



THE STATE OF FLORIDA WILDFIRE OPERATIONS ANNEX

To The State of Florida Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Florida State Emergency Response Team (SERT) Guidelines for Wildfire Operations to the State Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan (CEMP) identifies the actions that may be taken by the Florida Forestry Service (FFS) and those state and local agencies in support of FFS in preparing for, responding to, and recovering from wildfire event(s). This annex addresses the role of state and local government in providing the necessary support to FFS in its statutory responsibilities in responding to, controlling and suppressing wildfires.

The Florida Division of Emergency Management (DEM) has the overall responsibility for coordination of the support to FFS. DEM, in cooperation with FFS, will update and coordinate the plans with other response and support agencies. Within DEM, the Bureau of Preparedness has the responsibility for coordinating the state's planning efforts for wildfire events with FFS. The Annex is a document that is constantly under development and is presently divided into five chapters as follows:

Chapter 1 – Introduction: Provides a discussion of the purpose, scope and planning assumptions used to prepare the annex.

Chapter 2 - The Response Organization: Identifies the various levels of support which may be provided through a Unified Command structure. It describes the circumstances under which the various agencies will unify under a single command structure in responding to, controlling and suppressing wildfires and the responsibilities of the Unified Command components (agencies). This chapter also addresses the delegation of authority during a wildfire event.

Chapter 3 - The Concept of Operation: Presents the key guidelines that are used to make key decisions during the course of the event. Based on joint considerations discussed and determined by the state liaison agencies of the Unified Command (FFS, DEM, the Florida Fire Chiefs Association, and the State Fire Marshal's Office), several guidelines for the three levels of activation (Monitoring, Partial, and Full) for the State Emergency Operations Center (SEOC) during a wildfire event have been developed. This chapter also addresses medical unit activation, air operations, logistical support, and resources.

Chapter 4 - Requesting Fire Suppression Assistance: Provides the framework under which fire suppression assistance will be obtained when state resources have been over extended. The chapter also describes the information needed and the steps necessary for satisfying the requirements to request fire suppression assistance from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) based on the wildfire or complex of wildfires.

Chapter 5 - Public Information and Information Flow: Discusses the notification process for active wildfires to the State Watch Office, the coordination of situation reports and incident action plans.

I. References and Authorities

The authority for the development, implementation, and maintenance of this annex and all compatible county/municipal plans in support of the FFS in its statutory responsibilities in responding to, controlling and suppressing wildfires is derived from **Chapter 252.35(2)(a) of the Florida Statutes**.

This Annex further serves as the fundamental governing policy as prescribed for the FFS under **Chapter 590 of the Florida Statutes**.

The FEMA policy on requesting Fire Suppression Assistance is contained within **44 CFR Part 206, Subpart L**.

FEMA's **Interim Policy on Fire Suppression Assistance, April 1999**.

CHAPTER I – INTRODUCTION

I. General

The Florida State Emergency Response Team (SERT) Guidelines for Wildfire Operations identifies the actions that may be taken by those state and local agencies in support of the Florida Forest Service (FFS) in preparing for, responding to, and recovering from wildfire event(s). This Annex addresses the role of state and local government in providing the necessary support to FFS in its statutory responsibilities in responding to, controlling and suppressing wildfires.

II. Purpose

The Florida Division of Emergency Management (DEM) has the overall responsibility for coordination of the support to FFS and local government in response to a wildfire event. DEM in cooperation with FFS will update and coordinate the plans with other response and support agencies. Within DEM, the Bureau of Preparedness and Response has the responsibility for coordinating with FFS the state's planning efforts for wildfire events.

III. Scope

This Annex covers any and all wildfires that occur in the State of Florida, which FFS and local governments respond to. The purpose of the response is to contain, control and extinguish the wildfire.

