

September 13, 2022



BIA WILDFIRE PREVENTION
TECHNICAL GUIDE # 4
Version 1.0

BUREAU OF INDIAN AFFAIRS
WILDFIRE PREVENTION
SUPPORTING PLANS TECHNICAL GUIDE

OFFICE OF TRUST SERVICES
DIVISION OF FORESTRY AND WILDLAND FIRE MANAGEMENT
Branch of Wildland Fire Management

FOREWORD

This Bureau of Indian affairs (BIA) Wildfire Prevention Guide provides standards, background, and guidance, for Wildfire Prevention Planning and plans.

Human activity causes many wildfires on Indian Lands each year. Many of these fires are preventable with better education, engineering and enforcement actions. Planning an effective wildfire prevention program requires thoughtful organization and attention to detail. The multiple activities involved in a prevention program often require extensive analysis and planning. A few of these activities are complicated enough to require their own sub-plans to support the wildfire prevention plan.

The contents of this Technical Guide are loosely based on the National Wildfire Coordinating Groups discontinued wildfire prevention guides. The author gratefully acknowledges these sources.

The intended users of this guide are any Tribal or BIA Agency personnel implementing wildfire prevention programs.

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I. INTRODUCTION

This Guide is one in a series of Wildfire prevention Guides that are designed to be used as a tool to enhance the delivery of the Wildfire prevention program.

The information here provides guidance in developing effective supporting plans that are used to enhance a BIA Wildfire Prevention Plan (WFPP). These supporting plans provide the details and documentation to implement some of the more technical wildfire prevention activities.

PURPOSE

Having an approved WFPP is a requirement for all BIA funded wildfire prevention programs in Indian Country. The BIA has a standard outline and format for WFPPs that has a proven track record. The standard outline requires supporting plans for signs, patrol, communications, preparedness and restrictions.

The purpose of this guide is to provide step by step instructions for developing those supporting plans.

WILDFIRE PREVENTION PLANNING STANDARDS

Standards are an effective way to communicate what is essential and important for any activity. The supporting plans are important to implementing the WFPP. So, a solid foundation, expressed as standards, is necessary.

Standardized:

It is necessary to have standardized supporting plans to ensure that all of the important information gets addressed. Having standards prevents wildfire prevention staff from having to guess at what needs to be done.

Realistic:

Supporting plans must be realistic. These plans are for field staff to implement and for managerial/administrative staff to have as a reference.

Localized:

Supporting plans should be customized to meet the needs of the Tribe, Reservation or Agency. Templates may contain sample language, but this should be edited to meet local needs.

Actionable:

Supporting plans must be able to be implemented. They should contain details, steps, and actions the wildfire prevention staff needs to know when patrolling, planning sign installations, or communicating with the media.

Approved:

Some supporting plans will require management's approval. The most common ones that need management approval are the communications and restrictions plans.

II. THE PLANS

Supporting plans are needed in order for a wildfire prevention program to be fully functional. Even locations that don't have funded programs can benefit from developing supporting plans as needed to better guide their operations. The most common supporting plans used in wildfire prevention are a Sign Plan; a Patrol Plan; a Communications Plan; a Preparedness Plan; and a Fire Restrictions Plan.

HOW TO DEVELOP A SIGN PLAN

The Sign Plan is a basic supporting plan for a wildfire prevention program. It provides continuity, guidance, and where needed, authority to post fire wildfire prevention signs. The minimum contents of the sign plan should be:

- A. **Cover or Title Page** – Has the name of the unit, plan author, date of the current version, and possibly a signature line for approval, if needed.
- B. **Introduction** – Explain the scope and intent of the plan.
- C. **Standards, Construction and Maintenance Requirements**
 - Describe the types and specifications of signs intended to be used (4 x 4 Fire Danger signs, bulletin boards, etc.).
 - List the vendor sources for the signs.
 - If posters are a part of the signing program, include the types, sizes and sources of posters that will be used.
 - Include any standards that apply to constructing signs, including posting materials and right-of-way clearances.
 - Describe the maintenance needs for each sign type. Include painting, staining, and weed control frequencies.
 - Describe the life expectancy or replacement criteria for each sign type.
- D. **Regulatory Requirements** – Include any regulation or legal issues concerning posting signs. Include the regulatory authority's contact information and regulations they enforce.
- E. **Inventory Summary** – Provide a summary in table format of the names and locations of all the unit's signs.
- F. **Individual Inventory Pages**
 - Create an inventory sheet for each sign.
 - Include:
 - latitude and longitude,
 - road directions,
 - sign type,
 - inventory or serial numbers,
 - construction date,
 - photo,
 - local vicinity locator map,
 - right-of way or cooperators information, and
 - local guardian contact information (if used).

