

Chapter – 5 Wildfire Prevention

Introduction

The implementation of Wildfire Prevention programs saves lives, reduces suppression costs, property loss and the disruption of daily life in Indian Country. There are numerous prevention strategies and actions available to Tribes and Agencies that can be used to effectively reduce unwanted person caused fires. Wildland fire ignitions, damage to natural resources by unwanted wildfires, and the threat to firefighter and public safety can be reduced by using these strategies, and integrating prevention actions into existing preparedness programs.

Person caused wildfire is the highest ignition source of wildland fires in Indian Country. When coupled with the extensive nature of wildfire regimes that have been altered from historic levels, person caused fires pose a greater threat to life, property, and our natural and cultural resources than do natural ignitions.

Wildfire Prevention Program Guidance

The Bureau released a revised *Wildland Fire Prevention Handbook* in 2012 (WFPH). This handbook, designated as *Indian Affairs Manual* (IAM), Part 90, Chapter 1.4 C, 6 (H), provides detailed policy and guidance for all aspects of the wildland fire prevention program. The information presented in this chapter is operational policy and guidance and is not intended to replace the WFPH. The Regional Wildland Urban Interface (WUI)/Prevention Specialists or the BIA-NIFC, Deputy Fire Use Specialist should be consulted for guidance outside the scope of this chapter or the WFPH. The WFPH can be found on the Internet at:

<http://www.bia.gov/cs/groups/xraca/documents/text/idc008622.pdf>

Additional tools and guides are available at:

<http://www.bia.gov/nifc/prevention/NatlPreventHandbook/index.htm>

Current Program

The BIA Wildfire Prevention program has six (6) WUI/Wildfire Prevention Specialist positions placed strategically throughout the nation to serve all of Indian Country. The employees, regions they serve, and phone numbers are identified in **Appendix 5-1**.

Prevention Planning

Wildfire Prevention Plans (WFPP) are required to secure long-term prevention program funds. Chapter 2 of WFPH describes the process and requirements for developing a WFPP. A current Wildfire Prevention Plan (WFPP) containing the four "Policy Required Elements" is required to secure long term funding:

1. Documented Program Support for wildfire prevention.
2. Documented Fire Investigation Policies and Procedures.
3. Documented Standard Operating Procedure for investigating wildfires.
4. Documented Burn Permit System.

Chapter 3 contains policy and guidance on funding for prevention. Refer to the WFPH or communicate directly with the WUI/Prevention Specialist assigned to the region for further prevention planning assistance.

Funding Opportunities for Prevention Activities

Wildland Fire Management (WFM) Accounts

Tribes and Agencies may use preparedness, emergency operations, and/or hazardous fuels funds to support prevention efforts.

The following programs may be used independently or together to meet prevention program needs:

WFPP Implementation:

An approved WFPP is required to be eligible for prevention program funds. Funding to implement a prevention plan must be requested annually. A Tribe or Agency must demonstrate a commitment to the implementation of the WFPP to be considered for recurring program funds for the life of the plan. The WFPP may require periodic updates to assess and mitigate new prevention issues and to support continued program funding.

- For a position to be eligible for full funding from the wildland fire prevention program funds, 80% or more of the duties must be directly related to prevention activities. This includes wildland fire investigation.
- Annual Accomplishment Reports (see WFPH Resource CD) will be completed by prevention staff at BIA/tribal programs and are due to the Regional WUI/Prevention Specialist annually by November 15th. Documentation of activities must be kept, as defined in the WFPH and will be provided upon request.
- Prevention personnel are funded from preparedness and therefore do not accrue a savings in program dollars when assigned to fire suppression for their “base-eight”.
- Severity:

Long Term Severity: The identification of prevention actions is essential during the development of a severity request. Severity requests are routinely done in regions experiencing, or predicted to experience, drought and severe fire danger. In those conditions, prevention activities are a legitimate use of severity funds and should be included as part of a systematic response along with increased suppression resources. Severity funds may be used to fund prevention/investigation teams, augment patrols, develop and implement local prevention campaigns (e.g. community risk assessment and mitigation plans, community outreach and education, prevention materials and Firewise). Details for the specific prevention actions being planned must be provided in the request. These are not reoccurring funds. An electronic copy of the Severity Cost Estimation Worksheet is provided on the Prevention Resources Disk.

