

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

Office of Fire and Aviation
3833 South Development Avenue
Boise, Idaho 83705

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To: All Field Offices

From: Director, Office of Fire and Aviation

Subject: Wildland Fire: Roles, Responsibilities, and Accountability Workshop

The “Wildland Fire: Roles, Responsibilities, and Accountability Workshop” was held in March. We received many positive comments about the presentations and the group process, as well as some good suggestions for future conferences and follow-up actions.

Many fire management officers and line managers from all levels of the organization and all geographic areas were able to attend. Of the approximately 180 participants, about 60 percent were BLM fire management officers and 40 percent were line managers. The group's diversity was an important factor in the quality of the input we received.

At the request of Elena Daly, Field Committee Chair, a partial summary of the recommendations from the workshop was presented at the Field Committee meeting in Albuquerque. Our purpose was to brief them on the discussions, alert them that we will be incorporating many of the recommendations into policy documents for this field season, and to solicit their support for some of the broader issues that were raised. In addition, we discussed the recommendations and concerns at the Spring Fire and Aviation Operations Meeting. These discussions gave us a strong basis for moving forward with assignments and action items.

As many of the recommendations as possible were incorporated into the 2000 edition of the *Standards for Fire Operations Handbook* and we are making plans to include other changes – formatting, color coding, and other recommendations that may need further review – next year.

The information gathered at this conference, including written comments from attendees, will guide us as we work toward long-term improvements in the fire and aviation management programs.

Attached is summary of the conference. In the near future, we will post on our internal web page a conference summary that includes additional information about time frames, assignments, and follow-up actions. In addition, we are working on a short video that concisely summarizes the main points of the conference and a PowerPoint presentation that focuses on lessons learned from the Point, Sadler, and Lowden Ranch Fires. Both of these tools will be available for use in conjunction with annual refresher training as well as internal, interagency, and public meetings.

If you have any questions or comments, please contact Roy Johnson, Deputy Fire Program Manager, at 208-387-5163.

Signed by:
Larry E. Hamilton
Director, Office of Fire and Aviation

Authenticated by:
Pat Lewis
Supervisory Mgmt. Asst.

1 - Attachment
1 - Conference Summary (12 pp.)

Conference Summary

Wildland Fire: Roles, Responsibilities, and Accountability

February 29 - March 2, 2000

Boise, Idaho

Background

Since 1994, several pivotal events and initiatives have affected BLM's fire management program and the interagency wildland fire community. Some of these include:

- South Canyon Fire Investigation and Interagency Management Review Team Recommendations
- BLM internal National Fire and Aviation Review
- Interagency Task Group Report on Federal Fire and Aviation Management Competencies
- Federal Wildland Fire Management Policy and Program Review and Implementation Action Plan Report
- Wildland Firefighter Safety Awareness Study

Most of these efforts have focused on roles, responsibilities, and accountability at all organizational levels within wildland fire management agencies. As a result, BLM has worked aggressively to ensure employees are properly trained, understand their roles and responsibilities, and are held accountable for their actions.

In 1999, three incidents – Lowden Ranch Prescribed Fire, Sadler Complex, and an unsatisfactory preparedness review – prompted investigations, which resulted in evaluations of performance and assignment of accountability. These incidents emphasized the importance of better defining roles, responsibilities and accountability as they relate to wildland and prescribed fire. A conference to address those issues – "Wildland Fire: Roles, Responsibilities, and Accountability" – was held in Boise, Idaho, from February 29 to March 2.

Meeting Summary

The first day was spent sharing information:

- Al Wright addressed the meaning and importance of accountability, using the Lowden Ranch Fire as an example.
- Les Rosenkrance explained why it is important to define roles, establish specific performance standards, and hold people accountable for their actions - specifically in the fire management program.

