

Foundational Doctrine

Guiding All-Hazard Response in the U.S. Forest Service

Introduction

The following collection of principles and beliefs form the foundational doctrine for response to and support of all-hazard response in the Forest Service. These principles and beliefs operate at these multiple organizational levels:

- I. **Forest Service Wide** – Applies to all employees and activities;
- II. **Fire and Aviation Management** – Specific to all-hazard program management;
- III. **All-Hazard** – Specific to all-hazard response and support activities.

The Operational Environment

1. The all-hazard environment is high risk and can rapidly transition from normal to chaotic to emergency conditions. This environment is typically characterized by a lack of organizational stability, unknown hazards, and, often times, significant human suffering and tragedy. The fundamental human or societal services and capabilities familiar to Forest Service employees are sometimes absent within these environments. Furthermore, it will be a challenge to successfully mitigate every danger on these all-hazard responses. In recognition of these facts, the Forest Service is committed to accomplishing its assigned mission through aggressive risk management.

Mission

2. The Forest Service is a land management agency with a unique combination of people, skills, and resources that add significant value to our national all-hazard response capability. The Agency accepts this all-hazard role as complimentary to its overall land management mission. The Forest Service is a land management agency first, a good neighbor second, and, lastly, a partner in all-hazard response.

3. The intent of Forest Service all-hazard response and support is to protect human life, property, and at-risk lands and resources *while imminent threats exist*.

4. The Forest Service *is prepared and organized to support* all-hazard responses by providing trained personnel to utilize their inherent skills, capabilities and assets—without requiring significant additional advance training and preparation. Support to cooperators requiring Forest Service resources will be consistent with employee core skills, capabilities, and training.

5. A cooperative relationship between the Forest Service and other agencies is essential. The Forest Service is therefore committed to working with other agencies to develop, maintain, and improve all-hazard response and associated support capabilities.

6. On all-hazard assignments, Forest Service employees will provide the same professionalism and passion for safety as they do in all agency mission assignments.

7. On all-hazard responses, the Forest Service will operate within the National Incident Management System concept of clearly stated: missions, chain-of-command, authority, responsibilities, and expectations.

8. As incidents move from the *response phase* (when engaging in activities necessary to address the incident's immediate and short-term effects) to the *recovery phase* (when imminent threats to human life, property, and land and resources have been abated)—the Forest Service will focus on demobilizing agency resources.

External Relationships

9. The Forest Service all-hazard response doctrine is based on the assumption that other Departments and agencies will fulfill their primary roles and responsibilities with National Incident Management System qualified and trained resources as outlined in the National Response Framework.

10. The National Incident Management System is the foundation of the Agency's response organization. The Forest Service is dedicated to advocating its use.

11. The Forest Service will support its interagency partners in fulfilling their obligations to the National Response Framework by helping them develop, build, organize, and utilize National Incident Management System capability.

12. The Forest Service will be proactive in developing agreements with its interagency partners to facilitate its all-hazard response obligations.

13. When responding to requests for assistance, the Forest Service will use an integrated and coordinated process to determine the appropriate level of commitment.

14. The Forest Service will seek opportunities with interagency partners to enhance use of resources and increased interoperability.

15. Where the Forest Service has jurisdictional authority, including functional responsibilities or a significant commitment of resources, it will promote and participate in Unified Command.

Leadership and Accountability

16. The Forest Service will adequately display the short- and long-term all-hazard response impacts and tradeoffs between competing work assignments and priorities. This information will be used for various levels of analysis, including local and national priorities, other agencies, and Congress.

17. The Forest Service will continue to work with its National Response Framework partners toward implementing the National Incident Management System model in all-hazard response.

18. To balance the use of a highly skilled workforce with Agency and other requirements, the Forest Service will conduct a thorough mission analysis of every all-hazard request before committing people and other resources.

19. The Forest Service will use a “lessons learned” approach for tracking and applying new, learned knowledge to benefit future all-hazard assignments. All-hazard employee awareness training should be part of the existing annual fire refresher courses.

20. Within all-hazard response environments, Forest Service leaders may encounter situations in which there is an imminent threat to life and property outside of the Agency’s jurisdiction. These environments include scenarios ranging from being first on scene at a vehicle accident, to a district ranger committing Agency resources to protect a local community. Leaders are therefore expected to use their judgment and respond appropriately.

21. Forest Service resources deployed to all-hazard responses will understand the dynamic and complex environment and utilize their leadership, training, and skills to adapt, innovate, and bring order to chaos.

22. Leaders are expected to operate within the incident organizational structure encountered on all-hazard responses. When such structure is absent, they will utilize National Incident Management System principles to assure safe and effective utilization of agency resources.

23. Forest Service leadership will express clear and concise “leader’s intent” to ensure all-hazard assignments are managed safely, effectively, and efficiently.

24. Forest Service leaders are expected to operate under existing policies and doctrine under normal conditions. On all-hazard responses, fire and aviation business and safety standards may have to be adapted to the situation to successfully accomplish the mission. Where conflicts occur, employees will use their judgment, weigh the risk versus gain, and operate within the intent of Agency policy and doctrine.

25. As part of aggressive risk management, all employees involved in all-hazard response will be supported and managed by an Agency leader, Agency liaison, or interagency Incident Management Team. This support includes Agency participation in mission assignment, incident action planning and resource tracking while on these all-hazard work assignments.

Operations

26. Forest Service all-hazard response will be focused on missions that we perform consistently and successfully. Workforce assignments will be directed toward the core skills developed through our existing training and curriculum.

27. Agency employees will be trained to operate safely and successfully in the all-hazard environment. Preparedness training will focus on gaining general knowledge of all-hazard response, disaster characteristics, as well as the effects from these events on citizens and responders.

28. Specific operational skills will be facilitated through the National Incident Management System, working with responsible agencies who supply the technical specialists who, in turn, provide the specific skill sets. The Forest Service will not train or equip to meet every hazard.

29. Forest Service employees are expected to perform all-hazard support as directed within their qualifications and physical capabilities. All employees have the right to a safe assignment. The employee may suspend his or her work whenever any environmental condition, or combination of conditions, becomes so extreme that an immediate danger is posed to employee health and safety—that cannot be readily mitigated by the use of appropriate, approved protective equipment or technology.

Risk Management

30. All-hazard incident-specific briefing and training will be accomplished *prior* to task implementation. This preparation will usually occur prior to mobilization where incident description, mission requirements, and known hazards are addressed. Key protective equipment and associated needs for these all-hazard tasks that Forest Service employees do not routinely encounter or perform will be identified. This will be done—and be in place—*prior* to task implementation.

31. Agency employees will be provided with appropriate vaccinations, credentials, and personal protective equipment to operate in the all-hazard environment to which they are assigned.

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