

2006 Wildland Fire Talking Points



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NOTE: The 2006 wildland fire talking points are intended for public affairs officers and public information officers throughout the wildland fire community.

Administratively Determined Pay Plan

- With some modifications from last year, the DOI agencies and the Forest Service are implementing a refined Administratively Determined (AD) pay plan for emergency firefighters. Development of this plan included a process to level-classify the most common positions to more accurately compensate AD hires for the duties performed.
- The 2006 plan will increase pay rates between 11 and 15 percent for firefighters, squad bosses, and crew bosses, which comprise approximately 65 percent of emergency firefighter hires and are critical positions to fire suppression operations.
- The Administratively Determined Pay Plan to be implemented beginning in March 2006, is the result of long and detailed analysis and review, and it appropriately applies the intent of the original hiring authority, and it sets appropriate pay rates commensurate with job duties and responsibilities.
- The AD hiring authority was directed at strengthening the capability of on-the-ground response resources. This group – firefighters, squad bosses, and crew bosses – will see increases of 11 to 15 percent in pay rates under the new plan. This is a positive move that will enable the fire community to continue attracting and retaining this critical workforce.
- Although several changes are reflected in the AD Pay Plan for 2006, federal retirees can continue to be hired and work under the AD authority with no impact on their annuity.
- In the course of the leveling and classification process, conducted by subject matter experts and classification specialists who compared job responsibilities to comparable jobs in the full-time workforce, pay rates for some positions were reduced. Such reductions are based on a lack of sufficient documentation to support higher, typically negotiated rates paid in recent years.
- In order to reduce the impacts resulting from the reduced rates, a proposal to “freeze” the rates for these pay bands at the 2005 level has been agreed to by DOI and Forest Service fire leadership. Once annual cost of living adjustments bring these rates to the 2005 levels, they would then increase at the same increments as the remainder of the pay bands.
- Adjustments to the plan can be made through an established annual review process. Details of this process are being worked on collaboratively with Human Resources.
- The Administratively Determined hiring authority is just one hiring authority available to meet the needs of temporary workers in the fire program.

AD Pay Plan Background

- The Administratively Determined (AD) Pay Plan for Emergency Workers was authorized for the Forest Service by Congress in 1951 and to the Department of the Interior in 1975. The intent of the AD law was specifically to hire local help on a short-term basis to supplement regular Federal employees in responding to an emergency that threatened life and property. The law was designed to pay a casual/emergency hire under this authority at regular rates and without premium payments such as overtime or holiday pay.
- A revision of the AD Pay Plan was prompted by DOI bureau and Forest Service fire directors who collectively concluded that the AD authority and pay plan had expanded beyond its original intent and use. As a result, the National Wildfire Coordinating Group's Incident Business Practices Working Team tasked three different interagency groups to analyze the use of the AD Pay Plan, its covered positions, and associated pay rates.
- The previous pay plan was based on four levels of pay, AD-1 through AD-4, with the highest paid AD-5 rate negotiable based on intermediate rates ranging from \$21 to \$29 per hour. However, there was no computational basis for the AD-5 rate, and no classification for those jobs to determine how they corresponded to the GS-9/11/12/13 levels. The new pay plan uses 12 pay levels to more accurately reflect the range of skills and responsibilities across agencies and geographic areas.

Aviation Assets

An Operational Service Life has been developed for the P3 and the P2V aircraft indicating they can be flown safely for three to six years depending on the individual aircraft's hours. There is no equivalent engineering data available to create an operations service life study for the Douglas 4, 6, and 7. Since the federal agencies are using the operational service life standard, the Douglas products will not be on a federal contract for firefighting support in 2006.

- 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 are on federal contract. Nine P2Vs, and seven P3s will serve as airtankers in 2006.

Type 1 and 2 Helicopters: Fifteen Type 1 and seven Type 2 exclusive use helicopters are on contract and about 86 Type 3 helicopters. There are also 254 Call When Needed (CWN) Type 1 and 2 helicopters on contract and over 300 Type 3 CWN. Some CWN may be converted to exclusive use as needed will result in significant cost savings if these ships are needed.

CL-215 airtankers (water scoopers): There will be 2 scooper air tankers on exclusive-use contracts and 3 additional call-when-needed scooper aircraft available in Alaska this year. Additional scooper aircraft will be available through agreements with state and county firefighting agencies.