- A 2 ½-hour segment, “A Dose of Reality,” focused on how we have been affected, both individually and as an agency, by events of the past few years and how the lessons learned have affected the way we do business in the fire management community.
- Gordon Graham, a consultant and motivational speaker, talked about risk management and the predictability of negative consequences in certain activities, particularly those that are high-risk/low-frequency.
- A panel of speakers addressed why accountability is important and how it is assigned and measured, based on Department and Bureau policy and the law.

The second and third day were spent reviewing and making recommendations in four topic areas:

- Roles and Responsibilities of Fire Managers - Director, Office of Fire and Aviation (D, OF&A); State Fire Management Officers (SFMO); and Field Office Fire Management Officers (FMO)
- Roles and Responsibilities of Line Managers (BLM Director, State Directors, and Field Office Managers)
- Expectations and Communications (between and among fire and line managers)
- Minimum Qualification Standards

Findings and Recommendations

Roles & Responsibilities of Fire Managers

This group reviewed current role statements and performance requirements in BLM’s *Standards for Fire Operations* and made recommendations for additions, deletions, and revisions to cover all aspects of fire and aviation activities.

National Office Role Statement:

The Director of the Office of Fire and Aviation (D, OF&A) provides leadership for the BLM fire and aviation management program and assists states and field offices to develop, implement, and maintain a safe, effective, and efficient fire and aviation management program that meets land management objectives.

The Director is responsible and accountable for developing policy, program direction, and international coordination. Works with interagency cooperators to coordinate, reduce duplication, and increase efficiencies in wildland fire management. Provides feedback to state offices on performance requirements.

State Office Role Statement:

The State Fire Management Officer (SFMO) provides leadership for the BLM fire and aviation management program at the State level.

The SFMO is responsible and accountable for providing planning, coordination, training, technical guidance, and oversight to the field office fire management programs throughout the state. The SFMO also represents the state director on interagency geographic coordination groups and Multi Agency Coordination (MAC) groups. The SFMO provides feedback to field offices on performance requirements.

Field Office Role Statement:

The Fire Management Officer (FMO) is responsible and accountable to provide leadership for the BLM fire and aviation management program at the local level. The FMO coordinates with appropriate agency administrators to determine the level of program required to implement land use decisions through the Fire Management Plan (FMP) to meet management objectives. The FMO negotiates interagency agreements and represents the field office manager on local interagency fire and aviation groups.

It was recommended that the following fire management performance standards replace those currently listed in the Standards for Fire Operations Handbook.

Fire Management Staff Performance for Fire Operations

Performance Required		D-F&A	SFMO	FMO
1	Create, instill, and maintain safety first as the foundation of all aspects of fire and aviation management.	√	√	√
2	Ensure completion of a job hazard analysis (JHA) for fire and aviation activities so mitigation measures are taken to reduce risk.			√
3	Ensure work-rest and R&R guidelines are followed during all fire and aviation activities. Deviations are approved and documented.	√	√	√
4	Ensure that only trained and qualified personnel are assigned to fire and aviation management duties.	√	√	√
5	Analyze, develop, implement, and evaluate fire and aviation training program to meet current and anticipated needs.	√	√	√
6	Establish an effective process to gather, evaluate, and communicate information to managers, supervisors, and employees. Ensure clear and concise communications are maintained at all levels.	√	√	√
7	Develop and maintain an open line of communication with publics and cooperators.	√	√	√
8	Ensure that the fire and aviation management staff understand their role, responsibilities, authority, and accountability.	√	√	√
9	Ensure individuals selected for positions meet or exceed the Fire Management Positions Qualifications Standards. An IDP must be provided for <u>incumbents</u> who do not meet the new standards.	√	√	√
10	Based on allocated funding level, provide a safe, effective, and efficient fire protection and use program.	√	√	√
11	Organize, train, equip, and direct a qualified work force possible to ensure safe, effective, and efficient fire and aviation activities. Take appropriate action when performance is exceptional or deficient.	√	√	√
12	Take appropriate action when performance is exceptional or deficient.	√	√	√
13	Ensure BLM and DOI fire and aviation policies are understood, followed, and coordinated with other agencies as appropriate.	√	√	√
14	Monitor to recognize when complexity levels exceed local capabilities. Increase managerial and operational resources to meet the need.	√	√	√

