisor, and every firefighter is responsible to ensure that established safety practices are known and observed.

Medical Qualification Standards

- The Medical Standards are required by Office of Personnel Management (5 CFR part 339) for firefighters and law enforcement with the purpose is to ascertain if employees can perform at the arduous level without harm to themselves or others. The Standards were developed by an interagency team from the Department of the Interior (DOI) and U.S. Forest Service under the guidance of the Office of Personnel Management (OPM).
- The Federal Interagency Wildland Firefighter Medical Qualification Standards program has finished the DOI nationwide implementation with the Eastern and Southern geographic areas. The Forest Service has implemented the program in Regions 1, 2, 6 and 10 and is delaying further implementation until 2008. The Medical Qualification Standards program will exceed 18,000 arduous personnel this coming fiscal year.

Standard Firefighting Orders

The Standard Firefighting Orders were based in part on the successful “General Orders” used by the United States Armed Forces. The Standard Firefighting Orders are organized in a deliberate and sequential way to be implemented systematically and applied to all fire situations. Although the order of the ten Firefighting Orders has changed over the last few years, in 2003 NWCG formally adopted the orders in their original order:

1. Keep informed on fire weather conditions and forecasts.
2. Know what your fire is doing at all times.
3. Base all actions on current and expected behavior of the fire.
4. Identify escape routes and safety zones and make them known.
5. Post lookouts when there is possible danger.
6. Be alert. Keep calm. Think clearly. Act decisively.
7. Maintain prompt communications with your forces, your supervisor, and adjoining forces.
8. Give clear instructions and insure they are understood.
9. Maintain control of your forces at all times.
10. Fight fire aggressively, having provided for safety first.

WFM-Stratified Cost Index (SCI): A Performance Measure for Large Fire Suppression Cost

With growing fire suppression costs and the lack of a quantifiable performance measure for suppression expenditures, Congress directed the Forest Service to develop such a measure in collaboration with the Department of the Interior (DOI) and begin reporting in FY 2006.

- SCI was developed by economists at the Rocky Mountain Research Station and subsequently adopted as a performance measure by the Forest Service and the Department of the Interior in fiscal year 2006.
- Using historical data, SCI is used to calculate expected suppression costs of large fires (≥ 300 acres) with similar fire characteristics such as fuel types, fire intensity, topography, region, and values to be protected.
- Actual expenditures on 2007 and future large fires will be compared to their “projected” cost as calculated by the SCI.
- As it matures, the SCI will provide information for real-time decision support to agency administrators and incident managers along with insights into large fire suppression costs and trends that could result in significant cost savings.
- Current plans are to begin more widespread field use in 2007 for all fires over five million dollars.

SCI will:

- Identify fires with significantly higher or lower expenditures than expected suppression costs. Analysis of these fires will indicate current efficiencies along with practices and policies where changes should be implemented that could result in cost savings.
- Be used as an indicator for real-time decision support to evaluate suppression alternatives. SCI used with tools such as the Wildland Fire Decision Support System (WFDSS) including WFDSS-FSPRO and WFDSS-RAVAR provides feedback to the agency administrator and IMT managing a fire that can be used to affirm or modify a strategy.
- Provide a meaningful measure to monitor large fire suppression cost trends by identifying the percent of large fires more than one standard deviation above or below the expected cost each fiscal year.
- Provide a common quantifiable performance measure for the five federal wildland fire agencies. This measure is incorporated into the interagency document, “A Collaborative Approach for Reducing Wildland Fire Risks to Communities and the Environment: 10 Year Implementation Strategy 2006 update.”

- Provide increased accuracy and value with future enhancements such as the incorporation of spatial data, enrichment of the data set (entering more large fire information), and development of additional fire size classes.

Smoke and Smoke Impacts

General Talking Points

- Fire and smoke are an inevitable and natural part of fire seasons around the country.
- Smoke is made up of small particles, gases, and water vapor.
- Although we are getting closer to being able to predict smoke impacts from wildfire, the technology has not yet been perfected. The best way to predict when smoke may be heavy in your area is to watch the amount of smoke a nearby fire creates. Chances are, if a fire near you put out a large amount of smoke today, then smoke may be heavy in your area by the next morning.
- Generally, the worse the visibility is directly around you, the worse the smoke. One can use visibility directly around you to help gauge wildfire smoke levels and approximate air quality if you do not have a smoke monitor near you.
- A number of factors determine how long smoke will last, including the number of fires in the area, fire behavior, weather and topography. Smoke also can travel long distances, so fires in other areas can affect smoke levels in your area.
- Firefighters do try to manage smoke when possible. As they develop their strategies for fighting a fire, firefighters consider fire behavior and weather forecasts, topography and proximity to communities – all factors that can affect smoke.
- It may appear to be less smoky during prescribed fires because fire managers plan extensively for prescribed burns. They choose the areas that need to burn, the size of those areas, and the weather and wind conditions that must exist before and during the prescribed burn. Weather and wind conditions that are favorable to dispersing the smoke are key to implementing a prescribed fire plan.

Health-related Talking Points

- Avoid breathing smoke. If you are healthy, you usually are not at risk from limited amounts of smoke exposure, but extended amounts of smoke exposure can even affect healthy people.
- People with heart or lung diseases, such as congestive heart disease, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, emphysema or asthma, have an increased health risk from smoke.
- If you have asthma, consult your doctor for additional advice in smoke conditions. If you're supposed to measure your peak flows, make sure you do so. Call your doctor if your symptoms worsen.

