



Position Statement

Utilization of Local Government Resources for Wildland and WUI Fires

Problem

The risk of wildland and wildland-urban interface fire is increasing in both significance and prevalence in the United States. Reasons for this trend include the growing density and decreasing health of our forests, a hotter and dryer trend in the climate, and the increase in the number and density of homes built in the urban interface and people living in suburban and rural areas. The statistics show a general trend of an increasing number and size of wildland fires, an increase in number of homes destroyed, and an increase in both suppression costs and of financial losses due to wildland-urban interface fires.

Whatever specific solutions are enacted for this growing problem must be collaborative. The Cohesive Strategy consists of three tenets in which these collaborative solutions can be explored: landscape scale forest management, the promotion of fire adapted communities, and collaborative response. The intent of this position is to focus upon the third tenet - collaborative response to wildland and wildland-urban interface fires. In general terms, while all resources should be used to their fullest extent, often many resources are not being effectively utilized. Further intent of this position is to establish that local government resources bring additional value due to their all-hazard design. By focusing upon maximum resource utilization, the International Association of Fire Chiefs (IAFC) will promote the recognition of additional uses of resources familiar with rescue operations, emergency medical services, rapid and safe extraction, aircraft rescue and firefighting among other subsets of response. The utilization of these resources in the lowest level of operations builds experiences that further the utilization of individuals into future positions in the ICS organizational chart, helping with future successional planning challenges.

Position

The IAFC believes in the collaborative response environment and is in a position to mediate and promote solutions involving multiple levels of governmental, private, and non-governmental organizations. In order to promote the greatest collaborative effort working toward addressing the national wildfire risk, the IAFC stands behind the following specific categories:

1. Appropriate Representation - Due to the complexity and richness of local resources, the IAFC will seek representation at all levels within which resources are coordinated. Such representation should exist at the National Wildfire Coordinating Group (NWCG), National Multiagency Coordination Group (NMAC), Geographic Area Coordination Centers (GACC), and any state or regional training,

qualification, or “red-card” committees. Other representation will be sought when resources are available in state qualification committees and zone boards. Through this representation the IAFC with other stakeholder groups will be able to more effectively facilitate the use of local resources for collaborative decision-making, planning, and response.

2. **Qualification Management** - The IAFC believes in high quality well-vetted standards for qualification of resources and response and the use of NWCG 310-1 as the common framework for wildland qualifications. The IAFC also acknowledges the need for alternate routes of qualification such as Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL), the NWCG/USFA Skills Crosswalk as well as the frequently utilized course and position task book method of qualification. Further, the IAFC insists that the most effective way to accomplish this management of qualifications is to expect that the Authority Having Jurisdiction (AHJ) will track and vet these qualifications up through the Single Resource Boss in Operations, and up through Unit Level positions in Incident Command Sections including Finance, Planning, and Logistics in which agreements can be made between the collaborative partners. We recognize the concern for successional planning toward incident management teams (IMT) and feel we are well positioned to assist in meeting future needs.
3. **Resource Ordering** - The IAFC recognized the massive number of resources that must be managed nationwide if local resources are more effectively entered into the system. Furthermore, the IAFC recognizes the need for a single platform for the collection and tracking of resource availability and use for all types of emergencies and planned events. As such, the IAFC will promote the development of the National Mutual Aid System (NMAS) as a tool to help mobilize and track resources through all phases of response. It should be clear that any tool used by any collaborator in this environment must interface with the national level tools that are being applied consistently such as the ROSS and/or IROC systems.
4. **Reimbursement Management** - The IAFC insists that any resource mobilized is followed by timely recovery of all true costs associated with the use of shared resources. To that end, it should not be acceptable for local governments to be made to subsidize any jurisdiction by providing non-reimbursed services during incident response unless mutual or automatic aid agreements are in place. Ultimately cost recovery should be based upon actual expenditures and upon ethical standards. Agreements are a necessity to reach this means. Although existing agreements may be adequate in certain situations, needs may dictate/facilitate the necessity for future agreements between local government and/or federal and/or state agencies to reach optimum capacity.

It is the intent of the International Association of Fire Chiefs to promote any and all activities which work to improve collaborative response through any of the aforementioned strategies. It is in the best interest of all our constituents to attack these challenges head on and move toward a more efficient and effective response of the closest, most appropriate resources to national disasters.

Submitted by the IAFC Wildland Fire Policy Committee
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