IV. Assumptions

1. FFS is statutorily responsible for wildfire prevention, detection, and suppression on 26,000,000 acres in Florida.
2. The United States Forest Service and the Department of Interior are responsible for wildfire suppression on their respective federal lands throughout the state.
3. Each year, lightning fires that are associated with Florida's thunderstorm season (April through September) can create tremendous wildfire activity when associated with the state's dry spring conditions.
4. From 1981-2009, an average of 5,194 wildfires occurred per year, burning an average of 207,800 acres. In 2009, the wildfire season saw 2,771 wildfires consume more than 84,368 acres statewide.
5. Because of changing weather conditions, the yearly figures ranged from a low of 2,263 wildfires (with 28,674 acres burned) in 2005 to record high 13,917 wildfires in 1981.
6. In 1989, a record 645,331 acres burned statewide. However, the most intense fire season on record occurred in 1998 due to the escalating wildland/urban interface in the state.
7. The President is authorized through the Fire Management Act to provide assistance, including grants, equipment, supplies, and personnel, to any

state for the suppression of any fire on publicly or privately owned forest or grassland, which threatens such destruction as, or would constitute a major disaster.

CHAPTER 2 – THE RESPONSE ORGANIZATION

I. General

This chapter of the annex describes the organization to be used to coordinate state agencies' support of the Florida Forest Service's (FFS) response during wildfire events. It describes the unified command structure the various agencies will work under to control and suppress wildfires. Also it addresses the circumstances under which the unified structure will support FFS in its response to wildfires. Following the catastrophic fires in Florida during the summer of 1998, state and federal agencies developed new and updated strategies to deal with serious statewide wildfires. A major change since 1998 was in the organization of statewide oversight. Since 1999, a Unified State Command comprised of in-state personnel was utilized. The Unified State Command structure has been modified to a Multi-Agency Coordinating (MAC) Group and will be the process used to manage serious wildfire events.

II. Response Organization

The Florida MAC Group is established as conditions warrant based on a joint decision by the State Forester and the Forest Supervisor of the National Forest in Florida and/or a representative of the Department of the Interior. The Florida MAC Group provides logistical coordination.

The Florida MAC Group is set up so that an Incident Commander is provided from the primary jurisdictional agencies on which the wildfires are occurring. The Florida MAC Group will include FFS and either the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Forest Service, the National Park Service (NPS), the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), or the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA)(see Figure 1).

In addition to the incident commanders and jurisdictional agency liaisons, the Command Staff will also include liaisons from several key support agencies. These support agencies include the Florida Division of Emergency Management (DEM), State Fire Marshal's Office (SFM), Florida Fire Chiefs Association (FFCA), Florida National Guard (FLNG) and if involved the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)(see Figure 1).

III. Responsibilities

A. Florida Forest Service (FFS)

FFS has statutory responsibility for the suppression of wildland fires in the State of Florida. FFS has the lead role in determining when the Florida MAC Group will be established. In consultation with other state and federal partners, FFS will appoint one member of their organization and at least one alternate to serve as the state incident commander. The incident commander will determine the scope and structure of the unified command for the wildland(s) burning in the state.

B. Florida Division of Emergency Management (DEM)

DEM has statutory responsibility for coordinating state and local support to FFS in the response and recovery from wildland fires. A liaison will be

appointed to coordinate DEMs support role. Various support elements will be initiated as requested by the incident commander.

C. Florida Fire Chiefs' Association (FFCA)

FFCA provides FFS with logistical support through the services of fire departments throughout the state. This support effort will be initiated according to FFCA State Emergency Response Plan (SERP) that is activated by request of ESF 4, Firefighting.

