Missouri and Iowa Fire Management Zone
National Park Service
Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs)
2024

"Excellence, Integrity, Stewardship"

INTRODUCTION

These Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) outline the expectations, responsibilities, and operational practices for all personnel within the Missouri and Iowa Fire Management Zone of the National Park Service (NPS). This document serves as the foundation for a professional, safe, and effective organization, designed to protect the natural and cultural resources within our jurisdiction while fostering the development and well-being of our personnel.

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1. CREW MEMBER ORIENTATION

Purpose: The orientation phase ensures that new crew members are fully integrated into the team, understand the mission, and are prepared for the physical, mental, and procedural aspects of the fire management program. This phase establishes a foundation for long-term success within the team.

Key Components:

- **Introduction to Supervisors and Peers:**
  New personnel will be formally introduced to their direct supervisors, crew leaders, and fellow team members. This introduction is critical for establishing lines of communication, support, and trust.

- **Completion of Employment Forms:**
  All crew members will complete necessary NPS employment paperwork, including payroll, benefits, and tax forms. The orientation will include a review of compensation structures, leave policies, and scheduling expectations.

- **Review of NPS Policies & Expectations:**
  Supervisors will explain NPS-specific policies, focusing on professional standards, ethical behavior, and respect for cultural resources. This includes the organization's core values of safety, integrity, and stewardship.

- **Timekeeping, Leave, and Pay Procedures:**
  Crew members will be instructed on timekeeping protocols, the process for requesting leave, and how to access their payroll information. A clear understanding of pay cycles, overtime, and emergency compensation during wildfire deployments will be provided.

- **Position Descriptions and Development Plans:**
  Supervisors will discuss each crew member's Position Description (PD) to clarify their roles and responsibilities. Additionally, supervisors will work with crew members to create an Individual Development Plan (IDP) to support long-term career growth.

- **Gear and Equipment Issue:**
  Each crew member will be provided with essential firefighting gear, including Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), line packs, and other standard equipment. Supervisors will review the expectations for maintaining and replacing equipment. The gear will be issued utilizing the “Gear Issue” tracking form found on wildfireops.com on the crew page.

- **Physical Training (PT) Program:**
  Physical fitness is critical in the fire management environment. Crew members will receive an overview of daily PT expectations, the physical conditioning necessary for fireline duties, and the consequences of failing to meet fitness standards.

- **Initial Safety Briefing:**
  Safety is the foundation of all operations. Crew members will receive their first safety briefing

during orientation, including a review of the 10 Standard Firefighting Orders and 18 Watch-Out Situations.

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2. STANDARDS & CONDUCT

Purpose: The Missouri and Iowa Fire Management Zone operates under strict professional and ethical standards. These ensure that all personnel maintain high levels of responsibility, safety, and respect for the environment and the public.

Key Standards:

- **Safety First:**
  Every decision and action must prioritize safety. Crew members are accountable for their safety, the safety of their team, and the public. Violations of safety standards will result in disciplinary action.
- **Chain of Command:**
  Clear communication and adherence to the chain of command is essential for maintaining operational efficiency and cohesion. Crew members must respect the authority of their supervisors and use appropriate channels to report concerns or issues.
- **Accountability:**
  Each crew member must fully understand their responsibilities and strive for excellence in every task. Supervisors will regularly assess crew members' competency, initiative, and overall performance.
- **Professionalism:**
  Fire management personnel are representatives of the NPS and must uphold the organization's values at all times. This includes maintaining a respectful demeanor when interacting with the public, stakeholders, and other agencies.
- **Punctuality:**
  Reporting to duty on time is essential. Crew members must be prepared, rested, and mentally ready for the day. Consistent tardiness, failure to follow call-out procedures, or lack of preparedness will lead to corrective action.
- **Fire Ready:**
  All personnel must be prepared to mobilize at any time. Fire readiness means having personal and professional equipment packed, vehicles prepped, and logistics in place to respond immediately to assignments that may last 14+ days.

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3. TRAINING & DEVELOPMENT

Purpose: To ensure that all personnel maintain the highest levels of competency in fire management, ongoing training and development are core to the Missouri and Iowa Fire Management Zone.

Types of Training:

- **Critical Training Requirements:**
  All personnel must complete mandatory training including, but not limited to, the following:
    - First Aid/CPR
    - Work Capacity Test (WCT) at the Arduous Level
    - Basic Firefighting (S-130/S-190)
    - Incident Command System (ICS) Training (I-100, I-200, IS-700)

Annual refreshers, including fireline safety, equipment use, and hazard recognition, are required for all crew members.

