



United States Department of the Interior

BUREAU OF INDIAN AFFAIRS

Washington, DC 20240

JUN 17 2019

Memorandum

To: All Regional Directors
Attention: All Agency Superintendents
All Regional Fire Management Officers
All Agency Fire Management Officers
Branch Chief, Branch of Wildland Fire Management

From: Director, Bureau of Indian Affairs

Subject: Expectations for Line Officers and Wildland Fire Management Staffs

Purpose: Since 1988, the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) has experienced 14 fatal mJurles related to wildland fires. When these occur, we are reminded of the serious responsibilities placed upon the shoulders of our Agency Superintendents, Regional Directors and fire management staffs. Just as the Office of Wildland Fire Director recently issued his 2019 Direction to Wildland Fire Leadership, we too would like to express our expectations for line officers and fire management staff to ensure we do our very best to safely bring home those who protect Indian Country and our Nation every day.

1. Clear communication, coordination and collaboration are the keys to success in wildland fire management. Chapter 6 - BIA Program Organization and Responsibilities of the Interagency Standards for Fire and Fire Aviation (Red Book) clearly defines the wildland fire responsibilities of Regional Directors and Agency Superintendents. While the first line Superintendent may know these responsibilities, those in the order of succession may not. Before fire activity begins occurring at your agency or in your region, please ensure your Order of Succession is current, are familiar with Chapter 6 of this Book and that those who take your place have the knowledge and capacity to act on your behalf.

<https://www.nifc.gov/PUBLICATIONS/redbook/2019/Chapter06.pdf>

2. Noted in Chapter 6 of the Red Book is a listing of the Bureau's inherent federal activities that cannot be delegated to a tribal program or representative. Line officers must ensure they sign delegations of authority not only to incident management and post fire activity teams, but also to those fire management staff who are responsible for managing the fire management program on your behalf. This includes Fire Management Officers, Incident Qualifications and Certification System Managers, Incident Commanders of all Types (5-1), and other services such as Prevention, Fire Investigation, and Buying Teams. These delegations are a necessary tool to assist line officers with accomplishing the many responsibilities listed in Chapter 6.

3. When a large fire occurs, staying engaged with Incident Management Teams (IMTs) by attending all meetings, and signing appropriate legal documents, such as the Wildland Fire Decision Support Document, ensures we are fulfilling our trust responsibilities. This in turns empowers everyone to make the right decisions that keep firefighters, our public, and each other safe.
4. Wildfires do not recognize jurisdictional boundaries, and neither should our accident notification process. When any accident occurs, it is vital Agency Superintendents, Regional Directors, Fire Management Officers and Central Office staff (both through the Office of the Director and the Office of Trust Services) receive proper notification. Chapter 7, page 188 of the Red Book identifies reporting requirement for accident/ injuries and BIA's use of the Early Alert. Agency, regional and central office staff will use this internal communication tool to provide clear, factual, and timely (within 6 hours) information up, down, and across our organization and the interagency fire community for all wildland fires, other fire incidents, including ditch burning incidents. Further, if serious accidents do occur, following proper reporting requirements is essential to ensuring we are taking care of our employees in all the ways they deserve. Reporting requirements for serious accidents are identified in Chapter 18, pg. 366-368 of the Red Book.
5. Our Department Secretary made it clear all bureaus must work to ensure the protection of people, communities, and natural resources is at the forefront of wildland fire management activities. In times of resource scarcity, when the national Preparedness Level reaches 5, it is essential we release as many employees as possible to support the response effort. Our militia workforce is part of a surge capacity our Bureau and partner agencies depend on to meet the needs of our national response framework. Line officers should encourage all of their employees to take National Wildland Fire Coordinating Group (NWCG) Training when it becomes available. This allows the Bureau to develop depth and surge capacity, before it becomes too late.

The work you do is essential to ensuring we meet our trust responsibilities to the hundreds of federally recognized tribes we serve. This work is often very challenging and draining. As we look forward to another fire year, be cognizant of your fatigue levels and of those around you. Our people are the most valuable resources we have. Please take care of yourselves, each other and those you support every day.

If you have questions, please contact Leon Ben Jr., Branch Chief, Branch of Wildland Fire Management, at (208) 387-5697 or email at Leon.Ben@bia.gov.

Attachment: 2019 Direction to Wildland Fire Leadership