



United States Department of the Interior  
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT  
Fire and Aviation  
3833 South Development Avenue  
Boise, Idaho 83705-5354  
<http://www.nifc.gov>



March 29, 2011

In Reply Refer to:  
9210 (FA600) P

EMS Transmission 03/30/2011  
Instruction Memorandum No. FA IM-2011-021  
Expires: 09/30/2012

To: State and Center Directors

From: Acting Assistant Director (NIFC), Fire and Aviation

Subject: Bureau of Land Management Use of the Wildland Fire Decision Support System and Fire Cost Certification

**Program Area:** Fire Operations, Fire Management, Fire Planning, Fuels Management

**Purpose:** This Instruction Memorandum (IM) updates Bureau of Land Management (BLM) guidance for using the Wildland Fire Decision Support System (WFDSS) and the policy for certifying wildfire costs. This IM supersedes Instruction Memorandum No. FA IM-2010-019, and communicates recent WFDSS enhancements since 2010.

**Policy/Action:** Basic direction for implementing the WFDSS is found in the *Interagency Standards for Fire and Fire Aviation Operations*. The BLM has established the following additional policy requirements for the WFDSS:

1. Input of initial attack fires into the WFDSS is optional. All fires which escape initial attack or are being managed for multiple objectives will be input into the WFDSS and a decision will be published.
2. The BLM Agency Administrators will serve as Approvers of WFDSS decisions, regardless of fire costs. The BLM Agency Administrators must meet fire training requirements for Agency Administrators as specified in Chapter 2 of the *Interagency Standards for Fire and Fire Aviation Operations*.
3. Use of the web-based WFDSS application is required. If internet connections or servers are unavailable, WFDSS documentation will be completed using the "temporary WFDSS paper form" and entered into the web-based application as soon as it becomes available.
4. Minimum WFDSS documentation requirements are included in Attachment 1.

## Pre-Season Work Requirements

1. State and field units will ensure that WFDSS Strategic Objectives and Management Requirements reflect guidance contained in current Fire Management Plans and Resource Management Plans.
2. Unit-level shape files which define locally relevant data such as habitats, infrastructure, or other features important to fire management decisions will be uploaded into the WFDSS, at the discretion of local fire managers.
3. State and field units will ensure that Agency Administrators, Line Officers, and appropriate staff have WFDSS user profiles established in order to complete assigned WFDSS tasks.
4. State WFDSS points-of-contact will convey Agency Administrator responsibilities in pre-season training. As approvers of WFDSS decisions, Agency Administrators will ensure that periodic assessments are completed until the fire is declared out.

## BLM Wildland Fire Cost Certification Process

Wildland fire cost certification is a mandatory process for the BLM which requires an Agency Administrator to certify, at pre-identified cost thresholds, that the expenditure of funds on an incident are commensurate with considerations such as fire complexity and values at risk. The cost certification process is triggered when fire costs are anticipated to reach thresholds identified in Chapter 11 of the *Interagency Standards for Fire and Fire Aviation Operations*. Certification thresholds are based on total fire costs because individual agency costs cannot be accurately estimated in real time. States and units will coordinate with cooperators to address communication protocols and the process used to estimate total fire costs. If total fire cost estimates cannot be reached with cooperators, BLM managers will use BLM only cost expenditure estimates. Published WFDSS decisions which describe the fire situation and course of action may be useful to Agency Administrators and should be included in the cost certification briefing. Chapter 11 of the *Interagency Standards for Fire and Fire Aviation Operations* displays the cost certification thresholds and corresponding BLM certifying official. A cost certification form is provided as Attachment 2. A blank template and an example of the cost certification form are available at the BLM Fire Operations Toolbox:  
[http://web.blm.gov/internal/fire/fire\\_ops/Toolbox/WFDSS.html](http://web.blm.gov/internal/fire/fire_ops/Toolbox/WFDSS.html).