Short Term Severity: Short term severity may be used to fund prevention personnel conducting activities during non-base 8 hours, if those activities are related to the short term event with increased risks and high fire danger. The duration of the event should typically be less than a week. The AD Pay Plan allows for hiring qualified or trainee Prevention Team Leaders (PETL) and Prevention Team Members (PETM). **NO provision currently exists for using the AD Pay Plan to hire someone to wear the Smokey Bear Costume.**

For further guidance on severity, consult the BIA Blue Book, Chapter 4.

- Supplemental Funding:

The purpose of Prevention Supplemental funding is to provide a mechanism to request funding for special projects or needs that exceed an Agency/Tribe regular budgeted prevention funding. Supplemental funds may also be provided to agencies or tribes that do not meet the 1:1 cost benefit ratio for funded positions, but that still have needs to conduct prevention activities.

- Supplemental funds are non-recurring and are based on availability.
- The Regional Office will be informed by the WUI/Prevention Specialist when supplemental funding is available. Regionally prioritized requests must be submitted by the assigned WUI/Prevention Specialist to BIA-NIFC by May 1 to be considered for funding in the following fiscal year.
- Supplemental accounts may be created and funded at the Agency/Tribal, Regional and/or National level.
- Supplemental funding associated with these accounts has very specific and limited use. Deviations of up to \$1,000 from the approved proposals require the written approval from the assigned WUI/Prevention Specialist. Larger deviations from the original request require the approval of the Deputy Fire Use and Fuels.
- Proposals for supplemental funding must be submitted on the Supplemental Request form to the Regional Office. The Prevention Supplemental Request Form can be obtained from the assigned WUI/Prevention Specialist.

Appropriate uses:

- Travel for training specific to wildfire prevention, education, mitigation and investigation for those positions currently not receiving prevention funding. This is limited to current BIA and/or Tribal employees;
- Prevention Team activities during non-emergency periods and when all other funding sources are unavailable. Support from supplemental funding for prevention teams will be limited by the availability of funding;

- Prevention/investigation specific training materials which benefits multiple tribes and agencies for those programs not receiving prevention funding;
- Purchase of support items such as fire investigation kits, prevention and educational materials, for those programs currently not receiving prevention funding;
- The development and printing of educational materials such as brochures, flyers and banners to be used for special events where large numbers of visitors are expected;
- Additional Fire Danger Rating Signs;
- Initial non-recurring one time expenditures for "Startup" items; and
- Equipment that supports the implementation of the program.

Prohibited Uses:

- Base pay of preparedness funded positions, this includes prevention programs;
- Indirect Costs;
- Suppression Equipment (unless justified and approved in a specific proposal with a demonstrated wildfire prevention benefit);
- Medical Claims;
- Travel for regular government employees attending a non-prevention, education, mitigation, or fire investigation training;
- Any item and or service which is identified in the approved and funded prevention program; and
- Prevention promotional and/or educational materials (e.g. coffee mugs, Smokey Bear materials, key rings etc.) at locations currently receiving prevention program funding.

Contact the assigned WUI/Prevention Specialist for additional information on how to request this funding and its funding limitations.

- Community Assistance Funds:

Some mitigation activities may also be funded through the Community Assistance activity area of the Hazardous Fuels WUI Program. Requests must be entered in the Community Assistance portal of the NFPORS annually by May 1 of each year. Development of Community Wildfire Protections Plan (CWPP) or equivalent plans (WFPP), risk assessments, mitigation plans, outreach campaigns and FIREWISE workshops are examples of activities appropriate for this funding source. All Community Assistance project proposals must be coordinated through the assigned WUI/Prevention Specialist and Regional Fuels Specialist.

Agencies/tribes receiving Community Assistance funding will be required to provide:

- Annual project summary reports;
 - Supporting financial documents (receipts for items purchased); and
 - Photos of finished projects.
- Fire Codes

Fire Codes (apart from Severity) may be used to fund prevention activities and materials on a limited basis. They may be used to fund fire investigations (including travel, supplies and support directly related to the investigation). They may also be used to fund wildfire prevention/education teams in specific circumstances where increased fire prevention activity is essential to reduce further occurrence or increased competition for suppression resources.

- AD Hiring Authority

The DOI AD Pay Plan for Emergency Workers is a hiring authority, **NOT** a funding program.

No position currently exists in the AD Pay Plan to hire a worker to wear the Smokey Bear Costume. The current AD Pay Plan for Emergency Workers only provides authority to utilize qualified or trainee Prevention Team Leader (PETL) and Prevention Team Member (PETM) positions.