Performance Required		D-F&A	SFMO	FMO
15	Initiate, conduct, and/or participate in fire management related reviews and investigations.	√	√	√
16	Provide for and personally participate in periodic site visits to individual incidents and projects.	√	√	√
17	Utilize a decision-making process to ensure the proper level of management is assigned to all incidents.		√	√
18	Review and evaluate performance of the fire management organization and take appropriate actions.	√	√	√
19	Ensure incoming personnel and crews are briefed prior to fire and aviation assignments.		√	√
20	Ensure a Wildland Fire Situation Analysis (WFSA) is completed and retained for all fires that escape initial attack.		√	√
21	Monitor fire season severity predictions, fire behavior, and fire activity levels. Take appropriate actions to ensure safe, efficient, and effective operations.	√	√	√
22	Ensure that you have adequate resources are available to implement fire management operations.			√
23	Provide fire personnel with adequate guidance, training, and decision-making authority to ensure timely decisions.		√	√
24	Ensure a written, approved burn plan exists for each prescribed fire project.		√	√
25	Ensure all escaped prescribed fires receive a review at the proper level.	√	√	√
26	Ensure effective transition of incident management occurs and oversight is in place.	√	√	√
27	Develop and maintain agreements, annual operating plans, and contracts on an interagency basis to increase effectiveness and efficiencies.	√	√	√
28	Provide the expertise and skills to fully integrate fire and aviation management into interdisciplinary planning efforts.	√	√	√
29	Work with cooperators to identify processes and procedures for providing fire-safe communities within the wildland urban interface.	√	√	√

Performance Required		D-F&A	SFMO	FMO
30	Based on allocated funding level, provide a safe, effective, and efficient fire protection and use program.	√	√	√
31	Develop, maintain, and annually evaluate the FMP to ensure accuracy and validity.	√	√	√
32	Ensure budget requests and allocations reflect MEL in the FMP.	√	√	√
33	Develop and maintain current operational plans, e.g., dispatch, pre-attack, prevention.	√	√	√
34	Ensure that reports and records are properly completed and maintained.	√	√	√
35	Ensure fiscal responsibility and accountability in planning and expenditures.	√	√	√
36	Assess, identify, and implement program actions that effectively reduce unwanted wildland fire ignitions and mitigate risks to life, property, and resources.		√	√
37	Effectively communicate the "natural role" of wildland fire to internal and external agency audiences.	√	√	√
38	When human-caused fires occur, trespass actions will be completed.)		√	√

Additional general recommendations include:

- Create a framework for fire and aviation employee development and mentorship.
- Combine performance requirement checklists for fire management staff and agency administrators into one checklist with six columns for assigning responsibility.
 - Reorganize list by category and priority (color code). Possible categories:
 - Management
 - Organization
 - Safety/Risk Management
 - Preparedness
 - Incident/Projects
 - Planning
- Develop training on risk assessment and applying the decision process to fire operations.
 - Clarify whether *Standards for Fire Operations Handbook* is guidance or policy.

Roles and Responsibilities of BLM Agency Administrators

This group reviewed current role statements and performance requirements in BLM's *Standards for Fire Operations* and made recommendations for additions, deletions, and revisions to cover all aspects of fire and aviation activities.

Director Role Statement:

The director of the BLM is responsible to the Secretary of the Interior for fire management programs on public lands administered by the BLM. The Office of Fire and Aviation is responsible to the Director for policy formulation and program oversight. The Director will meet the required elements outlined in the *Management Performance Requirements for Fire Operations*.

