



United States Department of the Interior



BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

California State Office

2800 Cottage Way, Suite W1834

Sacramento, California 95825

www.ca.blm.gov

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To: Director, National Office of Fire and Aviation

From: State Director

Subject: California BLM Action Plan Response Update

This information bulletin serves to provide a status update to the issues that were identified and bulleted by the three National Review Teams and presented at the close out to the State Director from the 2000 California Preparedness review. The following restates the 22 action items as identified in IB No. CA-2000-63 and addresses the actions which were taken or are being taken to mitigate each item:

1. The Model 14 Retrofit contract started at the end of March and closed September 6, 2000. The implementation of this contract was agreed upon by all the District and Zone FMOs to be started as soon as the contract was awarded. We have six (6) Engines to complete and have been in contact with the Contractor regarding his adding more employees to the project. A letter from the Denver Contracting Officer is being sent to the contractor advising them of their project scheduling issues. We will continue to monitor the project and keep the field advised of their progress.

Due Date: September 6, 2000.

Action Taken: Of the six engines remaining to be retrofitted, two were completed by August 17, 2000. The contract was stopped on the remaining four engines till the end of fire season to allow first line engines to remain in place. The contract was resumed on October 31, 2000 to complete the remaining four engines within the specified contract period.

2. The State is experiencing recruitment challenges in filling positions in a timely manner. In surveying other states in the Bureau, it is becoming increasingly difficult to recruit and retain fire management employees. The National Office of Fire and Aviation will review the issue and staff potential options with input from states.

California's Fire Program has been a forerunner bureau-wide with the implementation of a Recruitment Strategy which is prepared and reviewed on an annual basis by the District Fire Management Officers. This document provides the guidance and commitment for each respective district, with a focus on achieving recruitment objectives for under-represented groups. This annual publication also contains the State's diversity accomplishments for the previous fire season or recruitment period. This report is published in February of each year.

California provides the program oversight, administration, curriculum development coordination, recruitment coordination and implementation for the Bureau's participation in the Wildland Firefighter Apprenticeship Program.

Due Date: On going.

Action Taken: As stated, this is an ongoing challenge. The focus on California's Recruitment Strategy Plan for 2001 will be an increased visibility at high schools and colleges with emphasis in career opportunities in the BLM and increasing diversity.

3. The Direct Protection Areas (DPA) identified within California will be reviewed. They are reviewed annually by cooperating agencies and are dynamic in nature in that geographic areas can be realigned. Operating Plans developed between agencies will be reviewed to insure efficiencies are being met in protection objectives for Initial and Extended Attack and reduce confusion for personnel and Coordination Centers. The State Fire Operations Specialist, District/Regional FMOs, and identified Cooperating Agencies will work to complete as part of the regular Operating Plan update.

Due Date: March 30, 2001 and on going.

Action Taken: The BLM, California Desert District, will initiate a DPA review meeting with agencies involved to change DPA responsibilities related to the newly established Santa Rosa National Monument. Responsibility would change from State DPA to Federal DPA, with protection being shared between the BLM and Forest Service. This should be completed by March 30, 2000.

4. Field Managers, ZFMOs, District/Regional FMOs and Field Office FMOs are concerned about multi-year funding of 2823 projects: A three-year program of 2823 projects is being prepared by each field office as required in IM No. OF&A 2000-12 by August 1, 2000. This will identify those multi-year projects and the funding required to insure continuity with BLM's partners, such as CDF, Nature Conservancy and others, on prescribed fire projects. BLM CA will also be required to identify those carryover projects prior to the end of the fiscal year to ensure those projects are funded first.

Due Date: August 1, 2000 and ongoing.

Action Taken: The California State Office responded to IM No. OF&A 2000-12. We also identified those carryover projects needing continued funding by the end of the Fiscal Year 2000, to ensure those projects were funded first. We have ensured Managers and FMOs, with the support of the National Office, that multi-year funding will be available for 2823 projects.

