

BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

Office of Fire & Aviation



Operations Alert

No. 09-01

Date: May 28, 2009

Subject: Federal Fire Assistance to Local Agencies

Area of Concern: Fire & Aviation Operations

Discussion:

1. Establish wildland fire assistance agreements when possible.

BLM managers should make every effort to jointly develop local and geographic area wildland fire assistance agreements with other federal agencies and with non-federal cooperators. BLM managers should also participate, to the extent possible, when multiple non-federal cooperators develop their own local agreements. These agreements can affect the types and qualifications of personnel and equipment that BLM personnel may encounter when assisting non-federal cooperators on non-federal lands. In general, BLM managers should attempt to ensure that all agreements establish safety, experience and qualification standards that reflect similar federal standards for personnel and equipment.

2. Be familiar with existing qualifications standards agreements.

- The National Wildland Fire Coordinating Group (NWCG) publication *Wildland Fire Qualifications System Guide* (PMS 310-1) is designed to, "Establish minimum requirements for training, experience, physical fitness level, and currency standards for wildland fire positions which all participating agencies have agreed to meet for national mobilization."
- However, the 310-1 also states, "The NWCG recognizes the ability of cooperating agencies at the local level to jointly define and accept each other's qualifications for initial attack, extended attack, and large fire operations."
- Therefore, it is important that BLM managers are familiar with existing agreements so that any issues involving the qualifications of non-federal agency personnel and equipment can be resolved before they become problematic on the fireline.
- Specific to aircraft and pilot approval, BLM managers should be familiar with DOI Aviation Management Operational Procedures Memorandum (OPM) No. 06-53, *Approval and Use of Cooperators - Other Government Agency Supporting Department of the Interior (DOI) Wildland Firefighting (1/01/06)*. This policy describes the procedures and responsibilities related to bureau requests for cooperator aircraft and pilot approval. The Aviation Management Directorate (AMD) is responsible for determining if cooperator aircraft, pilots and support equipment meet DOI technical and safety standards. Cooperator aircraft and pilots that meet DOI requirements are documented on a specific Letter of Approval, issued by AMD.
- Additional reference resources include: Interagency Standards for Fire and Fire Aviation Operations (Chapter 8) and Department Manual Part 351 (Chapter 4, Cooperator Aircraft).

3. Manage risk effectively even if agreements are inadequate or non-existent.

When BLM managers agree to assistance on fires where agreements are lacking and/or where non-federal personnel and equipment qualifications are inadequate, they should manage risk appropriately and should not hesitate to disengage if necessary.

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