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Subject: Chief's Letter of Intent for Wildland Fire - 2020

To: Regional Foresters, Station Directors, IITF Director, Deputy Chiefs and WO Directors

The 2020 fire year is different than any we have previously experienced. We are managing wildfires while confronting the worldwide COVID-19 pandemic. The way we have been and continue to respond to fire this year is definitely not the status quo. We are operating in a time of extreme uncertainty and we need to adjust our decisions and actions in light of what we know and what we don't know. We are changing how we approach fire management options during the COVID-19 pandemic across the board to adjust to this unprecedented challenge. Specific risk-based protocols for how we will respond will be developed at the field level by line officers and through the National Multi-Agency Coordinating Group.

Objectives for this fire year will be to:

- Minimize to the extent feasible COVID-19 exposure and transmission and smoke exposure to firefighters and communities
- Prioritize the use of local suppression resources with the predominant strategy being rapid containment
- Commit resources only when there is a reasonable expectation of success in protecting life and critical property and infrastructure
- Describe expectations in Delegations of Authority for risk-based protocols to develop response strategies
- Encourage innovation and the use of doctrine for local adaptations
- Develop methods for broad information sharing given changed conditions
- Use the skills of the entire agency workforce to play a role this fire year

We remain committed to improving the wildland fire system during these challenging times. In our incident response strategies and tactics, we will commit responders to operations where we understand the risks of the fire environment and the virus as best we can - and where responders can be most successful with the least exposure necessary to meet reasonable objectives. We will stop, think, talk and act more now than ever before. This will be challenging during the 2020 fire year, but we will evolve, learn and adapt as the situation changes. For example, we need to hear what works and what doesn't directly from firefighters, and we will be setting up multiple ways to get that feedback.

Just as in any fire year, we are not in this alone. Responding to wildland fire in this country is a partnership – across all levels of government. We are seeing just how important these partnerships are as States, local government, contractors, Tribes and the Federal government band together to fight COVID-19 – just as we all band together to fight fires.



Above all, our focus during this fire year will be on sustaining life—on protecting the health and safety of our employees and the American people we serve as we carry out our core wildfire mission responsibilities. We will be successful when we meaningfully weigh the risks of each action; listen, learn and change quickly as the need arises; and work together with the communities we serve to best keep them and our employees as safe and healthy as possible during this uncertain time. To do that we must anchor to our core values, especially safety and service. We must also foster a safe, respectful workplace where everyone is valued for their contributions. Everything we do – every part of our mission – depends on creating a workplace where each one of us is able to thrive in our work, free from harassment. I am proud of you and all the work we do to face the challenges of managing wildfire together. Thank you for your service.

/S/ Victoria Christiansen

VICTORIA CHRISTIANSEN

Chief