

8. Delegation of Authority

A format for the agency administrator's delegation of authority to the incident commander.

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A. Introduction

The transfer of authority for suppression actions on a wildland fire is accomplished through the execution of a written delegation of authority from the agency administrator with responsibility for the land area involved to the incident commander who will be assigned responsibility for implementing the agency's strategic direction for management of the incident. In conjunction with the wildland fire situation analysis, the delegation of authority is the most important procedural responsibility the agency administrator has in managing the wildland fire.

An incident management team will assume the authority to manage suppression actions on a fire only after receiving a signed delegation of authority from the agency administrator which is definitive enough for the situation and mutually acceptable. The delegation is part of the briefing package provided by the agency administrator and appropriate staff to the incident management team.

B. Purpose of the Delegation of Authority

A letter delegating authority and assigning responsibilities should be issued by the agency administrator whenever an incident commander and his or her team is assigned to manage an incident on the unit.

Prepare a delegation of authority specific enough to convey to the incident commander your expectations, yet broad enough to allow the team to be responsive to contingencies which develop during the incident. Any constraints that are necessary for the agency to meet land management objectives, avoid political problems and high levels of public concern, prevent unacceptable environmental impacts, or jeopardize firefighter or public safety should be included in sufficient detail for clear understanding between the agency administrator and incident commander. Where the team can be given the latitude to carry out the agency administrator's direction within the WFSA preferred alternative, further constraints only inhibit and reduce the team's management effectiveness and should be considered carefully.

Consider the delegation of authority as the performance objectives for the team on this incident. If that document is vague, the team cannot be held accountable for specific intentions the agency may have, but failed to clearly communicate in writing. If it is too restrictive, the team loses the necessary latitude to be responsive to changed conditions in the fire's environment that may require immediate action.

The direction provided in the delegation and the strategic objectives in the WFSA should serve as the basis for evaluating the performance of the incident management team at the conclusion of their assignment.

C. Who Is Responsible?

As in delegating any authority, the delegation for management of a wildland fire incident can only be made by the person responsible for management of the lands involved. For incidents involving more than one organizational level, or adjacent lands, either public or private, the the individual responsible for the entire jurisdiction will act as the responsible agency administrator. The appropriate official will also represent the agency administrator's role in incident management anytime an area command team is in place during multiple incident situations on the unit or involving the agency and cooperating agencies. In this case, the appropriate agency administrator will issue a single delegation of authority to the area commander, and the area commander will

further delegate authority to individual incident commanders specifically for the incidents they are managing.

D. Components To Include In The Delegation Of Authority

The delegation of authority should identify objectives and important issues identified by the agency administrator, placing performance expectations on the incident management team, and should identify and explain:

- Jurisdictional and protection responsibility for the lands involved in the wildland fire, including responsibility for structural protection where relevant.
- The agency administrator's representative who is authorized to speak for the delegating agency administrator.
- Suppression objectives and their priority.
- Specific suppression tactics or areas that require agency administrator approval.
- Initial attack responsibilities and areas that may be assumed by the team.
- Resource advisor who will represent the agency administrator's specific direction to the team.
- Basic documents that guide incident management on the agency/unit.
- Cost constraints and guidelines.
- Property accountability; fire loss/use rate expectations.
- Incident business advisor and required coordination with the team.
- Guidelines for media relations and incident information management.
- Procedures dealing with threats to other jurisdictions and private property.
- Any local logistical considerations, including procurement and supply procedures.
- Any other constraints or issues, such as current activities by forest or other agencies, legal requirements, training opportunities, etc.

In any specified direction, use clear, measureable descriptions to the extent possible.

E. Example of a Delegation of Authority Letter

The following is a sample format for the delegation of authority from the agency administrator to the incident commander.

SAMPLE DELEGATION OF AUTHORITY

File Code: _____ Date: _____

Subject: Delegation of Authority for the _____ **Incident**

To: _____, **Incident Commander**

_____, you are hereby assigned as the Incident Commander for the _____ Incident on the _____ District of the _____ National Forest. This fire will be managed under a Unified Command structure with _____.

I expect you to take command of the incident no later than _____ at _____ hours.

You have full authority and responsibility for managing incident operations within the framework of legal statute, current policy, and the broad direction provided in both your verbal and written briefing materials. You are accountable to me. A formal evaluation of your performance will be conducted prior to your departure from the Forest. This formal evaluation may be followed up within sixty days after your departure once the Forest has had the opportunity to review accountability, claims, financial matters, and other items, which require time to evaluate.

Safety

Accountability for fire safety is your first and most important responsibility. All members of your team must observe a “Zero Tolerance” for any careless or unsafe action. As Incident Commander, please take the appropriate actions to insure that everyone involved in suppressing the Old Incident knows and follows these **Safety Principles**:

- Safety Comes First on Every Fire, Every Time.
- The Ten Standard Fire Orders Are Firm. They will not be bent or broken. If anyone is observed breaking an Order, they are to be relieved of their fire assignment on the spot. No exceptions!
- All firefighters must have a safe assignment. If a chance is taken, it will be on the loss of property and natural resources, never on firefighter safety.
- Every firefighter and member of your team is responsible to ensure compliance with the established safe firefighting practices.

Incident personnel who violate these practices are to be reprimanded and released from the incident. Again—**ZERO TOLERANCE**—no exceptions.

