

“Doctrine Dialogue”
U.S. Forest Service
Fire & Aviation Management
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“The Current Status of Doctrine”

Lately many firefighters, program managers and line officers have been asking, “What’s the status on Doctrine?” The Interim Directive (ID) has been in final edit and updating in our section since January; however the biggest delays are from trying to catch all the current changes that are happening nationally. Presently, the rewritten FSM 5100 – (Fire Management), including 5120 and 5130, is now officially in the agency’s Directives System Office. The required edit, format, and review processes are expected to take at least 60 days. We hope to confirm the dates of field review soon in our next issue, especially as the agency progresses with key budget and transformation issues.

Although the FSM ID is delayed, doctrine related activities - especially discussions and dialogues, have increased significantly among fire managers and line officers. The concepts and principles surrounding doctrinal intent are becoming clearer and better understood. Overall, the collective awareness of doctrine and its intent, capabilities, and the changes it will bring forward are increasing. The most effective activities today are the surrounding dialogues, discussions and the questions now being addressed.

- Doctrine implementation will influence policy, rules, and guidelines, which will all be addressed at appropriate levels. The strength of Doctrine lies in the ability to use judgment and common sense to apply to situations rather than straight rules or checklists.
- Doctrinal principles can and will be applied on both large and small fire operations, with doctrinal leadership, commanders intent, key to decision-making.
- All wildland fire practitioners and Line Officers should be well versed in doctrinal “intent” – especially understanding its emphasis for situational awareness, accident prevention and empowered decision making.
- During summer 2007, multiple exchanges in doctrinal based processes were seen. These changes reflected: doctrinal intent, organization change, flexibility with learning tools and “lessons learned” analyses, as well as more vigilant firefighter leadership and increased situational awareness.

Remember, Doctrine is but one part of our evolving organizational culture. The process may move slowly but we are implementing as the culture learns and grows.

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