G. Maps

- Include a map of existing signs.
- Include a map of potential, proposed or desirable sign locations.

H. Agreements

- Include a copy of any agreement templates for right-of-way, cooperator maintenance, or guardianship.
- Include copies of all of the agreements.

Additional information about signs and the Sign Plan can be found in the discontinued NWCG publication, *Wildfire Prevention Sign and Poster Guide*, which can be found online at: <https://www.bia.gov/sites/bia.gov/files/assets/public/pdf/idc-020437.pdf>.

HOW TO DEVELOP A PATROL PLAN

The Patrol Plan is the basic supporting plan that provides guidance to wildfire prevention personnel in conducting an efficient and effective intentional patrol. Wildfire Prevention Patrol requires planning to produce the maximum benefits. It is more than simply driving around, looking for smoke on the horizon. When properly planned and conducted, Wildfire Prevention Patrol can accomplish many wildfire prevention functions, including:

- early wildfire detection;
- a current fuel conditions assessment;
- accomplishing a wide variety of wildfire prevention activities in the WFPP, such as:
 - making key contacts,
 - sign maintenance,
 - inspections,
 - updating fire danger ratings on fire danger signs, and
 - distributing information; and
 - serving as a deterrent by being highly visible.

The Wildfire Prevention Patrol Plan should contain the following elements:

- A. **Cover or Title Page** with the name of the unit, plan author, date of the current version, and possibly a signature line for approval, if needed.
- B. **Objectives** for the patrol. What are the personnel supposed to focus their efforts on when on Wildfire Prevention Patrol?
- C. **Risk assessment results**, including both a narrative description and maps.
- D. **Specific safety precautions** for the patrol, based on the assessment and objectives.
- E. **Priority Areas** and/or routes to be patrolled. Include maps of each area or the standard route. This may include specific route plans showing activities and contacts. An example route plan template is found online at: <https://www.bia.gov/bia/ots/dfwfm/bwfm/wildfire-wildfire-prevention-and-education/wildfire-prevention-resource-library/bia-wildfire-prevention-handbook>.
- F. **Scheduling** of the patrols, including trigger points. How often will an area be patrolled? When will patrols increase in frequency?

- G. **Staffing.** Who will perform patrol? Will patrol be done in pairs or by individuals? Will more than one patrol unit be working in the same area? Suppression personnel may also assist in patrol and should be included in the plan.
- H. **Patrol Kit.** Develop a checklist of the tools and equipment needed to meet the objectives and any predictable contingencies.
- I. **Wildfire Prevention Actions.** Identify any additional wildfire prevention actions that are compatible with the patrol objectives.
- J. **Type of Patrol.** Describe the modes of transportation.
- K. **Communications protocols.** Identify dead zones for communications, communications methods, periodic status check-in standards, and emergency contact numbers.
- L. **Documentation requirements.** What sort of documentation is needed for the patrol? Are there any required forms or checklists?
- M. **Evaluation.** Patrols should be evaluated to determine if they are meeting the objectives and if any safety issues need further mitigation. The method and requirements for the patrol should be described in the patrol plan.

Additional information about Wildfire prevention Patrol planning can be found in the NWCG's *Standards for Wildfire Prevention: Recreation Areas and Patrols* - PMS 456, which can be found online at: <https://www.nwcg.gov/sites/default/files/publications/pms456.pdf>.

