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Subject: Claims Resulting from Fire and Other Incidents

To: Regional Foresters, Station Directors, Deputy Chief for State and Private Forestry

This letter reiterates procedures for handling claims packages included in a “fire box” (Incident History and Administrative Records) at the end of an incident. The Albuquerque Service Center (ASC) Budget & Finance (B&F) Claims Branch frequently requests that a forest provide copies of documents needed to complete an administrative claim file. On occasion when searching fire records, forest personnel have discovered boxes and files marked “Comp/Claims”. These boxes have contained tort and employee claims that had been submitted during the fire and had not been forwarded to the ASC B&F Claims Branch for processing.

This letter is a reminder that claims filed at an incident must not be packed in boxes and sent to a warehouse with other incident records. The process for handling these items remains unchanged. Claims filed at an incident must be timely referred to ASC B&F Claims for prompt processing in order to meet legally-mandated deadlines.

Please ensure your forests and applicable staffs are reminded of these critical procedures:

Claims packages must be transmitted to ASC B&F Claims promptly at the end of each incident. According to the Interagency Incident Business Management Handbook, chapter 70 – Claims, section 73:

“The Incident Management Team will submit all original claims documentation to the incident agency. The incident agency will review for accuracy and completeness and will forward to the appropriate adjudicating official. This includes forwarding employee claims to the employee’s home unit, if different than incident agency.”

As stated above, it is the responsibility of the Incident Management Team to make certain that claims documentation is submitted to the incident agency. If the incident agency is the Forest Service, the incident unit must refer all claims documentation to the ASC B&F Claims Branch for processing and determination by the appropriate adjudicating official.

We thank you for your attention to this matter and your assistance in ensuring that claims resulting from fires and other incidents are promptly forwarded to ASC B&F Claims for timely processing.

If you have any questions, please contact Claims Branch Chief Janet Skeen at 505-563-7310.

/s/ Jesse L. King
JESSE L. KING
Chief Financial Officer

cc: Mary A Szymoniak