5. All four California BLM dispatch/coordination centers are interagency. Radio frequency usage will be reviewed and evaluated for potential reduction in numbers. Assessment of dispatch consoles and radio equipment is currently being done. Equipment has been identified for upgrading and replacement and replacement schedules are being set. The State Telecommunications Manager and State Radio Systems Manager, State Fire Operations Specialist, District/Regional Electronics Technicians, and Interagency Coordination Center Managers will work on this continuing issue. All dispatch offices were reviewed from June 5 - 9, 2000, documenting above issues and initiating methods for resolution.

Due Date: June 2000 and on going.

Action Taken: The State Telecommunications Manager and State Radio Systems Manager have been evaluating narrow banding needs for BLM California in terms of frequency use and equipment needs. This evaluation includes interagency dispatch centers, mountain top locations, and repeater/repeater vault needs. Progress has been made in purchasing equipment for mountain tops, i.e., vaults were needed, towers and antennae's. Upgrades to wide-band equipment, consoles, mobile and handheld radios, is taken place as well to meet current needs. These replacements are taking into account future narrow banding where possible. As stated above, these are on going issues.

6. Title 17 Air Quality Smoke Management Fees: BLM CA is a member of the CA Interagency Air and Smoke Council of which the Air Resources Board and local Air Quality Management Districts (AQMD) are members. The next meeting is scheduled for July 19 & 20 to discuss local air issues including Title 17 ARB smoke management fee development and implementation for all burners in California. The Bay Area Air Basin fee issue will be discussed at this meeting. The State Prescribed Fire Specialist will attend this meeting and set up a BLM/Bay Area Air Quality Meeting to further discuss this matter. The National Office Smoke Management Lead will be involved in this coordination meeting.

Due Date: July 19, 2000 and on going.

Action Taken: The State Prescribed Fire Specialist attended the above meeting and others since the preparedness review. The smoke management fee is still an issue, however, headway is being made in reducing the initial high costs of the fees. Discussions are in the areas of fees on an acres basis only, or potential for a project fee, which would reduce the costs depending on the project. Smoke emissions from the various fuels types, duration of smoke impacts and locations of prescribed fire are also being discussed to try and resolve some of the issues. In other words, every burn is not the same and fee rates should not be hard and fast. Again, an on going issue.

7. Our current fleet of Model 5's (total of 5 Engines) have 4 to 5 years left on their 15-year life cycle. We need to move their replacement cycle ahead and order new Engines. This would help relieve some of the perceived problems. The cost of doing this to California would be approximately \$323,500 for all 5 Engines. There are some possibilities of trading these Engines to other States that only have 3 person crews, and we are pursuing this also. We are working with the National Office on these issues and will keep the field informed of our progress. During this decision, we are operating a safe and legal fire Engine operation using the Model 5's.

Due Date: Ongoing until replaced.

Action Taken: We have been working with the National Office and currently four out of the five Model 5's will be given to other states to continue to be used for the rest of their life cycle. We will be replacing these five engines with Model 14's that have the crew cab configuration and therefore eliminate the need for personnel riding in the exposed back of the Model 5.

8. A State Aviation plan was not found during the review. However, after the review, and close out, a 1998 State Aviation plan was found. An updated plan is being done at this time by the State Aviation Officer and will be in draft form by 7/18 for review. It will then go out to all districts and Zones, and a copy will also be sent to the National Office under the State Directors' signature.

Note: The aviation program is presently operating within all policies and guide lines outlined by the National Aviation Office, (OAS) Offices of Aircraft Services, the National Interagency Helicopter Guide, the 9400 Manual and the 350 to 354 DM's. As stated by the national review team, our aviation resources are operating above the standard and, in some cases, setting the standards.

Due Date: August 1, 2000.

Action Taken: An updated California State Aviation Plan was completed and signed October 12, 2000. In the future, this plan will be reviewed annually and updated as needed.

9. California has 7 light Engines (Type 4s) at this time. Some of the older Engines are in the 11,000 lb. GVW class and are very hard to keep at their weight limit. In some cases it will require down loading ANY extra equipment of any kind, and in other cases may require a chase truck to be legal. The State Office will visit each site by July 31, 2000, and oversee the process of getting these vehicles to their weight limit. Again there may be other options, such as early replacement of the vehicles and upgrading them to higher GVW's. This would cost California several thousand dollars and we are going to work with the National Office on this issue. This is not a new problem and it is spread throughout the Bureau.

