

12. RESPONSIBILITIES DURING THE FIRE

Guidelines for maintaining line officer's accountability during the fire and monitoring performance of the incident management team. Appointing and using a resource advisor to represent the Forest's land management objectives and your direction to the incident management team. Providing for fire effects and fire suppression rehabilitation.

A. GENERAL GUIDELINES

After assigning the incident management team to a wildland fire on your unit, the line officer should allow those with delegated authority and responsibility to manage the situation and resources assigned to it. You must be prepared to provide necessary oversight, guidance, and direction to each level of the incident management organization by staying informed of events and participating in intelligence and strategy discussions in order to understand the current and emerging situation, and be able to respond when decisions and direction are required.

The following are suggestions for the line officer to help you remain focused during a large fire incident on your unit.

- Recognize that every fire has potential.
- Nobody likes surprises.
- Be available and be involved, but do not micro-manage the incident. Let excellent people do excellent work, and make sure they know you are there to lead and support them.
- Review daily incident action plans and ensure that tactics and other direction are compatible with the strategic objectives provided for the incident. Firefighter and public safety must be given visible and sincere emphasis.
- Provide oversight and direction to the resource advisor.
- Ensure that unit/district welfare and caretaking is on-going. Local personnel can become overwhelmed by the events, activities, and organization related to a large fire. Keep your folks informed and involved, but do not let them become overloaded by a combination of the fire and their normal duties, and do not let them feel left out.
- Keep your key publics and local government officials informed and involved.
- Understand the big picture; do the best you can with what you have. Increasingly, your large fire is not the only game in town, and the conventional wisdom of fire suppression may not apply.
- Know what is going on, see for yourself, stay ahead of the power curve.

- Use experienced advisors, coaches, or deputies to help you and your staff better manage the situation of increased volume and complexity of business during this period. Do not hesitate to bring in help to increase your unit's depth and situational management capability.
- In fire suppression, more often than not, that which must be done eventually should be done immediately.

B. USING THE RESOURCE ADVISOR

When a wildland fire is managed by an incident management team, the line officer should assign a resource advisor (RA) to work for you, and with the team, to represent your direction for meeting land and resource objectives during fire suppression. The RA is responsible for identifying and evaluating potential impacts of fire operations on natural and cultural resources, as well as to the social and political atmosphere affecting the unit. The RA will use their local understanding and familiarity to integrate these issues and concerns into the fire management strategy and tactics and assist the IMT in developing mitigations which satisfy the mutual objectives of wildland fire suppression and resource protection.

The decision to appoint a resource advisor should be made early in the decision process for managing a large wildland fire incident. Ideally, the RA is appointed and briefed by the line officer before the incident management team is in place and assumes direct management of the objectives set for the fire. The RA should be involved in the preparation of the wildland fire situation analysis and line officer's briefing to the IMT. That person should be made available to the team on as near a full time basis during the team's management of the incident as possible. Consequently, the line officer should take necessary steps to alleviate the RA of other routine responsibilities to the extent possible.

Throughout the incident, the line officer should be available to the RA for consultation and monitoring of issues and events. In all events, the line officer and RA must remember that the RA works *for* the line officer and *with* the team.

C. FIRE REHABILITATION

As soon as a large wildland fire incident occurs, the line officer must begin considering the effects and consequences of the fire itself and of the fire suppression activities on resources.

1. Burned Area Emergency Rehabilitation

Fire effects are those caused by the burning fire. Those must be analyzed by a burned area emergency rehabilitation team (BAER). Specifically, BAER work is focused on emergency watershed rehabilitation to stabilize soil, control water runoff, sedimentation, and debris movement, and prevent threats to life, property, and other downstream values resulting from the loss of vegetation and other organic material consumed by the fire. The line officer is responsible for assembling the BAER team and directing the team leader. The objectives set for the BAER team will largely be determined by land management standards which apply to the area impacted by the fire and the severity of the fire on that area. The process which the BAER team will follow is set forth in FSH 2509.

When the need for a BAER team is recognized and the team is assembled, its mission in the fire area must be coordinated with the incident management team and safe integration with the on-going strategy and tactics employed by the IMT must be ensured.

Funding the BAER team's analysis work and subsequent rehabilitation activities will be provided by a special appropriation requested by the Forest for only this purpose through the approved BAER plan for the fire area.

2. Fire Suppression Rehabilitation

The effects on resources and property caused by the tactical actions of fire suppression may be rehabilitated as part of the on-going implementation of incident objectives being managed by the IMT and funded from the emergency suppression account established for the fire. Ground disturbance from fireline construction, road and trail damage from equipment use, site disturbance at incident bases, fences damaged for fire suppression access, etc. are examples of the types of fire suppression effects which may be rehabilitated in this manner.

Standards for fire suppression effects rehab must be established by the line officer, usually through the resource advisor, and clearly communicated to the IMT in a time frame which allows the team to effectively incorporate this work into overall incident objectives and daily operations. Any such rehabilitation work which is not completed by the team and will be carried on by the home unit after the team has been released, must be completed promptly.