

## PART 6

### PUBLIC HEALTH, SAFETY, AND RESOURCE PROTECTION

The BLM's stewardship role, which includes preserving and protecting natural and cultural resources, also extends to protecting public health, safety, and property. The Bureau is responsible for reducing health and safety risks to employees and the public; maintaining facilities and infrastructure; and protecting public lands from illegal dumping of wastes, theft and destruction Federal property, misuse of resources, and wildland fires.

Table 6-1 summarizes the number of wildland fires and acres burned during the Fiscal Year 2007 fire season on lands protected by the Bureau of Land Management or lands protected under a cooperative agreement with local fire agencies. Nationally, all agencies experienced a long and arduous fire season in 2007 and the BLM was no exception. Across the West, 2,441 fires burned approximately 1.9 million acres on BLM land and 1.6 million acres on other land protected by the BLM or its contractors under various agreements. The Great Basin States of Idaho, Nevada, and Utah were hardest hit with 694,661 acres, 570,166 acres, and 365,404 acres, respectively, burned on BLM land or land protected by the agency or its contractors. These States also had the largest acreages burned on non-BLM land protected by the agency. The non-BLM land burned in these States ranged from 199,899 acres in Nevada, 204,749 acres in Utah, and 401,975 acres in Idaho. A series of widespread dry lightning storms across much of the West in midsummer accounted for more than 1,600 fire starts, compared with 857 human-caused ignitions. The lightning storms ignited multiple fires that spread rapidly because of associated strong winds. In spite of the active fire year, BLM firefighters successfully contained nearly 95 percent of all fire starts during initial attack before those fires became large incidents.

Table 6-2 identifies the major type of capital improvements that support the management, use, and enjoyment of the public lands for commercial, recreational, and other purposes. The trend has been for the BLM's inventory of fixed capital assets (buildings, roads, recreation sites, etc.) to increase over time. However, as the BLM implements its new Asset Management Plan (AMP), which was developed in 2006, it will begin compiling a list of real property assets that are candidates for disposition. Any asset that is no longer critical to the mission, or that is in such poor condition that it is no longer cost-effective to maintain, will be identified for possible disposal. The AMP provides the framework for the BLM to streamline its portfolio of assets and optimize the maintenance of those assets that contribute most significantly to its mission and strategic goals.

Table 6-3 summarizes the release of hazardous substances and other pollutants and contaminants discovered on public lands. Historically, approximately 60 percent of all hazardous waste sites on public lands result from commercial uses. Landfills, mines and mill sites, airstrips, and oil and gas sites account for almost half of these commercial activities. The other 40 percent have been caused by illegal activities such as midnight dumping of agricultural and industrial wastes, wire burning, and illicit drug production.

In recent years, about 90 percent of the hazardous substance releases found on public lands resulted from illegal dumping incidents involving debris or drums of biomedical, chemical, and petroleum wastes; pesticides; paints; batteries; asbestos; and illicit drug lab wastes. The remaining 10 percent of the hazardous substances releases came from fuel spills, mining wastes, and military accidents. The number of drug labs has essentially leveled off and even decreased due to enforcement actions taken by both State and Federal law enforcement agencies. However, highly toxic and explosive drug lab wastes continue to be found far afield of the more expected urban locations and in regions not previously plagued by this problem until the last few years.