HOW TO DEVELOP A WILDFIRE PREVENTION COMMUNICATIONS PLAN

The Wildfire Prevention Communications Plan is the basic supporting plan that provides the wildfire prevention staff with guidance on the communications protocols at the unit. It should include information on the limitations of their authority to work with the media, any approved key messages, and contact information. The recommended elements to cover in this plan are:

- A. **Cover or Title Page** with the name of the unit, plan author, date of the current version, and a signature line for approval. Signatures can also be maintained on a separate page to track period reviews.
- B. **Purpose.** This is a short section explaining the intended purpose for the Wildfire Prevention Communications Plan.
- C. **Authorities (Policies, Protocols and Procedures).** This section establishes the BIA Agency or Tribal spokesperson and lists any directions to the wildfire prevention staff for limitations on their authority to work with the media. This section should list the BIA Agency or Tribal personnel that may need to be notified in advance of a news release or possible story.
- D. **Key Audiences.** This section identifies the targeted audiences for fire wildfire prevention communications.
- E. **Tactics.** This section connects the communications actions in the WFPP to the Wildfire Prevention Communications Plan and expands on how they will be implemented.
- F. **Cooperators and Contact Information.** This section should provide a list of media outlets, cooperating agencies, and organizations as well as their contact information.
- G. **Key Messages.** This section lists any pre-approved key messages for the wildfire prevention program to include in interviews, news releases, or speaking events.
- H. **Evaluation.** This section discusses how the effectiveness of the wildfire prevention communications will be measured.
- I. **Appendix.** The appendix includes copies of any special guidance or policy memos affecting wildfire prevention communications and media relations. It should also include any templates for public service announcements or news releases.

Approved Messages

The 90 IAM Chapter 5 -H, Wildfire Prevention Handbook, provides guidance for the BIA delivered programs on topics that are pre-approved for prevention personnel to provide messages on.

Sample press releases on several of these topics can be found online on the [BIA National Prevention Program Implementation Guidance](https://www.bia.gov/bia/ots/dfwfm/bwfm/wildfire-prevention-and-education/handbook) webpage at: <https://www.bia.gov/bia/ots/dfwfm/bwfm/wildfire-prevention-and-education/handbook>.

Commonly Used Campaigns

Several national interagency campaigns are commonly used across Indian Country and are also recognized as having approved messages.

Smokey Bear

Not all programs will want to use Smokey Bear. The choice to use Smokey Bear is a local one, influenced by several factors. However, for those that do choose to use Smokey Bear, there are a few things the program staff needs to know. Smokey Bear is a powerful symbol for wildfire prevention, as his image is widely recognized and connected with wildfire prevention. Therefore, his image and message must be protected. Smokey's sole message is about personal responsibility in connection with unwanted ignitions. That message: "*Only you can prevent wildfires,*" has been tested and is linked solidly to the symbol. No other message such as "*Stop, Drop and Roll*" should be used in connection with Smokey Bear.

For more information on the BIA's use of Smokey Bear consult the 90 IAM Chapter 5-H, BIA's Wildfire Prevention Handbook.

Guidance from the US Forest Service on the use of Smokey Bear can be found online at: <https://smokeybear.com/en/about-wildland-fire> , near the bottom of the page as [Smokey Bear Use Guidelines](#).

FIREWISE®

Firewise is a national program managed by the NFPA that emphasizes community involvement and provides important information for residents to reduce the risk of a wildland fire igniting their homes. It teaches people how to adapt to living where wildfires frequently occur and encourages neighbors to work together and take action now to prevent losses.

Firewise uses a set of principles based on the research of Retired US Forest Service Fire Scientist, Jack Cohen. This research into how structures ignite in a wildland fire provides the basis for most of the advice fire wildfire prevention programs use to reduce structural ignitability. More information on the NFPA's Firewise® program can be found online at: <https://www.nfpa.org/Public-Education/By-topic/Wildfire/Preparing-homes-for-wildfire>.

Ready, Set, Go!