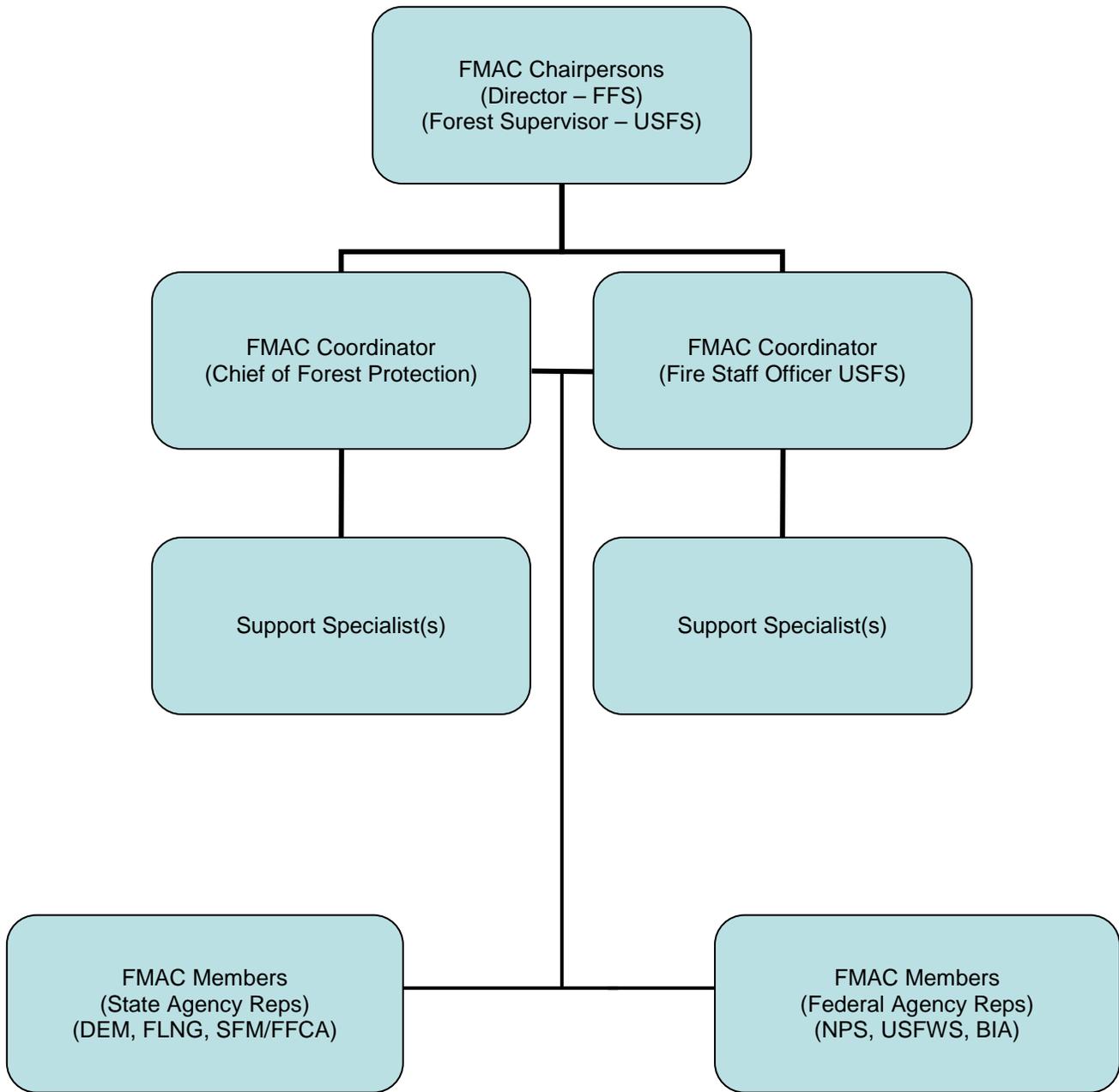
D. Division of State Fire Marshal (SFM)

The SFM appoints an emergency coordination officer ESF 4, Firefighting. ESF 4 is responsible for logistical requests from state and local governments for firefighting resources. These resources are then dispatched according to the requirements of the FFCA SERP.

IV. Delegation of Authority

Incident Management Team(s) for the incidents will be tasked by in Unified Command with liaisons from DEM and SFM or FFCA.

FIGURE 1: Florida MAC Group Organization



CHAPTER 3 – THE CONCEPT OF OPERATION

I. General

This section of the annex presents key guidelines that can be used to make key decisions during the course of the event. These decisions will be based on experience, the best evaluation of the current situation, and the forecast for the near future.

All wildfire responses will fall under the umbrella of the Unified State Command and will use the National Incident Management System (NIMS) as the emergency response organizational management structure.

Based on joint considerations discussed and determined by the state liaison agencies of the Unified Command (Florida Forest Service, Division of Emergency Management, Florida Fire Chiefs Association, and Division of State Fire Marshal), several guidelines for the three levels of activation (Monitoring, Partial, and Full) for the State Emergency Operations Center (SEOC) during a wildfire event have been developed.