- Effects from smoke may include a scratchy throat, cough, irritated sinuses, headaches, runny nose and stinging eyes. Children and people with lung diseases may find it difficult to breathe as deeply or vigorously as usual, and they may cough or feel short of breath. People with diseases such as asthma or chronic bronchitis may find their symptoms worsening.
- Healthy adults generally find that their symptoms (runny noses, coughing, etc.) disappear after the smoke is gone.
- Many areas report EPA's Air Quality Index for particulate matter, or PM. PM (tiny particles) is one of the biggest dangers from smoke. As smoke gets worse, that index changes -- and so do guidelines for protecting yourself. So listen to your local air quality reports.
- If it looks smoky, you may want to limit or eliminate exercise or other outdoors activities.
- If you're advised to stay indoors, keep your windows and doors closed. Running your air conditioner, if you have one, can help but remember to keep the fresh air intake closed and the filter clean.
- Air cleaners that work by generating ozone can put more pollution in your home.
- You can help keep particle levels inside lower by avoiding using anything that burns, such as wood stoves and gas stoves --even candles.
- Paper "comfort" or "nuisance" masks are designed to trap large dust particles -- not the tiny particles found in smoke. These masks generally will not protect your lungs from wildfire smoke.
- The same particles that cause problems for people may cause some problems for animals. It's a good idea to monitor the health of your animals and/or contact your veterinarian or county extension office for more information.
- Firefighters also may experience short-term effects of smoke, such as stinging, watery eyes, coughing and runny noses. Firefighters must be in good physical condition, which helps to offset adverse effects of smoke.
- If you have smoky conditions due to an inversion in place, these talking points may be used:
- The smoke impacting local communities is due to unfavorable weather conditions which are holding the smoke at low altitude and winds that are directing the smoke toward communities.
- The weather that we are experiencing is known as an inversion, which is the result of a stable air mass that has settled over the area and is preventing smoke from rising out of the area.

Wildland Fire Decision Support System (WFDSS) Tools

- There are new tools being developed and used that can assist fire managers and agency administrators make better decisions regarding strategies and tactics on wildland fires.
- These tools can help display to local officials and the general public why strategies and tactics were chosen.
- The goal of the current tools is to enhance the accuracy of WFSAs. WFDSS is actually a new system being developed that incorporates FSPPro and RAVAR as part of its web based decision support modules and is designed to replace the current WFSAs and the WFIP in the future.
- The Forest Service is working with IBM, Northrop Grumman and Systems for Environmental Management to develop the website.

FSPPro – Fire Spread Probability Model.

- FSPPro is a spatial model that calculates and maps the probability of fire spread from a current fire perimeter or ignition point for a specified time period.
- Combining data layers that include, bulk density of vegetation, current weather projections, historical weather scenarios, fuel moisture classifications, fire history and wind speed and direction, FSPPro can push fire projections out as far as 30 days.
- The mode is designed for situations when managers do not have a high level of confidence in weather projections, or for periods when long-term weather projections are not available.
- FSPPro helps managers prioritize firefighting resources based on anticipated fire spread.

RAVAR – Rapid Assessment of Values at Risk

- RAVAR is also a spatial model, showing the primary resource values to be protected/at risk by ongoing large fire events.
- The program can be directly integrated with the FSPPro model to identify the likelihood of different resources being threatened.
- The most important data layer generated by the RAVAR model is the structure layer using local parcel records, but RAVAR is not limited to the assessment of threatened structures.
- Any resource value that has been spatially mapped may included within a RAVAR assessment including power lines, road networks, gas pipelines, recreation facilities, sensitive wildlife habitat, cultural heritage sites and municipal water intakes.

- RAVAR assists fire managers in the prioritization of firefighting resources based on values to be protected.

Wildland Fire Use

- Wildland Fire Use (WFU) is the application of the Appropriate Management Response to naturally ignited wildland fires to accomplish specific resource management objectives in predefined geographic areas outlined in Fire Management Plans. Operational management is described in Wildland Fire Implementation Plans (WFIP) developed by local managers for each event.
- The goal of the WFU program is to protect, maintain, and enhance resources and, as nearly as possible, allow fire to function in its natural ecological role as defined within the context of the agency mission and approved land use/resource management objectives.
- WFU fires are managed for resource benefits. These benefits include the restoration and maintenance of healthy forests, rangelands and wetlands. It is important to recognize that WFU fires are actively managed to ensure that the fire stays within boundaries and meets objectives.
- Under current policy, only naturally ignited fires (those started by lightning and lava) are permissible sources for WFU. The only appropriate management response allowed for human-ignited wildfires (including arson or escaped prescribed fires) is suppression.
- WFU is often a long duration event which requires public understanding of smoke events, temporary inconveniences regarding travel, and potential closure of public use areas.
- Land Use, Resource Management, or Fire Management Plans provide the basis for allowing WFU on federal lands. If WFU is not authorized in one of these plans, for any local federal land unit, all unplanned ignitions on that unit must be suppressed.
- To effectively manage WFU the area must be large enough to support anticipated fire spread the risk to the public must be minimal.
- A revised policy on WFU implementation was released in March 2005. Entitled the “Wildland Fire Use – Implementation Procedures Reference Guide”, it expands and clarifies the detailed execution of wildland fire use planning and field implementation consistent with Federal Wildland Fire Policy. The 2005 Guide tiers directly to agency policy and guidance as specifically cited in agency manuals.
- The purpose of the 2005 Guide is to provide standardized interagency operational level interpretation and implementation. Planning, implementation procedures, management requirements, and formats, including the Wildland Fire Implementation Plan (WFIP), are provided.