State Director Role Statement:

The State Director is responsible to the Director for fire management programs and activities within his/her state. The State Director will meet the required elements outlined in the *Management Performance Requirements for Fire Operations. Ensure training is completed to support delegations to line managers and principal actings.*

Field Office Manager Role Statement:

The field office manager is responsible to the State Director for the safe, effective, and efficient implementation of fire management activities within his/her unit, including cooperative activities with other agencies or landowners in accordance with delegations of authorities. The field office manager or the principal acting will meet the required elements outlined in the *Management Performance Requirements for Fire Operations*.

Management Performance Requirements for Fire Operations

#	Performance Required	Directorate	State Director/Associate	Field Office Manager
1	Take necessary and prudent actions to ensure firefighter and public safety.	√	√	√
2	Ensure sufficient qualified fire and non-fire personnel are available to support fire operations at a level commensurate with the local and national fire situations.	√	√	√
3	Ensure that Fire Management Officers (FMOs) are fully qualified.	√	√	√
4	Provide a written Delegation of Authority to FMOs that provides an adequate level of operational authority. Include Multi-agency Coordinating (MAC) Group authority.	√	√	√
5	Identify resource management objectives to maintain a current fire management plan (FMP) that identifies an accurate and defensible most efficient level (MEL) of funding and personnel.		√	√
6	Develop protection and use standards and constraints that are in compliance with Department of the Interior (DOI) and BLM fire policies.		√	√
7	Ensure use of fire funds is in compliance with DOI and BLM policy.	√	√	√
8	Management teams will meet once a year to review fire and aviation policies, roles, responsibilities, and delegations of authority. Specifically address oversight and management controls, critical safety issues, and high risk situations such as team transitions, periods of multiple fire activity, and Red Flag warnings.	√	√	√
9	Review safety policies, procedures, and concerns with field fire and aviation personnel. Discussions should include issues that could compromise safety and effectiveness during the upcoming season.			√
10	Ensure timely follow-up actions to program reviews, fire preparedness reviews, fire and aviation safety reviews, fire critiques and post-season reviews.	√	√	√
11	Ensure fire and aviation preparedness reviews are conducted in all field offices each year. Personally participate in at least one inspection annually.		√	√

#	Performance Required	Director	State Director/Associate	Field Office Manager
12	Ensure an approved burn plan is followed for each prescribed fire project, including follow up monitoring and documentation to ensure resource management objectives are met.		√	√
13	Meet annually with major cooperators and review interagency agreements and memoranda of understanding (MOUs) to ensure their continued effectiveness and efficiency (may be delegated by State Director).		√	√
14	Ensure that a Wildland Fire Situation Analysis is completed and approved on all fires that escape initial attack.			√
15	Ensure reviews are conducted on all fires that require a Wildland Fire Situation Analysis. Personally attend reviews on Type 1 (State Director may delegate) and Type 2 fires.		√	√
16	Ensure that a Wildland Fire Implementation Plan (WFIP) is completed and implemented for all fires managed for resource benefits.			√
17	Provide management oversight by personally visiting wildland and prescribed fires each year.		√	√
18	Provide incident management objectives, written delegations of authority, and line officer briefings to incident management teams.			√
19	Monitor the fire situation and provide oversight during periods of critical fire activity/situations of high-risk.	√	√	√
20	Assign a resource advisor to all escaped fires.			√
21	Hold and participate in annual pre- and post-season fire meetings.	√	√	√
22	Conduct fire preparedness reviews.	√	√	√
23	Ensure appropriate investigations are conducted for incidents, entrapments, and serious accidents.	√	√	√
24	For all human-caused fires where liability can be determined, ensure trespass actions are initiated to recover cost of suppression activities, land rehabilitation, and damages to the resource and improvements.		√	√

Expectations and Communications

This group addressed the expectations that line officers have of the fire management staff at the national, state, and local levels and, conversely, the expectations the fire management staff have of line officers at those three levels of the organization. Discussion focused on communication, coordination, and other aspects of successful, productive relationships. Findings are as follows:

Communication will be enhanced by integrating fire into resource management; however, currently there are a number of barriers that inhibit communication and/or the integration of fire management with other programs:

- Different organizations within each state.
- The complexity of interagency fire organizations (primarily associated with the Service First Initiative).
- Many of BLM's line managers lack fire experience.
- For the most part, current FMOs have an experience level that is operational in nature.
- Line managers have many other priorities that compete for their time.

