



USDA Forest Service Fire and Aviation Management Briefing Paper



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Topic: Thirtymile Hazard Abatement and Accident Prevention Plan Status

Background: On July 10, 2001, four firefighters lost their lives on the Thirtymile fire on the Okanogan National Forest in Washington. In addition to the Forest Service investigation, the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) conducted a separate investigation. OSHA cited the Forest Service with two willful, and three serious violations. OSHA delivered the citations to the Pacific Northwest Regional Forester on February 8, 2002. A Hazard Abatement Plan was submitted to OSHA on March 26, 2002, and was accepted. In addition, an Accident Prevention Plan was developed containing 38 specific actions (28 that are interagency in nature) to enhance firefighter safety and training. These actions have resulted in significant changes within the Forest Service and Department of Interior. Implementation efforts will continue and are posted on the Internet at <http://www.fs.fed.us/fire/>.

Key Points:

- The Hazard Abatement Plan was implemented during the spring of 2002. Implementation actions will be ongoing in 2004 and subsequent fire seasons.
- The Forest Service completed a review of the hazard abatement accomplishments at the end of 2003. According to the review, 33 of the 38 actions in the Accident Prevention Plan have been accomplished at the National level. Of these, 95 to 100% of the Regions and National Forests have fully implemented 30 of these action items. Open actions and their status are as follows:
 - A-1 Initiate changes to the Federal Wildland Fire Management Policy. The National Wildfire Coordinating Group (NWCG) created an interagency task group to develop interagency implementation direction for the Federal Wildland Fire Policy. This direction was approved by the Wildland Fire Leadership Council on June 20, 2003. Federal agencies will incorporate this standardized implementation direction into agency specific manuals and handbooks to bring closure to this action item.
 - A-3c Identify the thresholds at which large fires typically occur. NWCG has established an interagency Risk Threshold Project group to develop predictive tools. Pilot testing occurred on a few selected field Units during the 2003 fire season. Full implementation is expected in fire season 2004.
 - A-4 Review and revise the Federal Wildland Fire Management Policy to include indicators regarding transitions. Status is the same as for A-1.
 - A-6 Evaluate existing training in fatigue awareness and make it available to all employees. New fatigue awareness training was developed by the Missoula Technology Development Center and released for field use on July 25, 2003. Since the release

occurred in the middle of fire season many Units were unable to get this training to all of their employees. Employees still needing this training will get it in 2004.

- A-18 Develop core fire management competencies for agency administrators having fire program responsibilities. Seek inclusion of these competencies into the position descriptions and in selection criteria for agency administrators. The Chief issued direction on July 3, 2003 implementing fire management core competencies for agency administrators. Field Units are still amending position descriptions to include these core competencies and incorporating them into selection criteria for filling vacant positions. Full implementation is expected in 2004.
- A-19 Key fire management positions are being classified into the GS-401 series and are in compliance with the Interagency Fire Program Management Qualifications Standards and Guide. Most Units have started to use the GS-401 series. Many are using it to fill vacancies. Additional National direction and standardization will be developed.
- A-25 Develop a Leadership Curriculum to improve the leadership skills of fire managers. The NWCG Training Working Team has identified a course structure of five modules of training. Three of the modules are complete, two are still under development.
- A-26 Develop and implement a comprehensive safety and health program within the Forest Service. A comprehensive program has been developed and is included in the “Safety & Health Action Plan for 2003”. The final revision of FSM 6700 will institutionalize this program for the agency.
- Forest Service Fire & Aviation Management is exploring with OSHA the opportunity to develop a formal Alliance at the National Level. The purpose of this Alliance would be:
 - Provide employees from both OSHA and the Forest Service to gain cross-agency experience and knowledge.
 - Jointly review and adapt OSHA training and education programs to enhance safety as a “core value” in Forest Service wildland fire management personnel.
 - Jointly develop and disseminate information to raise employee and public awareness of the Alliance commitment the safety and performance of firefighters.
 - Jointly identify, perform, and publicize case studies germane to the purpose of the Alliance.
 - Jointly promote and facilitate the development of Regional Alliances to enhance firefighter safety at the field level.

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