Due Dates: GVW Reduction - July 31, 2000.

Light Engine Replacement (3) - May 31, 2001.

Action Taken: By July 15, 2000, all seven Type 4 engines were downloaded to meet the 11,000 lb. GVW weight limitation. Working with the National Office, California will be replacing all seven engines with the 17,500 lb. GVW cab and chassis. This is expected to occur by the 2001 fire season.

10. The Self Contained Breathing Apparatus (SCBAs) used on BLM California Engines is based on a policy that was approved by the State Director. This policy, as stated by Dick King (National Safety Officer), is good and covers all the requirements needed to use the SCBA safely. The State Office will reissue current policy as is this year, and will review and update the policy by April 15, 2001 and send copies to the field for their implementation. We have a policy covering the safe operation of the SCBA, but with that, we need a good implementation plan by the FMO's.

Due Date: Reissue Current Policy - August 15, 2000

Implementation Plan - May 15, 2001.

Action Taken: The current policy was reviewed, by the State and National Offices, and reissued October 2, 2000, under IM No. CA-2001-001. A task group was identified and will be conducting a complete review and update of California's SCBA policy and Operations Guide to insure compliance with all current medical, equipment, training and clothing requirements. This is to be completed by May 1, 2001, with implementation beginning May 15, 2001.

11. A full review of the roles and responsibilities of the Field Office FMO's as well as the Regional/District FMO's will be completed by the District and Regional FMO's and managers by September 30, 2000. The State FMO will be provided documentation of the review and completion date.

After the review is completed and roles and responsibilities are understood, the proper delegations as per the "Standards for Fire and Aviation Operations 2000" will be in place by May 15, 2001. A copy of the Delegation of Authority will be sent to the State FMO.

Due Dates: Reviews - September 30, 2000.

Delegations - May 15, 2000.

Action Taken: Review of the roles and responsibilities is still in progress. Delegation of Authorities that do not currently meet the "Standards for Fire and Aviation Operations 2000" are being review updated. Completion date is set for May 15, 2000.

12. California has been in the forefront in the facility planning issue. We have completed several planning documents, have several projects completed, and currently have 4 projects for FY2000. We know that some of our facilities are poor and have red tagged them for restricted use. We are making every effort to get these buildings completed as quickly as we can. A meeting with the State Director, State Engineer, Field Office Lead Engineers, and State Office Fire Staff is being set up at this time. We will discuss the needs of BLM California in meeting our facility dates and how to best approach these issues. All fire facilities within the state are being reviewed and prioritized as projects for inclusion in the 5-year Deferred Maintenance and Construction Plan. One current project listing, Susanville Day Station, is being updated for re-submission. The State Office Fire Management, State Office Engineering Staff, District/Regional FMO's and Engineering Staffs, and the National Office, Paul Hefner will work to ensure follow-up on current projects and continued review of process.

Due Date: To be determined.

Action Taken: This is on going with the 5-Year Construction Plan. One station will be completed by fire season 2001, two stations are going out to bid, and another station (Susanville Day Station) has moved forward from 2003 to 2001 due to health and safety concerns. We are continuing to work closely with the National Office.

13. Request a review of the California State Office Fire and Aviation Management Program by the National Office. The National Office will prepare a process for evaluating a state level fire program and provide a small team to conduct the review. Coordinate with National Office to accomplish. The State Fire Operations Specialist and National Office, Fire Operations Specialist, will work together to accomplish by the end of the Fiscal Year.

Due Date: September 30, 2000.

Action Taken: This still needs to be accomplished. Will work with the National Office towards completion.

14. A review of the quarter deductions will be done to see if fair deductions are being applied based on condition of quarters being used. We will work with the National Office to see if reductions can be made.

Due Date: January 15, 2001.

Action Taken: As of this date, this is still a work in progress.

15. All modules will be staffed in accordance with approved staffing plans as per the District/Regional Fire Management Plans. Apprentices will be used on modules as appropriate, and placed in normal seasonal vacancies, not as supplemental or additional positions.

The practice of over hiring for no shows has been and still is a necessary tool. However, it should be calculated on a five-year average of the “no shows.” It should not be a flat rate of 10% or a flat number of “X” number of positions. Over hires should be told at the time of hiring that their services may be terminated should it be deemed that their services are not needed. The State Fire Management Officer will monitor.