The following recommendations are intended to help break down communication barriers created in large part by the wide range of organizations and experience levels.

- The FMO should be a member of the management team with input and ownership in all resource decisions.
- The role of the FMO should be redefined to ensure the fire program is fully integrated with resource management programs.
- Continuing fire education opportunities should be provided for field managers, including: Incident Command System, Basic Firefighter Training, and Fire Management Leadership.
- Provide cross-training opportunities for fire personnel relating to all disciplines (resource, planning, budget).
- National office should develop a strategic fire plan with the participation of field and state level personnel to address workforce planning & diversity, career ladders, and preparedness reviews.

Minimum Qualification Standards for Fire Management

In 1995, through the Federal Wildland Fire Management Policy and Program Review and as a result of independent studies, reviews, and the Report of the Interagency Management Review Team, the Secretaries of both Interior and Agriculture directed federal wildland agencies to "establish fire management qualifications based on program complexity...." Federal agencies began work to establish minimum standards for fire management leadership positions and technician positions.

The Group reviewed, discussed, and compared qualification standards for the following six of the fourteen positions identified in the *Interagency Fire Program Management Qualifications Standards and Guide*:

- Agency Manager (training only)
- National Fire Program Lead
- State Fire Management Officer
- Unit Fire Management Officer
- Fire Control Officer/Assistant FMO
- Prescribed Fire and Fuels Technician/Specialist

For those six positions, the group defined minimum qualification standards for BLM's *Standards for Fire Operations*. They recommended that another smaller group composed of managers, fire specialists, and human resource specialists review, discuss, and define minimum standards for the remaining eight positions.

In addition, the group

- reviewed the Training for Designated Agency Managers in the *Interagency Fire Program Management Qualifications Standards and Guide*. Recommended that State Directors/Associate State Directors and their primary actings be required to attend the National Fire Management Leadership course. Agency Managers and their primary actings below the Associate State Director level should attend, at a minimum, their Local Fire Management Leadership course. In all cases, incumbents should attend the recommended course within two years of assignment to a line management position.
- determined that for some BLM positions the minimum standards exceed those identified in the *Interagency Fire Program Management Qualifications Standards and Guide*; these additional minimum standards will be reflected in the BLM Red Book next year.
- developed a recommendation for "grandfathering" existing personnel in positions who do not meet the minimum standards identified in the *Interagency Fire Program Management Qualifications Standards and Guide*: Individuals in positions who do not meet the experience requirements can be waived of these requirements if they have performed satisfactorily. The developmental training to fully achieve competencies as identified in the *Interagency Fire*

Program Management Qualifications Standards and Guide should be addressed in an Individual Development Plan within a defined time period.

Summary

Several additional messages were heard loudly and clearly from this group:

- Fire is not a stand-alone program. Fire management is an important and growing program, and it must be fully integrated into all of BLM's resource management programs through the Director's priorities and the Bureau's Strategic Plan.
- A strategy must be developed to address recruitment, retention, diversity, and training to meet minimum qualification standards, and workforce planning.
- BLM's organizational structure is different from state to state. This causes confusion at the field level about delegation of authority and responsibilities. It is essential to have clearly defined delegations of authority from the state director to the line officers to help alleviate this confusion.
- The Director and State Director need to ensure their line managers are receiving appropriate training to fulfill their responsibilities.
- The Bureau must develop a strategy for assessing and managing risk in the fire management program, including identification and mitigation of high-risk activities/situations.

As follow up to this workshop, training packages will be developed that address lessons learned from recent fire incidents.