

Chapter 15 – Allowable Fire Activity Cost

PURPOSE

This chapter identifies the authorized uses of the Fire Suppression Preparedness and Fire Suppression Activity Budget Components.

GOVERNING STATUTES

- A.S. 41.15.010 Intent
Provides that resources will be protected commensurate with the value of the resource at risk on private, state, and municipal land.
- A.S. 41.15.030 Contracts
Provides that the Commissioner may enter necessary contracts for protection and hire emergency personnel.
- A.S. 41.15.050 Fire Season
Provides that the period from April 1 to August 31 is designated as the fire season.
- A.S. 41.15.200 Statement of Purpose
Provides a readily (may be repealed) available fund for the payment of expenses incurred by the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) in suppressing fires.
- A.S. 26.23.010 and A.S. 44.19.048 Statement of Purpose and Disaster Relief Fund
Provides a readily available fund for disasters by proclamation by the Governor.
- A.S. 26.23.020 Governor's Responsibilities and Authorities During an Emergency
Provides definition of Governor's authority to respond to disaster emergencies.
- A.S. 26.23.050 Financing
Defines the sources of emergency funding.
- A.S. 37 Public Finance
- A.S. 36 Public Contracts

RESPONSIBILITIES & PROTECTION PROGRAM BACKGROUND

The State of Alaska's (SOA) fire protection program is established by Alaska Statutes 41.15.010 - 41.15.170 granting authority to the Commissioner of the DNR and subsequently delegated to the Division of Forestry (DOF) through Department Order #113 (DO #113) to provide protection, commensurate with the value of the resources at risk, for the natural resources and watersheds on land that is owned privately, by the state, or by a municipality. Private lands protected by the federal government as enacted by law (i.e., Native ownership under ANCSA) are exempted from A.S. 41.15.010. DO #113 delegates the DOF the responsibility to "oversee and control, on behalf of the Department, the fire protection obligation for all State and private lands in coordination with federal and local fire suppression agencies." DO #113 also delegates the DOF the management and control of the State suppression fund and designates DOF as the lead organization to represent the Department's management goals relative to fire management activities.

State, private, municipal, and federal land ownership is intermingled across the entire State making it extremely difficult to provide wildland fire protection services. For that reason, Cooperative Agreements have been negotiated between the DOF and the Department of Interior, Bureau of Land Management, the Department of Agriculture, and Forest Service providing that each agency protect all land within their identified protection boundary eliminating duplication of effort.

These agreements also provide for the exchange of fire suppression resources between agencies when one agency's fire activity exceeds their suppression capability.

The DOF has adopted the National Interagency Incident Management System (NIIMS) Incident Qualifications System (ICS) as its training and qualification standard. Utilizing this system ensures that DOF employees meet national standards that facilitates the free exchange of resources between cooperating state and federal agencies. Meeting these national qualifications standards makes a larger, national pool of resources available to the State during periods of high fire danger when additional resources are required.

The Alaska Interagency Wildland Fire Management Plan 2016 (March 2017 Review) has been adopted by the DNR and provides a coordinated and cost-effective approach to fire management on all lands in Alaska. Fire management decisions are based on values warranting protection, protection capabilities, firefighter safety, and/or land and resource management needs. The plan requires an annual, preseason review of the fire protection needs on fire-prone lands by the responsible land manager/owners. Once fire protection needs are determined, the lands are placed in one of four management options, **Critical**, **Full**, **Modified**, or **Limited**. This categorization ensures that human life, private property, and identified resources receive the appropriate level of protection balanced with the fiscal impact and availability of suppression resources.

EMERGENCY PROCUREMENT (AS 36.30.310 / 2AAC 12.450.c)

Normal purchasing policies, guidelines, and authorities will be followed unless procurements are made under emergency conditions. Procurements may be made during emergency conditions when a situation poses a threat to public health, welfare or safety, or when a situation exists that makes procurement through competitive sealed bidding or competitive sealed proposals impractical or contrary to the public interest, or to protect public or private property. In such cases, procurements will be made with competition that is practical under the circumstances and the purchasing documents with amounts greater than \$10,000.00 will have the Activity Code of FIRE added to the coding string.