Due Date: On going.

Action Taken: Staffing of modules is being accomplished at the FMP level. Hiring is currently taking place to fill vacant positions. Conversion of Career Seasonal Engine Captains to PFT is also being done. Monitoring of seasonal over hires will continue to be monitored by the State FMO.

16. The process for certifying Wildland Fire Type 1 and 2 Team command and general staff positions and Prescribed Fire Type 1 and 2 positions within California BLM by the California State Office will continue. The State Fire Operations Specialist will continue oversight and review of Incident Qualifications System for California BLM on an annual basis.

Due Date: On going.

Action Taken: The State Office will continue to certify Wildland and Prescribed Fire Type 1 and 2 positions, as well as provide oversight for IQS in California BLM. A duplicate file for those personnel holding Type 1 or 2 qualifications will be maintained at the State Office. This will aid in the review and certification of personnel in these positions. Files to be established by March 15, 2001.

17. The 9999 code will not be used as an excepted code on vehicles. All exception codes on fire vehicles will be actual fire or project numbers.

The practice of “banking” miles is not acceptable and will be discontinued at this time in all areas where it is taking place. District/Regional FMOs will insure compliance.

Due Date: August 1, 2000 and on going.

Action Taken: The State Office FMO will work with the District/Regional FMO’s to insure monitoring and compliance vehicle mileage coding. The State Office Property/Equipment Specialist will be available to assist in this matter.

18. There are numerous cooperators around the State, as well as BLM offices in adjoining States, who are very well versed in the use of WFSAs. The District and Regional FMO’s will arrange for WFSAs training to be put on in their District or Region *by May 15, 2001*. It is also recommended that samples of delegations of authority from Field Office Managers to overhead teams also be addressed at these training sessions.

Due Date: May 15, 2001.

Action Taken: Currently, the California Desert District has completed WFSAs training. The NORCAL and CentralCAL Regions will be conducting WFSAs training this winter/spring.

19. Each District/Regional coordination center (SIFC, CCICC, OVICC, FICC) will develop a process for distributing NFDRS (fire danger indices) information to all fire and non fire personnel in all field

offices by August 15, 2000. Centers will also make sure “pocket cards” are printed and issued to all appropriate personnel by the same date.

Due Date: August 15, 2000.

Action Taken: This has not be completed by all Districts/Regions at this time. Cataloging of RAWS stations and currency of weather information is a problem in one district/region. This is hindering completion and is being worked on at this time.

20. California currently has Specific Staffing and Action Guides that address staffing levels and planning levels related to fire danger indices. We will compare with Fire Danger Operating Plans, Chapter 7, Standards for Fire and Aviation Operations, guidelines and integrate to meet the standard. Will pursue statewide implementation of development of the Fire Danger Pocket Cards and distribution to non fire personnel and posting of a poster-sized version in fire stations and field offices. This is currently being done in one region. To facilitate accomplishment, request assistance from the National Office to complete cataloging of California weather stations, manual and RAWS, to provide needed fire danger information for Fire Danger Pocket Cards and Fire Danger Operating Plans. The State Fire Operations Specialist, National Office, District/Regional FMO’s will work together to complete.

Due Date: April 30, 2001.

Action Taken: This is on going and is not completed at this time. Will need National Office assistance to complete.

21. Prescribed Fire and Fire Use:

A. Prescribed Fire Plans and Project Files Need Improvement: CDF prescribed burn plans examined in most cases except Ukiah did not meet the current BLM Prescribed Fire Management plan format. Major areas found deficient were: Lack of measurable burn plan objectives that match EA objectives, prescription parameters, lack of site specific “Behave” fire behavior runs, and a current NWCG Complexity Rating sheet rather than the California version which is not the same.