The *Ready, Set, Go!* (RSG) program, managed by the International Association of Fire Chiefs (IAFC), helps fire departments teach individuals who live in high risk wildfire areas how to best prepare themselves and their properties against fire threats. The messages used by RSG are appropriate for most Tribal communities. RSG has three simple tenets:

1. **Be Ready** – Be Fire Adapted and Ready

Residents are encouraged to take personal responsibility and prepare long before the threat of a wildland fire, so their home is ready in case of a fire. It encourages the creation of defensible space by clearing brush away from the home. Fire-resistant landscaping and hardening of the home with fire-safe construction measures are also promoted. The program recommends assembling emergency supplies and belongings in a safe place and planning escape routes. Finally, it advises making sure all those residing within the home know the plan of action.

2. **Be Set** – Maintain Situational Awareness

It promotes packing emergency items, staying aware of the latest news and information on fire activity from local media, fire department, and public safety officials.

3. **Go** – Act Early

It promotes executing an evacuation plan early as a wildfire approaches. By evacuating early, better access is provided for firefighters and public safety officials. Their attention can then be focused on the suppression effort and property protection, rather than on rescuing residents that have become trapped by the fire.

Additional information about RSG, is available online at: <http://www.wildlandfirersg.org/>.

Respect the Flame

Respect the Flame is a program developed by the North Dakota Forest Service and the North Dakota Fire Fighters Association to educate children and their parents about fire safety. It features replacing fear of fire with understanding of, and respect for, fire. Additional information about *Respect the Flame* is available online at: <https://respecttheflame.com/>.

One Less Spark, One Less Wildfire

The *One Less Spark, One Less Wildfire* campaign has been used successfully by several federal agencies and states. It focuses primarily on vehicle and homeowner equipment-caused fires but supports the wildfire prevention of all human caused fires. The campaign highlights lesser

known but significant causes of wildfires, including sparks created by tow chains dragging along the pavement or by a metal lawnmower blade striking a rock.

Additional information about *One Less Spark, One Less Wildfire*, is available from several sources on the internet. CalFire's website is well developed and offers a toolkit:

<http://www.readyforwildfire.org/One-Less-Spark-Campaign/>.

The USDA Forest Service also offers several print ready publications online at:

<https://www.fs.usda.gov/detail/r4/fire-aviation/wildfire-prevention/?cid=fseprd520523>.

The Fire History Project: Fire on the Land

The Salish-Kootenai Tribes of the Flathead Reservation have developed an educational program appropriate for Indian Country entitled *Fire on the Land*. It includes an integrated set of educational materials that focus on the traditional uses of fire by Indian people and the profound effects that Indian burning had on plant and animal communities. Additional information about *Fire on the Land* is available online at: <http://www.csktribes.org/natural-resources/tribal-forestry/fire-history-project>.

HOW TO DEVELOP A WILDFIRE PREVENTION PREPAREDNESS PLAN

The Wildfire Prevention Preparedness Plan is another basic supporting plan for any wildfire prevention program. It lays out a logical progression in fire wildfire prevention activities as a fire season develops. Alternately, these steps may be included in the unit's "preparedness," "readiness", "step-up plan", or fire danger operating plan. When it is necessary or more desirable for the unit to develop a separate wildfire prevention preparedness plan, the recommended elements to include are:

A. **Cover or Title Page** with the name of the unit, plan author, date of the current version, and a signature line for approval.

B. **Introduction.** This is a short section explaining the intended purpose for the Preparedness Plan.

C. **Preparedness Criteria.** Determine verifiable and reliable criteria for determining progression from one level to the next. Describe the criteria used as a basis for changing the preparedness levels. Some of the most common criteria are:

- Unit Preparedness Level
- Keetch-Byram Drought Index (KBDI)
- Burning Index (BI)
- Energy Release Component (ERC)
- Fire Activity
- Fire Danger Ratings

Consider using more than one criterion to best depict the current situation.

D. **Trigger Points.** Describe the trigger points for the Preparedness Criteria that will signal a change in Preparedness Level is needed. These should be selected based on experience combined with an understanding of the criterion.

