



United States Department of the Interior
OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY
Washington, DC 20240

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OWF POLICY MEMORANDUM 2016-013

To: Director, Bureau of Land Management
Director, National Park Service
Director, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Director, Bureau of Indian Affairs
Commissioner, Bureau of Reclamation
Director, U.S. Geological Survey

From: Director, Office of Wildland Fire

Subject: Criteria for Reviewing Wildfire Incidents

Purpose: The purpose of this Policy Memorandum is to establish criteria for selecting wildfires to review and for conducting these reviews within the Department of the Interior (DOI).

Background: September 9, 2015, the Government Accountability Office (GAO) issued *Wildland Fire Management: Agencies Have Made Several Key Changes but Could Benefit from More Information about Effectiveness* (GAO-15-772), which recommended that Secretary of the Interior direct the Director of the Office of Wildland Fire to “develop specific criteria for selecting wildland fires for review and conducting the reviews” and “once such criteria are established, revise agency policies to align with the specific criteria developed by the agencies.”

Reviewing wildfire incidents will improve the effectiveness of wildland fire management. Reviews provide oversight and identification of strengths and opportunities for improvements in fire management operations.

Scope: This Policy Memorandum applies to the Department of the Interior’s bureaus and office wildland fire management activities.

Time Frame: This Policy Memorandum is effective immediately and remains in effect until rescinded or modified, or superseded by updates to the Departmental Manual.

Policy:

The Department of the Interior bureaus will conduct a Significant Wildland Fire Review on an incident when an incident is projected (single fire or complex) to meet or exceeds federal combined expenditures of \$15 million in suppression costs, and more than 50% of the burned acres are managed by one or more DOI bureaus. If the incident is multi-jurisdictional, the

affected DOI bureaus will identify a lead. The lead DOI bureau is responsible to coordinate with and involve interagency partners in conducting the review, completing the report, and developing any recommendations.

The Review will assess the following elements, at minimum:

1. Delegation of Authority (provided to the Incident Commander) to assess how cost containment direction and protection goals were addressed.
2. Incident Decisions and Procedures, including those published in the system of record (e.g. Wildland Fire Decision Support System) to assess how strategic decisions relate to policies and plans.
3. Success in meeting incident objectives.
4. Role of the Agency Administrator in financial oversight and strategic decision-making.
5. Cost management actions that were implemented.

Any of the following elements may also be included, as determined by the lead DOI bureau:

- Program Management
- Safety
- Leadership
- Initial Response
- Strategies (to include fuels management and prevention activities occurring prior and effectiveness)
- Operations
- Incident Business Practices
- Cost Effectiveness
- Cooperation and coordination (e.g. internal, interagency, intergovernmental)
- Other/special items of concern

The Department of the Interior bureaus may also conduct a Fire Review on an incident that meets any of the following criteria assessing any of the elements included above:

1. When there are significant political, social, natural resource, complexity, size, or policy issues.
2. There are significant and complicated cost-share or multi-jurisdictional issues.
3. The affected line officer requests a review team.

The DOI bureau leading the Significant Wildland Fire Review will provide a copy of the final report to the DOI Fire Directors and the Director, Office of Wildland Fire. Through the Interior Fire Executive Council (IFEC), the bureau management officials or their designee will share best practices and emerging issues. Reviewing wildfire incidents supports organizational learning within the wildland fire management community.

The bureaus will collectively analyze the reports to determine if policies or procedures require modification or if the results suggest additional action in terms of improving the effectiveness in fire management activities.

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