- **Developmental Training:**
  Developmental training focuses on leadership development, advanced skills acquisition, and career progression.
    - Courses such as S-131 (Squad Boss), S-230 (Crew Boss), S-290 (Intermediate Wildfire Behavior), and L-280 (Followership to Leadership) are available.
    - Supervisors will encourage crew members to participate in cross-training opportunities, which may involve helicopter operations, chainsaw certification, or other specialized roles.
- **Task Books:**
  Task books are the framework for progressing in Incident Command System (ICS) qualifications. Supervisors will initiate task books for crew members based on their performance and readiness. Successful completion of task books requires consistent demonstration of knowledge, leadership, and performance.
- **Field Assignments:**
  Development opportunities may also arise through field assignments, where personnel are deployed across zones for interagency collaboration. Crew members are expected to fully engage in these assignments and report key learnings back to their home unit.

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4. SAFETY

Purpose: Safety is the foundation of all NPS fire management operations. The goal is to ensure the safety and well-being of all personnel while maintaining effective operations in high-risk environments.

Safety Protocols:

- **Risk Assessment:**
  A Job Hazard Analysis (JHA) will be conducted before each project or operation. This assessment will identify potential hazards, determine necessary PPE, and establish mitigation measures to reduce risk.

- **Mandatory PPE:**
  Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) will be worn at all times while on duty, both during operations and project work. This includes Nomex clothing, helmets, leather gloves, and appropriate footwear.
- **Chainsaw and Tool Safety:**
  Specific safety measures will be followed during chainsaw and tool operations. Proper training and certification are required before any crew member operates a saw. Saw operators will adhere to established guidelines for safe felling, bucking, and saw maintenance.
- **Mental Health and Fatigue Management:**
  Firefighting is physically and mentally demanding. Supervisors will monitor crew members for signs of fatigue, burnout, or psychological stress. Mental readiness is a key safety factor, and personnel are encouraged to seek support if needed.
- **Accident & Incident Reporting:**
  Any accidents, near-misses, or injuries must be reported immediately to supervisors. All incidents will be reviewed, and corrective actions taken to prevent future occurrences.

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5. PERFORMANCE

Purpose: The goal is to maintain a high level of performance throughout the fire management team, ensuring that both individual contributions and team efforts align with NPS standards.

Performance Standards:

- **Teamwork:**
  Firefighting requires cooperation, communication, and support. Standing idle while others are working is unacceptable. All crew members are expected to contribute to the completion of every task, demonstrating initiative and leadership when needed.
- **Knowledge of Orders and Guidelines:**
  Crew members will be regularly tested on their knowledge of the 10 Standard Firefighting Orders, 18 Watch-Out Situations, and other fire safety practices. Mastery of these principles is crucial to individual and team safety.
- **Daily Performance Evaluations:**
  Supervisors will assess crew members' performance on a daily basis. Constructive feedback will be provided, and areas of improvement will be addressed immediately. Supervisors will also recognize exemplary performance and leadership.

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6. EQUIPMENT

Purpose: Proper equipment management is essential to maintaining safety, operational efficiency, and readiness in the field. Crew members are responsible for ensuring that all equipment is maintained, accounted for, and ready for use at all times.

Equipment Management Guidelines:

- **Personal Responsibility for Equipment:**
  Each crew member is issued specific equipment such as PPE, radios, line packs, and tools. It is the responsibility of each individual to ensure their gear is clean, maintained, and stored correctly. Equipment must be inspected before and after each assignment to identify any damage.
- **Equipment Maintenance:**
  Supervisors will establish a maintenance schedule for tools, vehicles, and equipment caches. Regular checks will include ensuring radios are properly charged, chainsaws are in working order, and fire pumps are functioning. Broken or damaged equipment must be reported immediately for repair or replacement.
- **Lost or Damaged Equipment:**
  Crew members may be held financially responsible for lost or negligently damaged equipment. Routine checks by supervisors will ensure that all issued gear is accounted for. Documentation of equipment usage will be maintained to track wear and tear, and to determine when equipment needs replacement.
- **Cache Management:**
  The Fire Cache Manager is responsible for overseeing the Zones fire caches, ensuring that all necessary equipment is readily available for mobilization. Cache supplies such as hose packs, hand tools, and water pumps must be organized and inventoried regularly.

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7. UNIFORM

Purpose: The uniform policy ensures that all personnel maintain a professional appearance and are prepared for safe field operations. Proper attire is essential both in the field and when representing the NPS in public or during interagency operations.