Single Engine Airtankers (SEATs): 16 Single Engine Air Tankers will be on exclusive use contracts for the 2006 fire season. Approximately 75 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 will be refurbished during intermittent periods in the spring.

Aviation Safety:

- All the heavy airtankers and about half of the Single Engine Airtankers (SEATs) are now equipped with additional safety equipment such as the Automated Flight Following (AFF) and Traffic Collision Avoidance Systems in the large airtankers.
- We continue to gather Operational Load Monitoring data on the heavy airtankers for analysis to better determine the characteristics of the firefighting environment. A structural health program is underway by the BLM on its fire aircraft.
 - Large airtankers continue to be downloaded 15 percent by weight as part of the contract.

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.
- 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.

Community Assistance

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 more than 4,000 communities nationwide in completing CWPPs.

- 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 HFRA.
- 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.
- Assisting at risk communities to reduce losses from wildland fire on private lands, and improving basic firefighting safety and capacity are critical to the safety and protection of these communities.
- Helping community partners plan for and mitigate hazards on private lands in the Wildland Urban Interface will reduce overall federal wildfire suppression costs.
- The programs have also stimulated local economies by providing employment through contracting and other means to produce products for area markets. (posts, poles, firewood)
- Fifty-one percent of the Bureau of Land Management has a solid target to spend 51 percent of its fuel budget thru contracting.

- Wildland urban interface fuels funds can be used to develop wildfire hazard assessments, mitigation plans, and specific hazard reduction projects.

Assistance comes through several programs.

Rural and Volunteer Fire Assistance Grants

- The Department of the Interior's Rural Fire Assistance program provides grants for basic safety equipment, firefighter training, fire tools, and essential communications equipment to rural fire departments. Rural Fire Departments, which protect communities of 10,000 or less near DOI lands, are eligible.
- 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 by the Forest Service and administered by the State Foresters through the state and private forestry system.
- The DOI funds for RFA total approximately \$8.5 million.
- \$50 million was awarded to rural fire departments since FY01.
- The federal agencies and their state partners are initiating the Ready Reserve program in FY06. This program focuses on training rural and volunteer firefighters to meet the wildland fire fighter requirements.
- Program emphasis is to provide basic wildland fire safety equipment, training, tools and equipment, and funds for local fire prevention and education activities to eligible rural fire departments.
- There are several different cooperative forestry programs that might provide community assistance through USDA Forest Service's State and Private Forestry Program.

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 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.

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.

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 forester before doing any burning in a wooded area. The forester will weigh all factors, explain them to you, and offer technical advice.

Contract Crews

Wildland fire management agencies have used contract fire crews since the 1980s. However, as the industry evolves, both hiring States and federal agencies have been continuously challenged with making the overall program safe and effective.

- 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. The Office of Inspector General has completed a review of crew contract firefighting programs and has provided recommendations to the agencies for program and oversight improvements. These recommendations have been adopted.
- 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.

Cost Containment

- Fires are suppressed at minimum cost, considering firefighter and public safety, benefits, and values to be protected, consistent with resource objectives.
- Fires are analyzed for the Appropriate Management Response (AMR) which includes a variety of options from full suppression to Wildland Fire Use according to the relevant Fire Management Plan. When fire management plans are in place, the opportunity exists to consider the less costly strategy of WFU to achieve resource benefits. These fires must be in an area that does not threaten communities or damage natural resources.
- An Incident Business Advisor (IBA) must be assigned to any fire with projected suppression costs of more than \$5 million. An IBA is advised for fires with suppression costs of \$1-5 million. If a certified IBA is not available, the approving official will appoint a financial advisor to monitor expenditures. The IBA reports directly to the responsible Agency Administrator.
- A new training course for Agency Administrators/Line Officers on the responsibility of employing sound incident business management practices and how to best use the expertise of the IBA was completed in 2005.
- Line officers will be responsible for approving management strategies and their associated costs. As costs increase, the authorizing official is higher in the organizations until, at the most costly level, the Forest Service Chief or Directors of the DOI agencies must approve the plans.
- All Type 1 Incident Management Teams and many Type 2 Incident Management Teams are staffing Cost Unit Leader positions and using Incident Cost And Reporting System (ICARS) software to make daily incident cost projections, determine cost centers, and make recommendations for cost efficient management such as prompt release of under-utilized equipment and aircraft and tracking excess personnel and equipment shift lengths.
- Prevention teams have decreased human-caused fire occurrence in many drought areas, and many potentially large, costly fires are being controlled in extended attack with the additional severity resources.