FIRE SUPPRESSION PREPAREDNESS COMPONENT

The preparedness component is established to fund activities required to be prepared to fight wildland fires. This component funds personal services, fire and aviation contracts, warehouse and shop activities, and other activities not directly related to suppressing wildland fires. The Society of American Foresters defines preparedness as "Activities undertaken in advance of fire occurrence to help ensure more effective fire suppression; includes overall planning, recruitment and training of fire personnel, procurement and maintenance of firefighting equipment and supplies."

FIRE SUPPRESSION ACTIVITY COMPONENT

It is the intent of the suppression activity component to fund costs associated with actual suppression of wildland fires and to meet abnormal, emergency fire preparedness activities not funded in the fire preparedness component for a normal fire year. Because of the fluctuation of fire season severity, temporary increases above the average preparedness level are also covered by the suppression activity component.

The Fire Suppression Activity Component should be utilized to fund the following broad categories of Fire & Aviation Program costs:

1. Emergency preparedness and repositioning activities.
2. Actual costs for the suppression of wildland fires.
3. Fire & Aviation Program costs that are not predictable and non-recurring.

AUTHORIZED EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS AND REPOSITIONING EXPENDITURES

(Approval delegated to Program Managers, Regional Foresters or designees unless noted)

High Fire Danger

High Fire Danger (HFD) is defined as periods of higher-than-normal fire danger as predicted by the Canadian Forest Fire Danger Rating System to be in the "very high to extreme" burning range or periods of unusually high wildland fire occurrence at the lower predicted fire danger levels. During periods of high fire danger, allowable costs can be charged to fire suppression activity.

Regular personal services costs for:

- Temporary, permanent seasonal, permanent part-time and (other) non-permanent personnel when extended beyond their regularly budgeted staff months* (Request approval and charge code via Fire Operations Forester and AICC).
- Personnel not funded in the preparedness budget* (When working out of their home unit, Forest Resources personnel charge to ordering office HFD charge code; non-Forestry SOA employees working for other departments require an IPO RSA Encumbrance).
- Emergency hire and emergency firefighter (EFF) personnel. (charge code 73X3602300).
- Federal and local government cooperator personnel. (Paid via cooperative agreement).

*Applicable administrative fiscal management procedure will apply depending on the specific situation. (IPO, RP, CH8, etc.)

Overtime (covering periods of HFD not identified with ongoing fires) for:

- Personnel described above.
- Permanent preparedness personnel within budgeted staff months, (charge to ordering office HFD LDP).

Fire Operations Forester or Area FMO approval required.

Standby for:

State employees placed in standby status and paid via office or region standby charge code (Emergency firefighter personnel are not paid standby pay because EFF are either on or off shift.) requires Fire Operations Forester or Area FMO approval. Standby is considered hours worked, therefore; no standby on mandatory days off.

PREPOSITION COSTS

Prepositioning is defined as the movement of personnel, equipment, and supplies to a specific location in anticipation of wildland fire activity based on above normal fire danger or multiple fire occurrences at the lower predicted fire danger levels.

Appropriate office specific charge codes are used for mobilization, subsistence, and prepositioning of personnel, equipment and supplies to and from specific locations. When conditions above normal fire danger are present, allowable costs are authorized to be paid from fire activity. Fire Operations Forester or Area FMO approval required.

Meals, Lodging, and Transportation

Meals, lodging, transportation, and daily guarantee for aircraft are appropriate charges when a specific incident cannot be identified.

Contractual Services

Costs for hiring, rental, contracting of specialized services or equipment for temporary increases in preparedness are authorized.

Supplies

Procurement of expendable supplies and acquisition and short-term use of non-expendable supplies from commercial vendors or cooperators required for support of a temporary increase in preparedness.

