

consistent with land and resource management plans.

- Document values at risk and benefits to resources in the Escaped Fire Situation Analysis to determine the most appropriate suppression strategy, based on the availability of suppression forces.

- Renegotiate State and local cooperative fire agreements in the wildland/urban interface to clarify protection responsibilities.

- Establish protection priorities that allow an evaluation of relative values at risk for property and natural resources.

Goal—Preparedness

Federal agencies maintain preparedness and suppression programs that ensure appropriate protection from fire. Agencies take special preparedness actions on a case-by-case basis in local geographic areas that have unusually severe fire danger.

Actions

Federal agencies will:

- Emphasize case-by-case special preparedness actions to ensure timely, safe, and cost-effective response to unusually severe fire potential.
- Clearly establish the organization's mission and clarify managerial and employee responsibilities in fire suppression and support activities.
- Pre-position resources on an interagency basis as needed.

- Develop interagency preparedness plans that specifically include:

- Systems for gathering information necessary to make timely fire management decisions, including fuel conditions and weather.

- Analysis and decision-making processes that consider, on an interagency basis, existing and potential fire severity; suppression resource commitment and availability; prescribed fire activity; environmental, social and political concerns; and other pertinent factors.

- Actions to be taken at each level of preparedness.

- Actions to provide increased suppression capability as the fire season develops, including accessing additional resources, pre-positioning resources, and training emergency firefighters.

- A process for delineating actions to be taken when increased suppression capability is not an option.

- A process for identifying the appropriate level of prescribed fire activity, taking into account the potential impact on suppression resources.

- A process for coordinating actions among cooperating agencies and

promptly transmitting decisions to all affected parties, including adjacent units and cooperators.

- A process for preparedness reviews and follow-up evaluation of decisions and results.

Goal—Protection Capability

Federal agencies maintain sufficient capability for suppression through interagency staffing and by removing administrative barriers to hiring and retaining qualified personnel.

Actions

- Federal agencies will:

- Examine and ensure, on an interagency basis, employee availability at each organizational level, based on fire qualifications and other skills necessary for incident management.

- Develop and utilize to the maximum extent possible the concept of closest initial attack forces and interagency staffing for fire suppression to optimize the use of the Federal and non-Federal work force.

- Federal agencies will collaborate with the Office of Personnel Management and Congress to effect changes to:

- The Fair Labor Standards Act to remove exempt/nonexempt status of Federal employees during emergency incident management assignments.

- The hiring practices for temporary employees, which currently limit opportunities to hire and retain a highly qualified seasonal work force.

Goal—Standardization

Federal agencies improve upon existing preparedness and suppression programs by further integration of firefighting operations and by standardizing budget planning processes, budget management, and fire training.

Actions

Federal agencies will:

- Develop a standard interagency budget and staffing process which will result in the most economically efficient organization (Most Efficient Level).

- Implement adequate wildland fire suppression qualification standards, criteria, and certification procedures, utilizing the National Wildfire Coordinating Group (NWCG) to facilitate acceptance and adherence to the standards by all incident management personnel in the fire service.

- Staff existing and future fire management vacancies with people who possess the requisite knowledge, skill,

ability, and commitment to accomplish the total fire management mission.

- Recognize and reward success in interagency preparedness.

Wildland/Urban Interface Protection

Situation

Each time someone moves a mobile home into the forest or builds a house with a cedar-shingle roof in the foothills, a wildland/urban interface is created and a potentially dangerous situation grows even larger. That seemingly simple interface puts complex demands on Federal fire resources unlike anywhere else on the American landscape.

Wildland/urban interface protection is important to the Federal government because Federally managed lands are often located adjacent to private lands. In these areas, Federal wildland firefighters are often called upon to assist local agencies. In some cases, Federal agencies are the only source of fire protection. If Federal fire resources were unlimited, this would not be a problem. But with limited amounts of money, time, equipment and people, a fire burning in the interface demands that America protect its scattered structures at the huge sacrifice of natural resources elsewhere. Ultimately, the Federal government pays the bills when fire events exceed local capability, either as disaster assistance or relief through the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). This represents a significant fiscal liability to the Federal treasury and to State and local coffers as well. In addition, Federal response in the interface "spreads Federal firefighters thin" and places them in situations for which they may not be adequately trained or equipped.

Recent fires such as the 1994 Tyee fire in Washington, the 1994 Chicken and Blackwell complexes in Idaho, the southern California fire siege of 1993, and the 1991 Oakland Hills fire are clear examples of the complexity of protecting the wildland/urban interface. Although recent events occurred in the West, nearly every State has experienced wildland/urban interface fire losses.

The interface has become a major fire problem that will escalate as the nation moves into the 21st century. People continue to move from urban areas to rural areas. These new wildland/urban immigrants give little thought to the wildfire hazard and bring with them their expectations for continuation of urban emergency services. The National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) estimates that since 1985 more than