Fire Program Analysis

- The purpose of the Fire Program Analysis (FPA) System is to provide managers with a common interagency process for fire management planning and budgeting to evaluate the effectiveness of alternative fire management strategies through time, to meet land management goals and objectives. FPA will reflect fire objectives and performance measures for the full scope of fire management activities.

- Phase 1 of the FPA is being implemented, and the analysis and outputs generated are being used to inform the development of the upcoming 2008 budget request. Briefing materials have been distributed and it is imperative that management be fully engaged in this process.
- On February 15, 2006, FPA passed a critical deadline, as almost all Fire Planning Units (FPUs) completed their FPA submissions. FPUs are the geographic zones defined for the interagency fire program analysis as defined by local land managers. All agencies (federal, tribal, state, and local) with wildland fire management responsibility within an FPU are potential partners in the analysis.
- In February 2006, 135 of 138 Fire Planning Units (FPU) had accomplished Phase 1 analysis 'runs' and forwarded Budget Development and Delivery (BDD) submissions to their state offices. State offices are to submit approved BDD inputs to the National Office by March 1, 2006.
- FPA is remarkable for a number of reasons. First, it is an almost unprecedented collaboration across Departments and Agencies. Second, it has been developed, implemented, and used under an extremely short timeframe, even for contemporary software projects. Third, it has demonstrated that the sort of clear communications we use on the fireline are possible at higher levels in the process of formulating a budget submission package.
- FPA isn't perfect. It has required education, innovation, and persistence. It has been only through the efforts of Fire Program staffs that the submission deadline was met with nearly 100% participation. We now have an anchor point to work from.
- During the summer of 2006, the FPA staff will be reviewing the results of the February 2006 analysis runs. The purpose of this review is to determine the soundness of data inputs and evaluate model functionality
- The outcomes generated by technical and management reviews, lessons learned, and feedback from fire planning units will provide the direction for improvement in the implementation process. These improvements will be incorporated as we move forward in the development of Phase 2.
- Design and development work of Phase 2 of the Fire Program Analysis is ongoing. Fire Planning Units in Alaska, Oregon, California, Utah and Florida have been designated as prototypes for this second phase.

Federal Wildland Fire Management Policy Implementation

The June 2003 release of the Interagency Strategy for the Implementation of Federal Wildland Fire Policy clarified and finalized the remaining differences that existed among the federal wildland fire management agencies in the implementation of the 1995 Federal Wildland Fire Management Policy. (Note: Tribally-operated programs may choose to implement some policies differently than the five federal agencies with wildland fire

management programs). The following statements clarify the implementation of agency policy.

- The Appropriate Management Response (AMR) is any specific action suitable to meet Fire Management Unit (FMU) objectives. Typically, the AMR ranges across a spectrum of tactical options (from monitoring to intensive management actions). The AMR is developed by using FMU strategies and objectives identified in the Fire Management Plan.
- Only one management objective will be applied to a wildland fire. Wildland fires will either be managed for resource benefits or suppressed. A wildland fire cannot be managed for both objectives concurrently. If two wildland fires converge, they will be managed as a single wildland fire.
- Human caused wildland fires will be suppressed in every instance and will not be managed for resource benefits.
- Once a fire has been managed for suppression objectives, it may never be managed for resource benefit objectives.
- The Wildland Fire Situation Analysis is to be used to document the suppression strategy from the full range of responses available for suppression operations. Suppression strategies are designed to meet the policy objectives of suppression.
- Wildland fire use is the result of a natural event. The Land/Resource Management Plan, or the Fire Management Plan, will identify areas where the strategy of wildland fire use is suitable. The Wildland Fire Implementation Plan (WFIP) is the tool that examines the available response strategies to determine if a fire is being considered for wildland fire use.
- When a prescribed fire or a fire designated for wildland fire use is no longer achieving the intended resource management objectives and contingency or mitigation actions have failed, the fire will be declared a wildfire. Once a wildfire, it cannot be returned to prescribed fire or wildland fire use status.

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 never put themselves in a situation where the shelter is needed.
- 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 redesigned shelter showed a 22% reduction in temperature rise in radiant heat when compared to the current shelter, an 81% reduction in temperature rise in the convective heat test.

