

Chapter 01**Federal Wildland Fire Management Policy and Guidance Overview****A. Introduction**

Final Draft

1. Scope

These standards apply to all the signatories of this document. They are designed to ensure safe and efficient wildland fire, fuels, and fire aviation operations. This document is reviewed annually and updated as needed. Exceptions and/or supplemental direction to the *Interagency Standards for Fire and Fire Aviation Operations* are found in agency specific manuals and handbooks as referenced in individual chapters of this document.

2. Purpose

This document provides a reference for current operational policies, procedures, and guidelines for managing wildland fire and fire aviation operations. Employees engaged in fire management activities will follow all safety standards and guidelines in their agency specific health and safety guides and handbooks. All employees engaged in fire suppression activities will adhere to standards and mitigate risks defined in the *Incident Response Pocket Guide (PMS #461, NFES #1077)*.

B. Federal Wildland Fire Management Policy

In 2001 an update of the 1995 Federal Fire Policy was completed and approved by the Secretaries of Interior and Agriculture. On April 21, 2004 the Secretaries approved the "Interagency Strategy for the Implementation of the Federal Wildland Fire Policy". This document directs the agencies to work together to common language, unified guidance and direction for all agencies and bureaus manuals, handbooks and guidelines to complete final implementation of the policy.

C. Elements of the Federal Wildland Fire Management Policy

- 1. Safety:** Firefighter and public safety is the first priority. All Fire Management Plans and activities must reflect this commitment.
- 2. Fire Management and Ecosystem Sustainability:** The full range of fire management activities will be used to help achieve ecosystem sustainability, including interrelated ecological, economic, and social components.

3. **Response to Wildland Fire:** Fire, as a critical natural process, will be integrated into land and resource management plans and activities on a landscape scale, and across agency boundaries. Response to wildland fires is based on ecological, social and legal consequences of the fire. The circumstances, under which a fire occurs, and the likely consequences on firefighter and public safety and welfare, natural and cultural resources, and values to be protected, dictate the appropriate response to fire.
4. **Use of Wildland Fire:** Wildland fire will be used to protect, maintain and enhance resources and, as nearly as possible, be allowed to function in its natural ecological role. Use of fire will be based on approved Fire Management Plans and will follow specific prescriptions contained in operational plans.
5. **Emergency Stabilization and Rehabilitation:** Rehabilitation and restoration efforts will be undertaken to protect and sustain ecosystems, public health, safety, and to help communities protect infrastructure.
6. **Protection Priorities:** The protection of human life is the single, overriding suppression priority. Setting priorities among protecting human communities and community infrastructure, other property and improvements, and natural and cultural resources will be done based on the values to be protected, human health and safety, and the costs of protection. Once people have been committed to an incident, these human resources become the highest value to be protected.
7. **Wildland Urban Interface:** The operational roles of the federal agencies as a partner in the Wildland Urban Interface are wildland firefighting, hazard reduction, cooperative prevention and education, and technical assistance. Structural fire suppression is the responsibility of tribal, state or local governments. Federal agencies may assist with exterior structural fire protection activities under formal fire protection agreements that specify the mutual responsibilities of the partners, including funding. (Some federal agencies have full structural protection authority for their facilities on lands they administer and may also enter into formal agreements to assist state and local governments with structural protection.)
8. **Planning:** Every area with burnable vegetation must have an approved fire management plan. Fire management plan's are strategic plans that define a program to manage wildland and prescribed fires based on the area's approved Land Management

Plan. Fire management plans must provide for firefighter and public safety; include fire management strategies, tactics, and alternatives; address values to be protected and public health issues; and be consistent with resource management objectives, activities of the area, environmental laws and regulations.

9. **Science:** Fire management plans and programs will be based on a foundation of the best available science. Research will support ongoing efforts to increase our scientific knowledge of biological, physical, and sociological factors. Information needed to support fire management will be developed through an integrated interagency fire science program. Scientific results must be made available to managers in a timely manner and must be used in the development of land management plans, fire management plans, and implementation plans.
10. **Preparedness:** Agencies will ensure their capability to provide safe, cost-effective fire management programs in support of land and resource management plans through appropriate planning, staffing, training, equipment, and management oversight.
11. **Suppression:** Fires are suppressed at minimum cost, considering firefighter and public safety, benefits, and all values to be protected, consistent with resource objectives.
12. **Prevention:** Agencies will work together with their partners other affected groups and individuals to prevent unauthorized ignition of wildland fires.
13. **Standardization:** Agencies will use compatible planning processes, funding mechanisms, training and qualification requirements, operational procedures, values-to-be-protected methodologies, and public education programs for all fire management activities.
14. **Interagency Coordination:** Fire management planning, preparedness, prevention, suppression, fire use, restoration and rehabilitation, monitoring, research, and education will be conducted on an interagency basis with the involvement of cooperators and partners.
15. **Communication and Education:** Agencies will enhance knowledge and understanding of wildland fire management policies and practices through internal and external communication and education programs. These programs will be continuously improved through the timely and effective

exchange of information among all affected agencies and organizations.