Uniform Policy:

- **Daily Fireline Uniform:**
  While on duty, crew members must wear fire-resistant Nomex pants, long-sleeved shirts, and leather boots (minimum 8-inch height) with Vibram soles. A fire-resistant T-shirt may be worn under Nomex clothing, and an ICS Red Card must be carried at all times.
- **PPE Requirements in the Field:**
  PPE is mandatory during all field operations. This includes helmets, leather gloves, goggles or safety glasses, and Nomex clothing. All Nomex shirts must remain unrolled to ensure full protection.
- **Public and Interagency Events:**
  During public engagements or interagency meetings, personnel must wear their formal NPS uniform shirt, tucked in, along with nameplates and badges. This uniform represents the professionalism and authority of the NPS.

- **Cold Weather Considerations:**
  In cold conditions, personnel may wear additional natural fiber layers under Nomex. The outer layer must still comply with fire-resistant standards. Crew members must prepare for weather variability, particularly during prescribed burns or extended assignments.

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8. FIRST AID & VEHICLE OPERATIONS

Purpose: All personnel must be trained in First Aid and operate vehicles safely according to NPS standards. Preparedness for medical emergencies and safe vehicle operation are key components of daily duties in the fire zone.

First Aid Protocols:

- **First Aid & CPR Certification:**
  All crew members must maintain current certification in First Aid and CPR. Those with advanced certifications (e.g., EMT-B, paramedic) are encouraged to provide medical care within their scope of practice. First Aid kits will be maintained in all vehicles and at key locations throughout the zone.
- **Medical Supplies:**
  The Medical Manager is responsible for maintaining medical supplies within each squad vehicle and at base camp. Each medical kit will include items for basic wound care, burns, dehydration, and allergic reactions. Medical kits must be inspected before and after each assignment.
- **Incident Response:**
  During an incident, the crew member with the highest medical certification will take charge of providing care. In the case of severe injuries, immediate coordination with local emergency services will be initiated. Incident reporting forms must be completed after any medical emergency.

Vehicle Operations Protocols:

- **Driver Certification:**
  All crew members operating government vehicles must have a valid driver's license and be certified by NPS for official vehicle operation. Supervisors will verify that all drivers are properly licensed and trained for off-road or emergency vehicle use.
- **Daily Vehicle Inspections:**
  Each vehicle assigned to fire operations will undergo daily inspections, including checks of tire pressure, oil levels, brakes, and fluid reservoirs. Any mechanical issues must be reported immediately, and the vehicle should not be used until it is deemed safe.
- **Backing and Parking Protocols:**
  Vehicles must always be backed using a "spotter" to ensure there are no obstacles or hazards in the vicinity. If a spotter is unavailable, the driver must exit the vehicle and perform a 360-degree inspection of the area before proceeding to back up. This protocol is mandatory for all government vehicles to avoid collisions or accidents.

- **Emergency Vehicle Use:**
  When responding to a fire or emergency, vehicles must use flashing lights and sirens if necessary. These are only to be activated in poor visibility conditions, during high-traffic scenarios, or when required to signal the vehicle's presence for safety purposes. Use of emergency codes should follow established NPS and interagency protocols.

- **Vehicle Loading and Unloading:**
  All personnel must adhere to safe practices when loading or unloading gear, ensuring that equipment is properly secured to prevent shifting during transit. Heavier equipment should be stored low to avoid tipping hazards, and regular checks should be performed on tie-downs, compartments, and storage areas.

- **Fueling Procedures:**
  Vehicles should never drop below a ¾ fuel level, particularly during active fire assignments. When refueling, vehicles must be parked safely away from ignition sources, and all engines should be turned off. Fire crew members are responsible for ensuring that the fuel log is up-to-date and that the vehicle is ready for deployment at all times.

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9. MANAGERIAL POSITIONS

Purpose: Managerial positions are assigned to key personnel to ensure that specific operational areas, such as equipment, medical readiness, and vehicle management, are maintained to the highest standards. These roles carry additional responsibility for overseeing team readiness and resource management.

Key Managerial Roles:

- **Vehicle Manager:**
  The Vehicle Manager oversees the daily inspection and maintenance of all assigned vehicles. This includes ensuring vehicles are fueled, operational, and stocked with necessary supplies such as water, PPE, medical kits, and firefighting tools. The Vehicle Manager will verify PM's are completed via the wildfireops.com app and ensure vehicles are serviced regularly and in compliance with NPS standards.