Wildfire Fire Situation Analysis (WFSA)

A Wildfire Fire Situation Analysis (WFSA) has been prepared for this incident and will provide broad strategic direction for you. Should a new WFSA be deemed necessary upon regular operational period review, be prepared to assist in its development.

Cost Accountability

You are to provide the necessary suppression capability to control this wildfire at a reasonable cost to meet the objectives specified and to protect on- and off-Forest values.

- Emphasize good accountability for supplies ordered from the cache. Keep the incident loss tolerance within 25%.
- By 10:00 AM each morning, please provide me with a daily fire suppression cost, by category for this incident.
- Although broad incident suppression cost estimates is set in the WFSA, I expect the team to develop and implement reasonable and prudent incident suppression expenditure decisions.

The estimated suppression cost in the WFSA is \$__,000,000. I am setting the estimated suppression limit at \$__,000,000 based upon the assumption that you will make every effort to contain within the selected alternative, but with the realization that there will be increased _____(aviation) costs associated with working in the _____(urban interface) of _____. If the fire remains within the selected alternative boundary, you are authorized to spend up to _____(ten (10)) percent more than this amount without further changes to the WFSA. Given the variability and complexity of this incident and the range of historic costs used to derive this figure, I am providing this flexibility in order to ensure the successful conclusion of this incident, with the expectation that you and your Incident Management Team will strive to achieve the lower amount. I wish to be clear on the expectation that I do not want firefighter or public safety to be compromised over cost-containment actions.

Wildfires involving multiple jurisdictions may require mutually approved cost apportionment agreements. These agreements should be implemented by you as the Incident Commander based upon direction from the Administrative Officer or the Incident Business Advisor.

Incident Business Advisor (IBA)

An Incident Business Advisor (IBA) has been assigned, _____. Work closely with the IBA to stay fully informed of

fiscal issues, expenditures and the limitations. Be concerned about property accountability and potential damage claims. Be efficient in your operations.

Public Information

Work closely with Public Affairs Officer, _____, and representatives of other agencies and jurisdictions. Keep them informed and work closely with them, proactively dealing with controversial issues.

An information center has also been established in the _____ and a Joint Information Center (JIC) is being established. You will be responsible for information, but I expect you to coordinate releases through the Forest Information Center and the JIC. Cooperate with the local media. Be responsive to their needs but do not compromise safety standards in meeting their needs.

Your team is to handle local and national media contacts in coordination with the agency or JIC if established. All political contacts are to be forwarded to District Ranger _____. Keep me informed regarding all political aspects.

Suppression Considerations

The WFSA sets the priorities for the suppression actions. In my absence, _____ (Fire Management Officer) or _____ (Deputy Fire Management Officer) will be my representative. District Ranger _____ are available to advise you on District resource considerations.

_____ will be the agency liaison to you. Work closely to resolve problems and seek local fire management expertise in coordination with other incidents.

Resource Issues

Sensitive resource and land management issues include the necessity to minimize long-term watershed damage, minimize the adverse impacts to threatened and endangered species habitat. Please coordinate closely with the assigned agency Lead Resource Advisor _____ to minimize impacts to these habitats. Archeological considerations need to be addressed with _____ during suppression operations. Other sensitive activities requiring resource management advice include the placement of tractor lines, road damage and other suppression actions that could cause disturbance to watershed values.

Major Threatened and Endangered (T&E) species issues: _____. Please work closely with the Resource Advisor to minimize impacts to these issues.

Practice minimal impact suppression tactics in riparian areas when ever possible. Be conscious of invasive species, I expect actions to be taken to reduce the opportunity of spread of weeds. A weed-washing station for off-agency equipment should be set up as soon as possible.

Work closely with the Resource Advisors at briefings and planning meetings to minimize impacts to all resources.

A rehabilitation team will be assigned to evaluate rehab needs. Please work closely with the team.

Central Ordering Point

The central ordering point will be at _____.

Human Resources

Human resource issues include the need to provide for training specialist and human resource specialist needs. I expect that all Human Resource issues will be reported to me personally. The incident is to me managed with ZERO TOLERANCE FOR SEXUAL HARASSMENT. Incident personnel who demonstrate any type of inappropriate behavior should be released immediately

with appropriate follow-up documentation. Inappropriate behavior would include alcohol, drugs, sexual harassment, or any violation of personnel rules.

Be sure we provide for and meet Regional Training needs and human resource objectives. There will be no closed camp as far as incident personnel are concerned. A representative from NFFE may be assigned to this incident.

Incident Base

The Incident Base will be at _____.

Incident Turn Back Standards

The Fire Management Officer _____ will set the turn back standards.

Final Payments

Because of fiscal accountability issues, your team will be expected to prepare daily accruals and pay all obligations incurred on this incident.

Should any problems or concerns arise, please contact me. I am prepared to discuss any needs to revise or revisit this delegation. Agency personnel can be contacted at the following numbers:

| Name | Title | Office | Cell Phone | Pager | Home |
|-------------|-------------------------------|---------------|-------------------|--------------|-------------|
| | Agency Administrator | | | | |
| | Dep. | | | | |
| | FMO | | | | |
| | Resource Advisor | | | | |
| | Public Affairs Officer | | | | |
| | | | | | |
| | | | | | |

SWCC Dispatch can be reached at Emergency 505..., Business 505..., or Fax 505...

Sincerely,

Agency Administrator
Southwestern Agency