- The new generation fire shelter is one pound heavier and the packaged size 40% larger than the older style shelter.
- The New Generation Fire Shelter redesign project started in January 2000. The new shelter system, which includes the fire shelter, training shelter, video and booklet became available to firefighters in 2003.
- Tearing of the floor material near the shake handle area was found during training deployments of the shelter in the spring of 2004. A recall was ordered and a retrofit was designed and implemented in conjunction with GSA and the two sewing contractors. About 68,000 fire shelters were recalled and retrofitted, and are now available to firefighters.
- Although there is a sufficient supply of New Generation shelters available, the target date for complete transition to the New Generation shelter is December 31, 2007 for federal agency firefighters and December 31, 2008 for all state and cooperator fire fighters. The old-style fire shelters can be carried as long as they meet the refurbishment standards.
- 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.

Hazardous Fuels

- The President's Healthy Forests Initiative, the 10-Year Comprehensive Strategy, the Healthy Forests Restoration Act, the National Fire Plan, directs 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 to complete.

- 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 an average of 4,200 prescribed fires to treat over 1.2 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.D.A. Forest Service and the Department of the Interior agencies treated 4.3 million acres in 2005. 2.4 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.

HFI/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.
- The HFRA was passed by Congress in the fall of 2003. The Act provided new authorities to the BLM and the Forest Service to expedite NEPA requirements 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.

- Interagency guidelines have been developed to carry out the Healthy Forests Restoration Act's objectives of reducing wildfire threats on lands managed by BLM and Forest Service and these can be found on the web at www.fs.fed.us/projects/hfi/field-guide/web/

Military Support

National Guard: Although much of the military, including National Guard and Reserves are fulfilling an important mission overseas, there is no indication that 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 and if they'll be needed.

- The three Air National Guard and one Air Force Reserve units that provide aerial support to firefighting with the eight MAFFs units will be available this summer as needed. Some of the units will be unavailable during periods of time for refurbishment, but this maintenance work is being scheduled to ensure at least half of the units are available at any given time.
- National Guard forces are activated in each state by the governor and they do provide a valuable role when needed during wildfire operations, but they are rarely used as firefighters in suppression operations. Rather, they provide logistical support in the form of transportation for crews and equipment.
- With few exceptions, such as in Montana where crews of National Guard troops were specifically trained for fireline operations, and in a few other areas where National Guard helicopters can be used for tactical operations, National Guard troops provide a valuable 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 will be maintained as the fire season progresses.

Active Duty:

- The Department of Defense has not indicated to the federal wildland firefighting agencies that there will be any problems providing two battalions for firefighting if needed through the existing cooperative agreement.

Minimum Age Requirements for Hazardous Duty Assignments on Wildland Fire Management Operations on Federal Jurisdictions

- Current Guidance in the National Wildfire Coordinating Group (NWCG) Interagency Incident Business Management Handbook states that 16 and 17 year olds may be hired and assigned only non-hazardous or non-arduous duties. This is the guidance that the federal agencies need to follow.
- Whenever there is an accident the evaluation always considers whether we have adhered to our established guidelines. It is important to follow the established guidance unless there is a compelling safety reason not to.
- In accordance with current federal guidance, persons under 18 years old will not perform hazardous or arduous duties during wildland fire management operations on federal jurisdictions.
- On incidents where the state has fire protection jurisdiction (may include federal lands), states may use youth crews with persons under 18 years old if their respective state law so allows.
- During Initial Attack the agencies agree to accept each other's standards. Once jurisdiction is established fire personnel will follow the jurisdictional standards.
- A number of states have programs that allow youth under 18 to take hazardous and/or arduous fire assignments. The age and other conditions for allowing persons under 18 to participate in fire assignments vary by state so there are no consistent standards across state governments.

National Interagency Management Organization (NIMO)

- The NIMO concept includes nine recommendations addressing improving training, enhancing non-traditional partnerships, increasing agency fuels expertise, and providing increasing opportunities to gain fire qualifications and experience. The NIMO teams will work to implement the recommendations, providing leadership in these areas and assuming all-risk and long duration incident management responsibility.
- One of the nine NIMO concepts calls for seven teams of seven members and three call-when-needed positions which meets NWCG short team definition. Members can come from Federal, State, or local agencies. Other needed positions would be ordered through the normal dispatch channels or through activation of agreements with non-traditional partners.