Please refer to the most current version of the DOI AD Pay Plan for additional guidance

Prevention Program Monitoring and Review

Monitoring and review is the responsibility of all levels of the organization. WFPP's should be revised as often as necessary to make program adjustments and apply new prevention strategies that address current prevention issues. Documentation of prevention activities and results is not only necessary, but vital to demonstrate program success. Annual readiness reviews for prevention are required, either as part of the comprehensive readiness reviews at each location or independently. Prevention program reviews may also be conducted along with other program reviews or alone. Program reviews are conducted at least every five years, and more often if necessary. Prevention program reviews are conducted by the assigned WUI/Prevention Specialist to insure funding intent is met and policy is being followed. The *BIA National Wildfire Prevention Handbook 2012* provides guidance, direction and review templates to accomplish these tasks. Also, see Chapter 4 page 4-9 Program Preparedness/Readiness Reviews for additional information.

Wildland Fire Investigation

Policy

The BIA has approved the *Wildland Fire Investigation Handbook* as of September 28, 2012. This handbook [90 IAM 1.4C(10)] is now the BIA policy reference for wildland fire investigation. Refer to it for subjects not covered in this digest. The *BIA Wildland Fire Investigation Handbook* can be found on the Internet at: <http://www.bia.gov/nifc/library/index.htm>.

The BIA policy is to determine the origin and cause of all wildfires occurring on lands held in trust or restricted status for Indian Tribes (90 IAM 1.4C (10), Chapter 5). It is imperative that the wildland fire office work hand-in-hand with the Office of Justice Services (OJS); Tribal Law Enforcement; or Local Law Enforcement on all suspicious wildfire cause determinations.

- An MOU has been signed which defines the roles and responsibilities of OJS and BIA Branch of Wildfire Management at the national level regarding wildland fire investigations. This document also assigns a OJS Law Enforcement Officer (LEO) to BIA-NIFC to coordinate the case management of those wildfire crimes. The most recent version of this MOU can be obtained from the regional WUI/Prevention Specialist.

- The OJS LEO is available to assist the regions and field level units with wildfire crime case development and management. The local unit must have completed a Wildfire Investigation Report and at least one of the following criteria must be met before the OJS LEO will respond:
 - A determination of criminal activity, CFR violations, federal misdemeanor, and other crimes associated with the fire;
 - Suspects identified;
 - Witnesses identified but unable to contact;
 - Damage to natural resources or structures;
 - Evidence identified and/or recovered which indicates criminal activity;
 - Serious injury/accident or fatality occurred on fire;
 - Multiple ignition points – evidence of serial arson;
 - Arson Task Force is formed for serial arson;
 - The OJS LEO can be reached at: 208-387-5238.

National Fire Investigation Teams

A Tribe, Agency or Region may request, a wildland fire investigation team (INVF Team) to assist if local resources are unavailable and additional investigative resources are needed. The appropriate line officer should be briefed on the mobilization and expected accomplishments of the team. A formal written delegation-of-authority should be secured prior to arrival of the team. For information on how to request or participate on a BIA Arson Investigation Team, contact the assigned WUI/Prevention Specialist.

Youth Fire Intervention Program

If fires started by children and juveniles are an identified cause, tribes are encouraged to initiate a Youth Fire Intervention Program. The Bureau has a Youth Fire Intervention Specialist on contract to assist in the development of an effective tribal youth fire intervention program. For more information on the Indian Country Youth Fire Intervention Program refer to the Program web page at:

http://www.bia.gov/nifc/prevention/y_fip/index.htm

To contact the Youth Fire Intervention Specialist, contact the assigned WUI/Prevention Specialist.

National WeTip Program

WeTip is a national anonymous tip hotline dealing with sensitive crimes including wildland fire. BIA-NIFC maintains an annual agreement to provide an anonymous tip hotline for Indian Country regarding Wildland Arson. The tip hotline number is 1-800-472-7766 (1-800-47-ARSON). For more information regarding the WeTip program contact the assigned WUI/Prevention Specialist.

**APPENDIX 5-1
BIA Wildland Fire Prevention Specialist Assignments**

Alaska and Northwest: Len Diaz, (503) 231-6806

Eastern Oklahoma and Southern Plains: Pat McDowell, (405) 609-8872

Midwest and Eastern: Jeremy Bennett, (715) 526-7075

Navajo and Southwest: Kenneth Jaramillo, (505) 563-3375

Pacific and Western: Jim Nanamkin, (916) 978-6148

Rocky Mountain and Great Plains: Jeffrey Moyer, (406) 247-7906