16. **Agency Administrator and Employee Roles:** Agency administrators will ensure that their employees are trained, certified and made available to participate in the wildland fire program locally, regionally, and nationally as the situation demands. Employees with operational, administrative, or other skills will support the wildland fire programs necessary. Agency administrators are responsible and will be held accountable for making employees available.
17. **Evaluation:** Agencies will develop and implement a systematic method of evaluation to determine effectiveness of projects through implementation of the 2001 Federal Wildland Fire Management Policy. The evaluation will assure accountability, facilitate resolution of areas of conflict, and identify resource shortages and agency priorities.
18. **Training and Qualification:**
 - a. All fire personnel will meet specific agency training, experience, and qualification requirements for incident assignments. (*See NWCG 310-1, DOI Incident Qualification and Certification System, and FSH 5109-17.*)
 - b. Follow all safety policies, standards, and guidelines identified within the *Interagency Incident Business Management Handbook (IIBMH)*, *Fireline Handbook*, *Interagency Helicopter Operations Guide (IHOG)*, *Interagency Standards for Fire and Fire Aviation Operations*, and *Incident Response Pocket Guide (IRPG)*.
 - c. **Code of Conduct for Fire Suppression**

Firefighter safety comes first on every fire every time. The Ten Standard Firefighting Orders are firm. We don't break them, we don't bend them. All 18 Watch Out Situations must be mitigated before engagement or re-engagement of wildland fire suppression activities. Every firefighter has the right to know that his or her assignments are safe. Every fireline supervisor, every fire manager, and every administrator has the responsibility to confirm that safe practices are known and observed.

19. Economic Efficiency

Fire management programs and activities will be based on economic analyses that incorporate commodity, non-commodity, and social values.

20. Fire Cause Determination and Cost Recovery

Agency policy requires all wildland fires to be investigated to determine cause, origin, and responsibility. Agencies must pursue cost recovery, or document why cost recovery is not initiated for all human-caused fires on public and/or other lands under protection agreement.

21. Employee Responsibility

All employees, cooperators, contractors, and volunteers who participate in wildland fire operations have the duty to treat one another with respect and to maintain a work environment free of harassment.

Hazing is considered a form of harassment. Hazing is defined as any action taken, or situation created intentionally, to produce mental or physical discomfort, embarrassment, or ridicule.

There is zero tolerance of misconduct, whether it is harassment, hazing, or any other inappropriate behavior. We must all take responsibility for creating and ensuring a healthy and safe work environment.

Every individual has a responsibility to report harassment, inappropriate behavior, and take positive action to mitigate its effects.

22. Operational Clarification for Consistent Wildland Fire Management Policy Implementation:

- A. 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.
- B. Human caused wildland fires will be suppressed in every instance and will not be managed for resource benefits.

- C. Once a wildland fire has been managed for suppression objectives, it may never be managed for resource benefit objectives.
- D. 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.
- E. The Wildland Fire Situation Analysis process is used to determine and 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.
- F. 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.
- G. 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 a prescribed fire or wildland fire use status.

D. Fire Management Objectives

The federal wildland fire management agencies fire management activities should result in safe, cost-effective fire management programs that protect, maintain, and enhance federal lands.

1. The objectives of the wildland fire management programs are to:
 - a. Protect human life, property, and natural/cultural resources both within and adjacent to agency administered lands.

- b. Minimize damages and maximize overall benefits of wildland fire within the framework of land use objectives and Land/Resource Management Plans.
- c. Manage the wildland fire program in accordance with congressional intent as expressed in the annual appropriations act and enabling legislation, and comply with applicable departmental manual and agency policies and procedures.
- d. Promote an interagency approach to managing fires on an ecosystem basis.
- e. Employ strategies to manage wildland fires that provide for firefighter and public safety, minimize cost and resource damage, and are consistent with values to be protected and management objectives.
- f. Restore and rehabilitate resources and improvements lost in or damaged by fire or suppression activities.
- g. Minimize, and where necessary mitigate, human-induced impacts to resources, natural processes, or improvements attributable to wildland fire activities.
- h. Promote public understanding of fire management programs and objectives.
- i. Organize a fire staff that can apply the highest standards of professional and technical expertise.
- j. Encourage research to advance understanding of fire behavior, effects, ecology, and management.
- k. Integrate fire management through all levels of the planning process.
- l. Prevent and investigate all unplanned human-caused fires.