- The development of the NIMO program is based on several interagency reports over the last six years and is a response to the many factors affecting response to wildland fire and all-hazard incidents. Those factors include:
 - Major cultural and demographical changes in the workforce and programmatic changes in the wildland agencies are resulting in reduced participation on Incident Management Teams.
 - The increasing number of all-hazard incidents that can be long-duration assignments.
 - The need to address the hazardous fuels issue across all agencies and states requires that fire expertise remain on the home unit to complete projects.
 - The rising cost of fire management is creating a need to find new approaches in fire management and suppression organizations and responses.
- One outcome of creating NIMO teams may be a reduction in the number of national and geographic teams and commitments so that fire expertise is available on the home units to complete needed natural resource work including hazardous fuels projects.
- The NIMO teams would be assigned by the National Multi-Agency Coordinating (NMAC) group through an IMT Coordinator position based at NIFC. NMAC will be the oversight body for NIMO and Type 1 team assignments and performance. Type 2 teams would be assigned by geographic areas.
- The approved implementation plans calls for a phase-in of the NIMO teams, beginning with two teams in 2006 administratively assigned to Boise, Idaho and Atlanta, Georgia.
- The initial two teams are funded by the Forest Service at a cost of about \$2.5 million.

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 between all levels of government. It addresses federal agency to federal agency support including letters of agreement and Memorandums of Understanding.
- The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) is responsible for coordinating NRP activities. The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), an agency within DHS, 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 developed by the wildland firefighting agencies and partners as the system to be used by all responders as the national standard for incident management in implementing the NRP>.
- There are fifteen Emergency Support Functions (ESFs) outline in NRP. ESFs provide detailed description of the missions, policies, and responsibilities of the federal agencies under each ESF. The USDA Forest Service and the Department of the Interior agencies are assigned functions throughout the fifteen ESFs for coordination, primary response and support roles.
- 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.
- The National Response Plan and a full description of the ESFs and assignments is located at www.dhs.gov/interweb/assetlibrary/nrpbaseplan.pdf

Preparedness

- The Interagency Federal Wildland Fire Management Policy directs the federal wildland fire agencies and states to assure safe, cost effective fire management programs in support of land and resource management plans through appropriate planning, staffing, training, equipment, and management oversight.
- Personnel are trained and qualified for the emergency response positions that they are assigned.
- All units will adjust staffing levels based on observed and predicted fire danger to maintain protection capabilities. Staffing levels will be coordinated with adjacent cooperators.
- For unplanned wildfires, our objective will remain 99 percent initial/extended attack success rate in 2006.
- Initial attack operations will be the number one mobilization priority. All efforts will be made to use predictive services, anticipate threats, and preposition protection resources.

- Predictive Services unit on the geographic and national level will be a key in assessing fire activity risk so that decision makers can pre-position resources.
- Interagency cooperation is a keystone for national responses to wildland fire.

Radio Communications

- All federal agencies are mandated by National Telecommunications Information Administration (NTIA), the oversight group to federal agency, to use narrowband radios. All incidents on federal jurisdictions or those with federal cooperators must use narrowband frequencies. If a cooperator is on an incident and using federally assigned frequencies they must be using the narrowband mode.
- No firefighters have been injured due to radio communications issues. Firefighters use Situational Awareness to make sure that if they have interrupted communications capabilities, that they are still fighting fire safely.
- All radios purchased by the federal agencies in the last 10 years are backward compatible. That is, while they are narrowband radios, they are compatible and can speak to wideband radios when used and maintained correctly.
- All aviation radios for air-to-ground contact are narrowband radios. All federal aviation contracts currently require a multi-mode radio with both narrowband and wideband capability but must operate in the narrowband mode. Most forests, districts, parks, and refuges have converted to a narrowband communication system.
- Contractors are responsible for supplying their own radios according the narrowband specifications in their contract.
- Incidents have assigned frequencies at their home units, and when additional radios are requested, more frequencies are supplied to the incident so that it can operate independently of the local unit's frequencies. Since going to narrowband created more frequencies, theoretically we can 'borrow' more frequencies from other agencies as needed.
- 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) or older radio infrastructure (long-term).
- Training:
 - There have been training programs ongoing for the past five years, with an intensive schedule of training offered in the last two years.
 - All Type 1 crews and Smokejumpers have completed the training.
 - There is an established website that offers programming and user training for a variety of radios: <http://radios.nifc.gov>