Statewide Fire Stores Procurement

Replenishment of non-capitalized warehouse stock (includes aviation fuel and fire retardant) depleted by Resource Orders or temporary Normal Unit Strength (NUS) increase based on forecasted activity when a specific incident number cannot be utilized. (Charges made to the Warehouse Stores charge code.) Costs are adjusted based on incident warehouse issues. State Fire Support Forester Approval is required.

Vehicles

Operating costs for State fleet vehicles not budgeted in the preparedness component used for fire suppression activities are authorized to be charged to the suppression activity component for the period they are equipped for fire suppression.

Detection Flight Time

Aircraft flight time and associated costs utilized for the discovery of new fires. (Charge to regional detection charge code.)

Emergency Normal Unit Strength Increase

Procurement of critical fire suppression equipment and supply items required to meet Fire and Aviation Program responsibilities can be purchased when supported by written justification (charge to Permanent NUS charge code). Chief of Fire & Aviation approval is required.

AUTHORIZED FIRE SUPPRESSION EXPENDITURES

All activities associated with the monitoring, suppression, support, documentation, auditing, emergency fireline rehabilitation and investigation of a fire incident may be funded from the suppression activity component. Refurbishment of fire equipment, surveillance of Limited Management Option fires, and removal of fire caused safety hazards that pose an imminent safety hazard to firefighters and the public are included. All costs must be charged to an appropriate incident number.

Personal Services

Regular personal services charges (including personnel costs) for:

- Temporary, permanent seasonal, permanent part-time and other non-permanent personnel not funded in the fire suppression preparedness component*
- All permanent full-time personnel not funded in the preparedness component*
- Emergency hire personnel
- State, federal, and local government cooperator personnel
- Emergency firefighter (EFF) personnel

*Applicable administrative fiscal management procedure will apply depending on the specific situation. (IPO, RP, CH8, etc.)

Overtime/Standby/Hazard Time

Overtime/standby/hazard pay for positions funded by the preparedness component may be paid from the suppression activity component when working directly in support of a specific incident identified by an authorized charge code. Incident Commander, Duty Officer, or Line Officer approval required.

Travel

Meals, lodging, and transportation expenses to and from an incident are chargeable to the specific incident number. Employees will be subsisted on the incident at State expense. Transportation costs, including costs associated with the temporary assignment of interagency cooperator personnel and equipment are coded to the specific incidents.

Contractual Services

Costs for hiring, rental, contracting for specialized services, equipment, or personnel for wildland fire suppression can be charged to the specific incident.

Supplies and Materials

All supplies and materials used in the fire suppression effort will be charged to the specific incident. If supplies and materials are stockpiled in anticipation of need on a specific incident, they will be obligated against that incident. Subsequently, if supplies and materials are used on another incident, then the original incident cost will be reduced and the new incident charged for the supplies and materials.

Critical Component Repair and Replacement

Capital asset repair (or replacement if the cost of repair exceeds the current replacement value) is an allowable expenditure if the need for repair is directly attributed to fire activity or if the need for repair and/or replacement could not have been planned in an upcoming budget cycle. All expenditures must be charged to an established charge code. Chief of Fire & Aviation approval is required.

Federal, Canadian, and Northwest Compact Support

Regular time, overtime, standby and hazard pay for all permanent seasonal, permanent part-time, permanent fulltime, EFF, and temporary personnel engaged in suppression activities and/or support activities on federal or Canadian lands or in states or provinces through the Northwest Compact are reimbursable from the suppression activity component. All regular time may be paid from the suppression activity component through appropriate administrative procedures.

Duration of Charges

Obligations for direct suppression action are authorized throughout the year. Obligations begin as soon as an incident is reported and end when all activity associated with the incident is completed.

Support

Support costs incurred by off-site personnel dedicated to the incident (warehousing, dispatching, procurement, equipment repair shops, administrative services, Geographic Information System (GIS), mapping and photogrammetric services) can be obligated to the suppression activity component.