E. **Preparedness Levels.** List the preparedness levels with their trigger points. Under each level, describe or list the various wildfire prevention activities that will begin, end, or increase for each level. If an activity will continue through all levels, it doesn't need to be shown. Only include those activities that will change as the wildfire prevention preparedness levels increase. Some of the most important activities to include in each preparedness level are:

- Patrol Frequency
- Burning Permit Issuance
- Fire Restrictions
- Extended staffing

- Long Term Severity Requests
- Fire Danger Sign Ratings
- Public Information Efforts
- Wildfire prevention's Role in Suppression Support
- Leave Scheduling

HOW TO DEVELOP A WILDFIRE PREVENTION FIRE RESTRICTIONS PLAN

A Wildfire Prevention Fire Restriction Plan is a very useful supporting document for the wildfire prevention program that expresses leadership's intent for the safe use of fire in the jurisdiction. It is related to the Preparedness Plan and Burning Permit System and may also impact industrial operations plans. It should use similar or identical trigger points as the Preparedness Plan. This Plan will need to be developed with involvement from the Forestry, Fuels Management, and the Natural Resources staff. It can take many forms. It can be a separate plan; a section in the Preparedness Plan or Burn Permit System; a Tribal ordinance; or a decision memo from some authorized person describing the process for entering into fire restrictions. It may also be desirable to include the triggering criteria in the Fire Danger Operating Plan, when developed. The recommended format for a Restrictions Plan is:

- A. **Cover or Title Page** with the name of the unit, plan author, date of the current version, and a signature line for approval.
- B. **Introduction.** This is a short section explaining the intended purpose for the Wildfire Prevention Fire Restrictions Plan. It should cite the authority for issuing fire restrictions. Tribes have the ability to develop their own restrictions or adopt those used by county or state governments. BIA Agency programs must typically rely on the RD for the authority to adopt the burning restriction laws of a state (25 CFR §1.4). Some types of restrictions may be developed and adopted by a BIA Agency program in consultation with the affected Tribal government. The text of 25 CFR §1.4 can be found online at: https://www.ecfr.gov/cgi-bin/text-idx?SID=35e6322ee645b8e4b2bce91c08b908bb&mc=true&node=se25.1.1_14&rgn=div8.
- C. **Types of Restrictions.** This section lists the types of restrictions and triggering criteria used by the program to protect the public and natural resources. The types of restrictions most commonly used are:
 - **Burning Permits** - The Burn Permit System is a form of a restriction. It is limited to authorizing the burning of small areas around a domicile when not conducted for land management purposes. The Burn Permit System should contain provisions for revocation of permits and for not issuing permits. Restrictions on the issuance of permits are normally of short duration. The determining criteria are usually daily weather conditions.
 - **Burning/Fire Use Restrictions** - Burning restrictions primarily apply to the use of prescribed fire but may also supersede any burn permits the program has issued. Restrictions are not an outright ban, but may place limitations on the weather conditions, time of day, or signature authority required for approval of a prescribed fire. The determining criteria can be daily weather, climatic, seasonal, or activity driven. Each restrictions plan should refer to the current version of the Interagency Standards for Fire

and Fire Aviation Operations - Chapter 17, found online at:
https://www.nifc.gov/policies/pol_ref_redbook.html for guidance on prescribed burning during national Preparedness Levels 4 and 5.

- **Burn Bans** - Burn Bans are the most severe form of fire restriction. They are typically issued by an elected government entity, such as a county or a state governor's office. They may also be issued by Tribal government. Burn Bans are normally triggered by drought conditions and are put in place for extended periods.
 - **Closures** - An action that restricts entry into a geographic area. Closures covering a small- or large-scale area will be used when safety of the public and/or firefighters is a concern. These closures may involve multiple or limited areas and should be coordinated between the agencies and Tribes.
 - **Industrial Operations Restrictions** - These restrictions are most often initiated by the division overseeing the activity and typically limit activities, operational time periods, and equipment use. The wildfire prevention staff should collaborate with the appropriate division to ensure fire safety and wildfire prevention measures are included in these restriction plans.
- d. **Trigger Points.** This section lists the trigger points for the criteria used for each type of restriction. It should include a description of the official source for each criterion.
- e. **Exceptions.** This section describes any allowances for some limited exceptions. The most common Indian Country exception is an exemption for cultural, ceremonial, and religious use of fire. This can be in the form of a standing exemption, notification process, or by application.