



United States Department of the Interior

OFFICE OF THE ASSISTANT SECRETARY
POLICY, MANAGEMENT AND BUDGET
Washington, D.C. 20240

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To: Director, Bureau of Indian Affairs
Director, Bureau of Land Management
Director, Fish and Wildlife Service
Director, National Park Service

From: Assistant Secretary - Policy, Management and Budget *PRS wj*

Subject: Fire and Aviations Operations Action Plan, 2003

As discussed at the June Wildland Fire Leadership Council meeting, I am transmitting the Department of the Interior's 2003 Fire and Aviation Operations Action Plan. This plan establishes and communicates Department direction and expectations for wildland fire operations during the 2003 fire season, and clarifies existing policies and procedures for agency administrators and fire and aviation management personnel.

The plan focuses on three areas: safety, preparedness and cost containment. These focus areas and the guidance supporting them are based on DOI's fire suppression priorities: the first priority is the protection of life and the second priority is the protection of property, cultural and natural resources. The plan reinforces our emphasis on safety with Secretarial direction on management controls, the airtanker program, and unified command. Under wildland fire program preparedness, initial and extended attack are underscored as the mobilization priority, and the plan makes clear all units will be trained, staffed and ready to meet fire season demands. The section on cost containment, which is the third focus area, clarifies roles and responsibilities, provides new guidance for the Wildland Fire Situation Analysis (WFSA), and outlines requirements for Incident Business Advisors and National Cost Oversight Teams.

Agency administrators must be directly involved in establishing priorities for fire management and setting the direction for developing the WFSA, including providing reviews and approval. Line officer oversight and involvement during the decision-making process is critical for safe and cost-effective suppression operations.

Wildland fire continues to increase both in complexity and, more importantly, in the risk to our firefighters and the public. Forests and rangelands, choked with overgrown and hazardous fuel and severely impacted by long-term drought, have made a difficult situation worse. Our actions, from the fireline to the agency administrator's office, are under intense scrutiny and Congress and the public are holding us accountable to ensure our work is safe, efficient and cost-effective. My expectations are that this plan and the direction provided within will help us accomplish these goals.

As we move into the most intense part of the 2003 wildland fire season, I reinforce our emphasis on safety. Firefighter safety comes first on every fire, every time, and this is a responsibility we all share.

cc: Assistant Secretary – Land and Minerals Management
Assistant Secretary – Fish and Wildlife and Parks