Project files were not consistent in 6 way folders. CA IM No. CA 2000-069, dated June 23, 2000 requires all burn plan project files to be in a six-way folder with specific pages devoted to certain elements (i.e. Inside page 1 - EA.) All funded FY 2000 RX plans are now required to be approved by the State Fire Management Officer and the new format will be used for this process. Plans not in this format will be returned for correction. All other hazardous fuels project files with FY 2000 approved funding which has not been completed will be placed in this format *no later than August 30, 2000.*

B. Multi-Agency Prescribed Burn Plans in Southern California need to have one approved format. This suggestion would apply to all of California. BLM will set up a task force to address this issue with CDF, USFS, and NPS with the goal to have one burn plan format that is consistent with the new BLM 9214 Prescribed Fire Management Policy. Jim Francis will develop a BLM 9214 briefing schedule for all California fire agencies by region *no later than August 30, 2000.* CDF Headquarters in Sacramento will be briefed first. These briefings will be coordinated with the State Director and through the California Fire Alliance partnership.

C. RAMS documentation updates. California’s Fuels Assessment Treatment Evaluation (FATE) program will be incorporated into the new BLM Resource Assessment & Mitigation Strategy (RAMS) program during the week of *September 11, 2000.* All California field offices will be required to participate and bring supporting documentation to input and complete this program

during the training exercise. An IM is being developed by Jim Francis and due out to the field offices by July 30, 2000. Contractors for this training are Fire House and Big Horn Solutions.

D. Minimum Level of Prescribed Fire Expertise at all Offices. Each field office will develop IDP's for all assigned prescribed fire and fire suppression personnel. Training requirements will be identified and submitted as part of the Update to Fuels Portion of the Fire Management Plan, which was due to the California State Office July 14, 2000 and are in the process of being received. The State Prescribed Fire Specialist is the lead. Wildfire, Prescribed Fire and Contracting training course requirements will be coordinated with CSO fire training coordinator. Training courses will then be programmed and budgeting for tuition and travel included in annual work plan packages.

E. Interdisciplinary process used to develop fuels management projects. All field offices will use IDT process to develop fuels management projects. All projects submitted for FY2001 funding and those RX burn plans submitted for SFMO approval will be checked to ensure this process was used. Project Objectives will be reviewed by each Field Office manager prior to the project submission for FY2001 and out-year funding. *Review date September 30, 2000.*

F. Pressure to Complete 2823 Fuels projects. The new BLM Prescribed Fire Policy and Prescribed Fire Management Handbook places **Safety First** for both the public and BLM personnel. The State Office will work diligently to assist field offices in meeting funded project targets without compromising public and/or firefighter safety.

Due Date: As indicated

Action Taken:

A. This has been done and is continuing to be monitored to insure compliance with California IM No. CA-2000-069.

B. This is still a work in progress. We are working cooperatively with CDF to develop a Multi-Agency Prescribed Burn Plan for California that will meet everyone's needs without hindering the plan development and processing procedures.

C. The September 11,2000, was not met due to the extended fire season. This session is being rescheduled.

D. The level of expertise for prescribed fire at the field office level is being evaluated and IDP's are being developed. Training needs are being identified. This is an on going process and will continue.

E. Field Offices are utilizing the IDT process. Those that have not gone through the process after review by the SFMO are returned until the checklist is complete. This is on going and part of the prescribed fire plan process and review for California BLM.

F. The State Office is working with the field offices to assist them in meeting funded project targets without compromising public and/or firefighter safety.

22. The State Office Branch of Fire and Aviation will identify any field managers who have not attended "Fire Management Leadership" training, and assist them in scheduling attendance at the next available training session.

Due Date: September 30, 2000

Action Taken: The State Office has identified four field managers needing to attend the "Fire Management

Leadership” training and has submitted nominations to NARTC for these managers to attend the March 2001 session.

District/Regional Responsibilities:

The District/Regional FMO’s will be responsible for all checklist items identified as “Needs Improvement” in their respective District/Region from the review. They will provide the State FMO with the corrective action taken or the proposed corrective action related to the item and the date action was or will be completed. The response to “Needs Improvement” *actions are required by August 15, 2000.*

Response: As of November 20, 2000, eight field offices had responded to the state office identifying checklist corrective actions. These offices all responded by September 2000. The remaining field offices will be notified their responses are still required and due to the SFMO by January 15, 2001.

Monitoring of Action Item Completion:

This IM also serves as status update of action items completion to the State Director by the *December 15, 2000* commitment.

Signed by:
Mike Pool
State Director

Authenticated by:
Liza Raymundo
Records Management