- NIICD posts a list of all Land Mobile Radios (LMRs) that are 'fire' certified. The list can be found at www.fs.fed.us/fire/niicd/documents.html
- Communications Unit Leaders assigned to incidents must also have completed the training.
- Maintenance:
 - Narrowband radios operate on a more bounded system compared to wideband radios. An analogy is that you have less room for error on a one lane road than on a two lane road. On some wildland fires, the terrain can reduce the capability of the narrowband transmission.
 - The radios must be maintained and loaded with the latest software which is available for download by the manufacturers.
 - All agencies have less field-going radio technicians than in previous years due to reorganization and budget cuts.
- Radio Infrastructure:
 - All units must budget the new equipment required to provide narrowband-compliant repeater coverage. These costs must be factored in to each unit, and scheduling for upgrades made well in advance.

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 will use these products. YPS was a corrosion inhibitor in the retardant necessary to protect tanks and equipment.
- The Forest Service, who 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 for AFSEE on a decision issued October 24, 2005.
 - The Forest Service Fire and Aviation, Ecosystem Management Coordination, and Watershed, Fish, Air and Rare Plants leadership are studying the decision in order to identify and consider all options available. A follow-up hearing in February established a timeline of 18 months to complete the NEPA and consultation.

- 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/MFS 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 1990’s, 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 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.

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 2006 revisions to the Wildland Fire Safety Training Annual Refresher (WFSTAR) website are available at <http://www.nifc.gov/wfstar/>.
- Updates for 2006 include new Hot Topics and an expanded What’s New section. The 2006 Hot Topics include Radio Use and Narrowbanding, Conducting Effective Briefings, Facilitating Effective AARs, Ignition/Firing Techniques and the Interagency Reviews and Investigations Database. Since all of the Hot Topics are of relatively equal importance, no single National Emphasis Topic was identified.

- The expanded What's New section includes information on the 2006 version of the Incident Response Pocket Guide (IRPG), a training program titled Taking Good Weather Observations, a PowerPoint presentation titled Vehicle Fires -The Hidden Dangers, 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.
- However 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 Fire Management Plan and activities 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 Federal Interagency Wildland Firefighter Medical Qualification Standards program is in its fifth year of implementation for the DOI agencies. BIA has implemented bureau-wide. NPS, BLM, and FWS are scheduled to complete implementation in FY07.
- The Forest Service initiated a pilot of the MSP in the Northwestern Region on "Service First" forests (7) in 2003 and 2004. A Medical Standards was tasked to develop a monitoring plan and report the findings with recommendations subsequent to full implementation across Region 6 in 2005. The Committee performed its task and delivered

the full report to the Directors of FAM and HR and the Deputy Chiefs for State and Private Forestry and Business Operations in July and August 2005.

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:

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 the Wildland Fire Implementation Plan (WFIP).
- WFU fires are actively managed for resource benefits; these benefits include the restoration and maintenance of healthy forests, rangelands and wetlands, and supporting ecosystem diversity. WFU fires are actively managed to ensure that the fire stays within boundaries and meets objectives.
- The goal of WFU fires is to protect, maintain, and enhance resources and, as nearly as possible, be allowed to function in its natural ecological role as defined within the context of the agency mission and approved land management objectives.
- Under current policy, only naturally-ignited fires (those started by lightning and lava) are permissible sources for WFU. Human-ignited wildfires, including arson or escaped prescribed fires, receive an appropriate management response for 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.
- WFU requires an approved NEPA-compliant Fire Management Plan. When no plan is in place, the fire is suppressed. The process for creating a Fire Management Plan includes appropriate public review explaining why the strategy is appropriate in certain areas.
- Some parameters must be in place before WFU can be effective. Vegetation communities and fuels conditions must exist in an appropriate condition, the area must be large enough to support anticipated fire spread and the area should have minimal human interaction so that the risk to the public is reduced during periods of greatest fire spread.

- 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 of the appropriate management response to all wildland fires, but will have the greatest value for potentially long-duration wildland fires. Planning, implementation procedures, management requirements, and formats, including the Wildland Fire Implementation Plan (WFIP), are provided.