Equipment and Vehicles

- Variable costs for use of dedicated State equipment and aircraft, along with leased or rented aircraft and equipment and associated support costs will be charged to specific fire incidents.
- Expenditures for repair or replacement of lost or damaged equipment due to a fire incident may be charged to this component.
- Reimbursed funds received from Risk Management for lost, stolen or damaged equipment will be credited to the suppression activity component if the equipment was procured with fire suppression activity component funding.
- Exhausted specialized fire equipment may be replaced with written authorization of the Chief of Fire & Aviation.
- Costs for state fleet vehicles assigned to a specific incident on an incidental basis for fire suppression support are authorized expenditures to the suppression activity component. The operating rate will be charged based on the number of days assigned.

Suppression Damage Rehabilitation

Repair of damages caused by suppression activities can be charged to the activity component incident number. This includes but is not limited to repair or replacement of fences, water barring of control lines, emergency seeding of disturbed soils and other related damages.

MISCELLANEOUS AUTHORIZED EXPENDITURES

Search and Rescue

The Department of Public Safety (DPS) has primary responsibility for search and rescue activities in Alaska. When actual emergencies threaten human life, DOF will respond to assist DPS within the existing capability of equipment, personnel and training. If an agreement, or an IPO RSA Encumbrance exists between the DOF and DPS, costs for requested support for search and rescue will be charged to that specific RSA or billed according to provisions in the agreement. If an IPO or agreement does not exist, costs will be charged to the suppression activity component and recovered from DPS through administrative coordination. State Duty Officer notification required.

The DOF will also participate in search missions for downed aircraft organized and conducted by the State Troopers, Civil Air Patrol or Rescue Coordination Center within the existing capability and availability of the DOF aviation section. The same provisions for administrative cost recovery will apply. State Duty Officer notification required.

All Risk Incident Support

DOF will support the Division of Emergency Services (DES) on all risk incidents as available. State Duty Officer notification required. Costs associated with this activity will be charged to an activity charge code and recovered from DES through the IPO RSA Encumbrance process.

Legal Actions

Costs associated with administrative, tort actions or court cases requiring subsequent action may be charged to the specific incident at any time. Chief of Fire & Aviation approval is required.

Claims

Payment of valid claims created by the suppression activities or support effort will be charged to the appropriate incident charge code. Regional Forester approval is required.

Cooperator Support

The Division has no control over the fluctuations in preparedness services obtained from its federal cooperators. Temporary cost increases for support or services obtained will be authorized expenditures from the suppression activity component. If these additional costs are deemed to be a long-term increase in preparedness costs, the increased costs will be moved to the suppression preparedness component.

Local government cooperators not having the ability to purchase wildland fire supplies and equipment directly from federal General Services Administration (GSA) may purchase through the DOF. The cost for these supplies will be charged to a suppression activity component charge code and the costs recovered from cooperators through a direct billing process. Fire Support Forester approval required.

Commissary

Commissary purchases are chargeable to the appropriate fire incident number. Costs for commissary items will be recovered from employees through payroll deduction.

Emergency Firefighter Village Crew Support

Advanced training support, specialized equipment, transportation and other support costs may be authorized expenditures to the activity component. Written justification and Chief of Fire & Aviation approval is required.

Emergency Fire & Aviation Program Activities

Unanticipated and non-recurring projects critical to the mission of the Division may be charged to the activity component. Written justification and Chief of Fire & Aviation approval is required.

Declaration of Disaster Emergency

If budgeted suppression activity component funds are depleted, the DOF will prepare a request for Declaration of Disaster, coordinate with Alaska Division of Emergency Services and forward the Declaration through the DNR Commissioner to the Office of Management and Budget who will seek the Governor's signature. This Declaration, when signed by the Governor, will provide funding for continuing action within the framework and intent of the suppression activity component.

National All-risk Support

The Division may be requested to assist on national all risk incidents declared disasters by the President of the United States. All costs associated with declared disasters will be charged to a suppression activity charge code and recovered through a billing process between the State of Alaska and the U.S. Forest Service.

Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Disaster Fires

Wildland fires that meet the criteria for FEMA assistance will be tracked through a separate charge code and authorized costs will be recovered from FEMA. The State Fire Operations Forester is responsible for initiating the FEMA Disaster Fire Declaration process.