**Timeframe:** This policy is effective immediately.

**Budget Impact:** Moderate costs will be incurred as BLM States continue to enter required information into the WFDSS and conduct additional training. The long-term expectation is that the WFDSS will provide economic efficiencies related to improved wildland fire management.

**Background:** The 2011 fire season represents the third year of WFDSS implementation for the BLM. In 2010, approximately 1600 BLM incidents were input into the WFDSS. A number of policy changes and system enhancements have occurred since the 2010 season, and are summarized as follows:

- Updated WFDSS resources such as forms, examples, and frequently asked questions are available at the BLM Fire Operations Toolbox website  
[http://web.blm.gov/internal/fire/fire\\_ops/Toolbox/WFDSS.html](http://web.blm.gov/internal/fire/fire_ops/Toolbox/WFDSS.html).

- WFDSS documentation will be used in determining Flame Act eligibility, and as such, units should document methods for estimating fire cost.
- In addition to uploading shape-files at the time of the incident, data managers may now pre-load data which may be useful to WFDSS decisions. These should be pre-loaded into the WFDSS at the discretion of local fire managers based upon the relevance of that data to local fire management decisions.
- Beginning with version 3.13, additional BLM features can be viewed in the Fire Situation page. These include sage-grouse key and currently occupied habitats, BLM buildings, BLM oil and gas leases, and BLM range allotments.
- Updates to Fire Management Unit (FMU) boundaries are continually accepted at the National Office and submitted to the WFDSS geospatial group for input into the application.
- The National Operations Center will compile final fire perimeters for all BLM fires greater than 10 acres and submit them to the WFDSS geospatial data group for migration into the application at the end of the fire season. Uploading final fire perimeters into the WFDSS is not required for field units.
- The FRAMES webpage will post announcements for WFDSS webinars and trainings [http://frames.nbii.gov/portal/server.pt/community/wfdss/688/training\\_webinars/3606](http://frames.nbii.gov/portal/server.pt/community/wfdss/688/training_webinars/3606).

**Manual/Handbook Sections Affected:** This IM updates guidance for the approval of Wildland Fire Situation Analysis (the precursor of the WFDSS) that is contained in BLM Manual 1203, Delegation of Authority.

**Coordination:** This memorandum has been coordinated with the Fire Leadership Team, the BLM WFDSS Oversight Group, the Division of Fire Operations, and the Division of Fire Planning and Fuels Management.

**Contact:** The BLM's WFDSS Oversight Group will assist field units with training as needed. For questions related to WFDSS policy, contact Doug Havlina, BLM Fire Ecologist, 208-387-5061, or Howard Hedrick, Division Chief, Fire Planning and Fuels Management, 208-387-5153. For technical questions regarding the WFDSS, contact the appropriate state level point-of-contact listed below:

State	Point-of-Contact for WFDSS topics	Phone Number
Alaska	Lindsey Lien	907-356-5859
Arizona	Mark Pater	928-348-4416
California	James Newman	916-978-4635
Colorado	Gwenan Poirier	303-239-3689
Idaho	Kevin Knauth	208-373-3856
Montana	Ken Schmid	406-896-2919
New Mexico	John Selkirk	505-954-2192
Nevada	Michael Boomer	775-861-6523
Oregon	Louisa Evers	503-808-6377
Utah	Brad Washa	801-539-4246
Wyoming	Gwenan Poirier	303-239-3689

Signed by:  
Gary Bowers, acting

Authenticated by:  
Erin K. Maskalick  
Records Management Specialist

2 Attachments:

- 1 - Wildland Fire Decision Support System (WFDSS) Minimum Required Documentation for BLM Wildfire Incidents (1 p)
- 2 - Certification Form for Expected Expenditure of Wildfire Funds (2 pp)

Distribution:

BLM ADs  
Fire Leadership Team  
BLM Library  
State FMO's  
Doug Havlina (FA600)