- **Tool Manager:**
  The Tool Manager is responsible for maintaining an inventory of all hand tools, power tools (e.g., chainsaws), and specialized firefighting equipment. This role ensures that all tools are properly maintained, sharpened, and replaced as needed. The Tool Manager also coordinates training sessions for crew members to ensure they are proficient in the safe use and maintenance of the tools.

- **Medical Manager:**
  The Medical Manager maintains all medical supplies, first aid kits, and emergency response materials. They ensure that medical kits are restocked and ready for deployment on any assignment. The Medical Manager is also responsible for tracking crew members' medical certifications and scheduling regular First Aid/CPR refresher courses.

- **Supply Manager:**
  The Supply Manager oversees the logistical side of fire management, ensuring that all necessary supplies—such as water, fuel, and safety gear and general cache items—are available and distributed appropriately. They are also responsible for keeping inventory records up-to-date and coordinating with external vendors for supply procurement.
- **Radio Manager:**
  The Radio Manager ensures that all radios are charged, operational, and equipped with the appropriate frequencies for fire communication. They maintain a stock of backup batteries, radio accessories (e.g., clamshells), and cloning cables. The Radio Manager is also responsible for programming radios as per interagency agreements to ensure seamless communication across teams.
- **Sanitation Manager:**
  The Sanitation Manager is responsible for ensuring that all facilities are clean and sanitary. This includes setting a weekly cleaning schedule for the crew and maintaining regular trash disposal. They will maintain and order necessary cleaning supplies and equipment.

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10. MISSOURI & IOWA FIRE MANAGEMENT ZONE MISSION

Mission:
To deliver innovative, high-impact training and operational support for wildland fire management and prescribed fire implementation through a comprehensive and adaptive framework. We are dedicated to excellence in safety, strategy, and execution, ensuring our personnel are equipped with the skills and knowledge needed to effectively combat wildfires and conduct successful prescribed fires.

VISION

Vision:
To be the leading authority in wildland fire and prescribed fire training and operations, driven by a commitment to safety, precision, and continuous improvement. Our vision is to advance both wildfire and prescribed fire management through cutting-edge practices and a culture of excellence.

PROGRAM LEVEL GOALS

Goal 1: Develop and Implement Advanced Training Pathways
Establish and maintain a robust professional development program for wildland fire personnel that emphasizes competency in both wildfire and prescribed fire management, leadership, and operational excellence. This program will include task book completion, field assignments, and structured leadership training, with clear pathways for progression.

Goal 2: Promote a Culture of Safety and Efficiency
Lead by example in creating and reinforcing a culture of safety, precision, and effectiveness in wildland and prescribed fire operations. This involves implementing strict safety protocols, performing regular

drills, and reinforcing best practices in every operation. Each crew member is empowered to stop work if unsafe conditions arise, ensuring accountability at all levels.

Goal 3: Enhance Coordinated Operational Planning
Set the standard for strategic and tactical planning, focusing on seamless coordination and communication across all phases of wildland and prescribed fire management. This includes developing risk assessments, establishing burn objectives, and ensuring tactical planning is aligned with long-term resource management goals.

Goal 4: Optimize Data Management and Analysis
Implement and uphold best practices for the collection, management, and analysis of data related to both wildfire and prescribed fire activities. This includes leveraging geographic information systems (GIS), fire behavior models, and monitoring tools to ensure accurate data informs decision-making and improves operational outcomes.

Goal 5: Foster a Sustainable and Resilient Program
Develop and execute strategies for maintaining a healthy, responsive, and adaptable wildland fire program. This involves integrating prescribed fire as a key component of long-term resource management and preparing the program to adapt to changing environmental conditions such as increased wildfire risk or climate change.

Goal 6: Encourage Informed and Collaborative Dialogue
Promote ongoing engagement and dialogue among stakeholders—including interagency partners, local communities, and ecological experts—to share insights, address challenges, and drive continuous improvement in both wildfire and prescribed fire operational practices. Collaborative planning ensures that fire management strategies are sustainable and inclusive of diverse perspectives.

CONCLUSION

The Missouri and Iowa Fire Management Zone SOPs are intended to serve as a comprehensive guide for all personnel. By adhering to these standards, we ensure that our operations are safe, efficient, and aligned with the highest professional standards. Our commitment to continuous improvement, operational excellence, and collaboration with our partners will ensure the long-term success and sustainability of the fire management program.

SIGNATURE PAGE

I accept these standards of operation and the duties assigned to me. I understand that my performance appraisal is based on the criteria stated in this document. A copy of this document will be placed in my permanent records folder.

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