

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

Office of Fire & Aviation
3833 S. Development Avenue
Boise, Idaho 83705

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To: State Directors

From: Director Office of Fire & Aviation

Subject: BLM Rural Fire Engine Initiative

The Office of Fire and Aviation has been working the past year to develop a program to improve the capabilities of Rural Fire Department's (RFD) which are actively involved in suppressing fires on public lands. As you are aware in many of our intermingled and remote lands, it is often the RFDs who is the first response to wildland fire either on or threatening public lands. It is common for Bureau of Land Management (BLM) personnel to be working side by side with their counterparts from the RFDs. It is also very apparent that some of their equipment is not adequate for the job at hand, and 20-year-old military surplus is not uncommon. In many cases communications equipment is not compatible with that used by BLM or other cooperators. Two RFD fatalities on the Point Fire in Idaho in 1995 in support of BLM in the urban interface are a classic documented case involving outdated equipment, poor communication capabilities, and volunteers not totally familiar with wildland operations. Since January 1, 1999, three more RFD firefighters have lost their lives fighting wildland fire on state and private lands. In addition to often having substandard equipment, they are seldom trained to our standards in wildland firefighting.

As a result of these types of issues we have decided to offer a pilot program to place a limited number of surplus BLM light engines into the hands of selected RFDs. We have acquired through the WCF five engines which have met their planned life cycle with BLM and were scheduled for sale. These engines are being refurbished and restocked at the National Interagency Fire Center (NIFC) and will be ready for assignment by June 1. It would be our intention to place these engines in RFDs where they could support us on the public lands and also increase the overall capability of the RFD. The ideal situation would be one where we could upgrade their capability to work with us in the urban/wildland interface.

Recognizing that our relationships with RFDs vary from state to state and even within individual states we have prepared a sample agreement (attached) which may be used to initiate an agreement or supplement existing agreements. We would encourage you to add or delete items you feel fit your particular situation. Please note in the attached agreement the term District may refer to a local Fire District, Fire Department, or local government entity depending on how the RFDs are organized in your state. We should remember that the goal is to improve the capability of the RFDs to safely assist BLM in protecting the public lands. Ideally we would desire the RFDs to meet our National Wildfire Coordinating Group (NWCG) standard, we realize that at this time it is not practical for most departments. We can help upgrade their capabilities through programs such as this. In addition we encourage you to offer NWCG sanctioned training if possible. It is not our obligation to provide this training but there is certainly benefit to both BLM and the rural communities.

At this point, working with State FMO's and Field Managers we have identified New Mexico, Utah, Nevada, Oregon, and Idaho as states which have expressed immediate interest. If additional states are interested in this pilot in future years' please contact Ron Dunton, Fire Program Manager, 208-387-5154 or on e-mail.

Signed by:
Ron Dunton
Acting Director, Office of Fire and Aviation

Authenticated by:
Pat Lewis
Supervisory Mgmt. Asst.

1 - Attachment
1 - Wildland Fire Engine Pilot Initiative (3 pp)

Distribution

Jay Thietten, MIB Room 5627
Aviation Program Manager
Fire Program Manager
NIFC Administrator
NARTC

WILDLAND FIRE ENGINE PILOT INITIATIVE

This Agreement is made and entered into by the Bureau of Land Management, hereinafter referred to as the Bureau, and the participating Fire Protection District, hereinafter referred to as District. This may serve as a supplement or amendment to existing mutual aid or interagency agreements.

1.0 Authority:

1.1 Reciprocal Fire Protection Act of May 27, 1955 (42 USC - 1856a)

2.0 Purpose:

2.1 Both parties have fire protection responsibilities upon lands of their respective jurisdiction. Both parties have intermingled and adjoining fire protection responsibilities and have limited fire protection resources.

2.2 The Bureau will loan a wildland fire engine to the District for the purposes of;

(Evaluating a pilot study to determine the feasibility of enhancing the wildland fire protection effectiveness and efficiency of both the Bureau and the District)

(Providing for a safer environment during joint suppression operations in wildland/urban interface areas)

2.2a Supplementing the existing fire engine fleet for fire suppression activities within the District jurisdiction including suppression of wildland fires on Federal lands within the District.

2.2b Provide initial attack capability on fires outside the District jurisdiction in support and to supplement Bureau fire suppression resources. This engine initiative will provide the Bureau with the ability to consolidate protection resources to attack fires on other high value public lands and/or offset protection responsibility areas within the jurisdiction of the local Bureau office.

3.0 Vehicle Identification:

License #	Vehicle ID #	Resource #	ICS Type	Pump/Engine Data

4.0 The Bureau shall:

4.1 Loan a fully operational and equipped fire engine for use as specified by this agreement.

4.1a Attach a vehicle inspection record and pump system performance data sheet to this agreement.

- 4.1b Provide an engine Normal Unit Stocking (NUS) inventory.
- 4.2 Allow the District the use of this fire engine for fire suppression and support activities within the capabilities of the engine, on all lands within the District jurisdictional boundaries.
- 4.3 Accept District personnel fire qualifications as identified in BLM's 9215 manual regarding non-NWCG agencies.
- 4.4 Place a placard on the vehicle, identifying the vehicle as a cooperative interagency Wildland Fire Engine Initiative.
- 4.5 Provide the District a vehicle and pump system maintenance schedule and a Bureau contact telephone number for coordination of repairs and maintenance.
- 4.9 Provide once-a-year annual maintenance of the vehicle and pump system, maintaining the vehicle and pump system at Bureau equipment standards.

5.0 The District shall:

- 5.1 On an as-needed basis and with availability of qualified personnel;
 - 5.1a Utilize the Bureau fire engine to supplement its fire suppression forces **appropriate to capability** within the District jurisdiction including lands administered by the Bureau.
 - 5.1b Provide immediate response for fire suppression on Bureau **lands** adjoining the District jurisdiction.
- 5.2 Ensure participating firefighting personnel meet State licensing requirements for vehicle drivers. Ensure all applicable state laws involving operation of emergency vehicles are followed.
- 5.3 Maintain the fire engine in a fully operational condition.
- 5.4 Provide vehicle and pump system maintenance as specified by the Bureau other than the yearly Bureau maintenance.
- 5.5 Coordinate vehicle and pump system modifications with the local Bureau vehicle maintenance representative.
- 5.6 Repair or replace the pump package, and stock items if damaged, lost, or stolen while in the District custody.

6.0 Mutual Understanding:

- 6.1 Title to the equipment will remain with the United State Department of Interior.
- 6.2 Both parties will maintain contact and coordination throughout the duration of this agreement.
- 6.4 The control and use of this equipment will be with the District.

7.0 Waiver of Claims:

- 7.1 The Bureau of Land Management does not make any warranties regarding the fitness of the identified vehicle.

7.2 The Bureau of Land Management does not assume liability for damages or injury of any kind resulting from use of the identified vehicle.

7.3 Insofar as the District is legally authorized to do so, it will hold the United States Department of Interior, Bureau of Land Management harmless for all damages or injury resulting from the use of the identified vehicle.

8.0 Duration and Acknowledgment:

8.1 The signatory District hereby acknowledges receipt of the identified vehicle and its operational condition.

8.2 The signatory District hereby agrees that the loan is temporary, subject to return upon the request of the Bureau of Land Management.

9.0 Signatures:

Fire District

Date

Bureau of Land Management

Date