

Firefighter Safety

RISK MANAGEMENT

FIREFIGHTER AND PUBLIC SAFETY IS THE FIRST PRIORITY OF THE WILDLAND FIRE MANAGEMENT PROGRAM.

Remember To:

- Follow the Standard Firefighting Orders.
- Recognize the Watch Out Situations.
- Recognize the Common Denominators of Fire Behavior on Tragedy Fires.
- Follow the Risk Management Process.

The Risk Management Process

Step 1 - Situation Awareness

- Gather Information
 - Objective(s)
 - Previous Fire Behavior
 - Communication
 - Weather Forecast
 - Who's in Charge
 - Local Factors
- Scout the Fire

Step 2 - Hazard Assessment

- Eliminate Potential Fire Behavior Hazards.
 - Look Up, Down and Around Indicators
- Identify Tactical Hazards.
 - Watch-Outs
- What other safety hazards exist?
- Consider severity vs. probability.

Step 3 - Hazard Control

- Firefighting Orders → LCES Checklist – MANDATORY
 - Anchor Point
 - Downhill Checklist (if applicable)
- What other controls are necessary?

Step 4 - Decision Point

- Are controls in place for identified hazards?
 - NO – Reassess situation
 - YES – Next question
- Are selected tactics based on expected fire behavior?
 - NO – Reassess situation
 - YES – Next question

- Have instructions been given and understood?
NO – Reassess situation
YES – Initiate action

Step 5 - Evaluate

- Self: Low experience level with local factors?
Distracted from primary tasks?
Fatigue or stress reaction?
Hazardous attitude?
- The Situation: What is changing?
Are strategy and tactics working?

The key message for all agency administrators and others responsible for management of a wildland fire on their unit is, no fire, *even those that threaten structures or improvements, is worth risking humanlife or injury.*

Responsible actions which should be taken to reinforce this message are:

1. Reiterate this safety message at every opportunity while exercising your agency administrator responsibilities in managing the incident.

- WFSAs and delegation of authority direction
- incident management team briefings
- strategy meetings
- at the incident command post and incident base
- at staging areas and R&R centers
- team evaluations

2. Maintain personal participation in ongoing incidents.

- show involvement and commitment
- be consistent, follow up and follow through

3. Bring an expert with you.

On large fires, request a functional assistance visit by the Regional FMO, Regional Aviation Manager, or Operations Forester as you deem appropriate.

Be sure to do this with the full knowledge of the incident commander. Assign your own safety liaison officer if warranted, as a technical specialist reporting to you. Again, take this action with the full knowledge of the incident commander to support your mutual interest in safety, working with the team's safety officer.

4. Ensure firefighters are being briefed.

- Do not assume those who need to know do know; be certain by asking questions.
- Stress safety as everyone's responsibility.
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5. Know and follow the wildland fire situation analysis policy.

- The WFSAs must follow the direction provided by the Fire Management Plan and consider firefighter and public safety in all alternatives and direction.
- Ensure the WFSAs has quality involvement by those who have a stake, and that *you* know

what that document says.

6. Know the weather forecast.

- All incident personnel are to be made aware of fire weather forecasts and fire behavior predictions, including those who may be called on to review and approve strategic and tactical decisions.

7. Participate in incident management team meetings and briefings.

8. Stay in front of the power curve.

- Don't assume something will fix itself; that which must be done eventually, more often than not, should be done immediately

STANDARD FIREFIGHTING ORDERS

- 1. Keep informed on fire weather conditions and forecasts.*
- 2. Know what your fire is doing at all times*
- 3. Base all actions on current and expected behavior of the fire.*
- 4. Identify escape routes and safety zones, and make them known.*
- 5. Post lookouts when there is possible danger.*
- 6. Be alert. Keep calm. Think clearly. Act decisively.*
- 7. Maintain prompt communications with your forces, your supervisor and adjoining forces.*
- 8. Give clear instructions and insure they are understood.*
- 9. Maintain control of your forces at all times.*
- 10. Fight fire aggressively, having provided for safety first.*

WATCH OUT SITUATIONS (SURVIVAL CHECKLIST)

- 1. Fire not scouted and sized up.
- 2. In country not seen in daylight.
- 3. Safety zones and escape routes not identified.
- 4. Unfamiliar with weather and local factors influencing fire behavior.
- 5. Uninformed on strategy, tactics, and hazards.
- 6. Instructions and assignments unclear.
- 7. No communication between crew members/ supervisor
- 8. Constructing fireline without safe anchor point.
- 9. Building fireline downhill with fire below.
- 10. Attempting frontal assault on fire.
- 11. Unburned fuel between you and the fire.
- 12. Cannot see main fire, and/or not in main contact with anyone who can.
- 13. On a hillside where rolling material can ignite fuel below.
- 14. Weather is getting hotter and drier.
- 15. Wind increases and/or changes direction.
- 16. Getting frequent spot fires across line.
- 17. Terrain and fuels make escape to safety zones difficult.
- 18. Taking a nap near the fireline.

LCES

Lookouts, Communications, Escape Routes, and Safety Zones

The *LCES* system was designed as a simple way to remind firefighters of their responsibility on every fire to designate and use *lookouts* where warranted, maintain *communications*, and identify and make known to all personnel effective *escape routes* which lead to *safety zones* where they can survive sudden, adverse changes in the fire environment.

The *LCES* system accounts for and reinforces the *Standard Firefighting Orders* and *Watch Out Situations* while making tactical plans for implementing a strategy for fire suppression. The Agency Administrator should make certain that fire managers at every level, from local initial attack to larger fires managed by incident management teams, use the *LCES* system on every fire at all times.

Firefighter Survivability

Fireline Questions to Emphasize Safety

Ten Questions Every Firefighter Must Ask and Answer Yes to Before Engaging in Fire Suppression

1. Do you understand the organization for this fire and your place in it?
2. Is there a plan, and do you understand it?
3. Do you know it is OK to ask questions and ensure that the instructions you are given provide for your safety and the safety of your fellow firefighters?
4. Do you know the weather forecast for today?
5. Have you followed the five step Risk Management, assessed fire behavior and made a prediction?
6. Are you interactive with the *Standard Firefighting Orders* and *Watch Out Situations*?
7. Do you have the **Lookouts, Communications, Escape Routes,** and *Safety Zones* in place?
8. Do you understand that it is both your responsibility and your right to say **No** to orders that cannot be accomplished without compromising one or more of the *Standard Firefighting Orders* or without mitigating each of the *Watch Out Situations*?
9. Can you describe the fire environment you are going to operate in?
10. Are you prepared to engage, monitor the fire environment, be proactive, and make adjustments