



**National Wildfire Coordinating Group  
(NWCG)  
Preparedness Branch**

**Incident Business Committee (IBC)**

July 1, 2014

**Federal Agency Vehicle Property Damage – Incident Response  
Frequently Asked Questions**

**The intent of this document is to provide general guidance to the field regarding damage to government vehicles during incident assignments. The terms of any applicable cooperative agreement take precedence over the guidance contained in this document. Refer to Interagency Incident Business Management Handbook (IIBMH) Chapter 30 “Property Management” for guidance regarding the responsible party to make determinations. See pages 2-3 for *definitions*.**

**Q. Who pays for repairs or maintenance due to *normal wear and tear*?**

**A.** This is to be paid by agency-specific funds as appropriate. It is not appropriate to charge normal wear and tear to the incident.

**Q. Can air filters be charged to an incident?**

**A.** Yes, only if it is determined that conditions of the incident are extremely dusty and exceed “normal” off-road driving conditions that the vehicle might encounter (this is an exception to maintenance required for normal wear and tear).

**Q. When does the incident pay for replacement tires?**

**A.** It is appropriate to fund the replacement of tires only when it is considered outside of normal wear and tear (see definition for *normal wear and tear of tires*). This includes damage such as side wall cuts, punctures, damage due to “chunking” of tread due to spinning of tires, etc. that occurs during suppression efforts while the vehicle is being used on the fireline.

**Q. Who pays for repair of damage due to *abuse or negligence*?**

**A.** This is to be paid by agency-specific funds as appropriate. These repairs are not to be charged to the incident.

**Q. Who pays for repair of damage that occurs during the incident due to *nonstandard use*?**

**A.** This is appropriate to charge to the incident if the damage meets the definition of nonstandard use (see page 2).

**Q. Who pays for repair of damage due to *hazards* (acts of nature)?**

**A.** This is funded by the appropriation financing the work on which the damage occurred. If the vehicle was damaged while in use on an incident response then it is appropriate to fund the repair from the incident.

**Q. Who pays for damage caused by an accident between government owned equipment and a 3<sup>rd</sup> Party?**

**A.** If the government is determined to be at fault, repair of the government owned equipment is funded by the incident or home unit agency-specific funds, as appropriate. If the 3<sup>rd</sup> Party appears to be at fault, follow agency specific procedures. As a precautionary measure, assign an S# in case litigation decides the 3<sup>rd</sup> party is not liable. If this occurs, an accounting adjustment would be made back to the incident job code or home unit agency-specific job code, as appropriate.

**Definitions:**

***Normal wear and tear:*** Maintenance required after using the equipment for its intended purpose within its design and performance capabilities. This includes failure of mechanical components due to normal life cycle and regularly scheduled maintenance such as lube and oil changes, alignments, rotation of tires, etc.

***Normal wear and tear of tires:*** Typical normal wear and tear is considered low tread depth, wear bars showing across the width of the tread, blowouts (due to low tread), cupping or uneven wear due to under or over-inflation, camber wear or feathering due to misalignment, etc. Examples of tread depth measurements that indicate tire replacement include the following:

FS – Front Axle 4/32”; Rear Axle 2/32”

BLM – All Season (street) Tires 1/16”; On/Off Road, All Terrain Tires 1/8”

***Non-standard use:*** Repair required as a result of using the equipment in a manner for which it was not intended, or beyond the design or operational capabilities of the equipment. **Non-standard use does not include damage caused by *abuse* or *negligence*.** Some examples of incident damage due to non-standard use include:

- Damage to mirrors antennas, dents, headlights, taillights, cracked windshields, and the underside of the vehicle (including steering and drivetrain components) caused by impact due to terrain and/or off-road conditions of the incident.
- Alignments if directly associated with impact damage or impact with rocks, boulders, water bars, etc.
- Replacement of shocks from long, unimproved roads on an incident site.

***Abuse:*** Damage caused by disregard for established standards of use or maintenance.

***Negligence:*** Failure to exercise the care that a prudent person usually exercises. Some examples include:

- Replacement of brakes due to overheating caused by excessive use or not “shifting down” in 4 wheel drive or using “4 low”.
- Loss or breakdown of vehicle due to motor being “dusted” caused by air filter not being changed on a daily/regular basis as required by conditions.

***Hazard:*** A hazard is an unusual or unforeseen occurrence, such as a fire, flood, slide, or a storm (also known as acts of nature).