II. Level 3, Monitoring Phase

The Florida Division of Emergency Management (DEM) will maintain a liaison with the Florida Forest Service (FFS) through the on-duty operations officer. FFS will maintain contact with the operations officer for DEM, and notify them of any significant wildfire activity. This activity may require increased awareness or activity from DEM or Emergency Support Functions (ESF) in the SEOC. The Emergency Management liaison will remain in contact with FFS and the Operations Chief for the State Emergency Response Team (SERT) and a joint determination will be made as to if and when to increase the level of activation in the SEOC. DEM will direct a liaison to be a part of the Unified Command Team once established by FFS.

III. Level 2, Partial Activation

The SEOC may be activated to a Level Two based on a variety of considerations.

A. The Request for Issuing an Executive Order

When appropriate, DEM will request an Executive Order, signed by the Governor, which is based on the following factors:

1. When FFS requires the assistance of the Florida National Guard (FLNG) air and/or ground assets for wildfire suppression. FFS will estimate the need for FLNG assets more than 24 hours before initiating the request.
2. When a FFS overhead team requires the support of the SERT for a wildfire that is out of control for longer than 24 hours.
3. When ESF 4 (Firefighting) partially activates for any of the following criteria:

- a. A wildfire event requiring the mobilization and deployment of Florida Fire Chiefs Association (FFCA) resources to the Region of impact from other region(s) within the state. Those forces are required on-scene for longer than 24 hours and may require logistical support.
- b. A wildfire burning into the urban/interface where multi-family homes and large subdivisions are being threatened.
- c. When FFS, in consultation with FFCA, identifies a need for out of State resources that can best be obtained through the Emergency Management Assistance Compact (EMAC).

Only those ESF needed to support FFS will be activated.

B. The Florida Forest Service's Liaison to the State Emergency Operations Center

Once the SEOC has gone to Level Two, FFS will provide liaisons to the SEOC and provide information coordination for the SERT.

IV. Level 1, Full Activation

A. The Division of Emergency Management Guidelines to Fully Activate the State Emergency Operations Center

The State Coordinating Officer (SCO)(usually the Director of DEM), in consultation with the SERT Chief, will make the decision when to activate the SEOC to a Level One. The following factors may be used in the decision-making process:

1. When a response to a wildfire event requires the resource and or logistical support from a majority of the SERT ESFs.
2. When a wildfire event necessitates evacuations that require resource support from neighboring counties.

B. The Florida Forest Service's Coordination with the Division of Emergency Management

FFS and DEM will coordinate several critical functions as follows:

1. ESF 4 will provide logistical liaisons to FFS/United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Forest Service offices or at the Unified Expanded Dispatch. Unified Expanded Dispatch is a joint FFS and USDA Forest Service organization that is established based on the number of resource orders and complexity of the current incident(s). The Unified Expanded Dispatch relieves the host agency(s) dispatch unit by focusing on the large or complex incident(s). The Unified Expanded Dispatch is responsible for ordering federal and state compact resources such as overhead, aircraft, crews, equipment and supplies.

2. A Joint Information Center (JIC) will be established with ESF 14 (Public Information). FFS will provide briefing points on the wildfire situation through ESF 14, who will then coordinate this consistent information message with other Public Information Officers (PIOs) throughout the state.
3. A DEM liaison will be included in the planning process with Unified Command personnel in the formation of the Incident Action Plan (IAP) for the wildfire event.
4. The Unified Command will provide liaisons to the SERT Plans Section to consolidate the planning process and provide input into the situation reports issued from the SEOC.
5. FFS will provide liaisons to DEM for all financial matters regarding decisions to provide funding for the wildfire event and the consequences of the disaster.

Although the SEOC may be at Level One (full activation), the wildfire events may not have escalated to the point where elements of the FFS staff will need to be co-located at the SEOC. FFS may be a part of a Unified Command and co-located with the USDA Forest Service due to the large logistical coordination needed with that agency.

C. The Florida Forest Service Colocation to the State Emergency Operations Center

The directors for FFS and DEM will jointly determine when and what portions of the Unified Command structure should co-locate to the SEOC. DEM will provide all support resources for such co-location. The joint decision to co-locate will be based on guidelines including:

1. FFS in its Unified Command with the USDA Forest Service continues to command and control all operational elements of the wildfire incidents. DEM will manage the overall disaster and all other areas including those areas related to consequence management.
2. The number of wildfire incidents requires continual coordination and logistical support from various ESFs. The liaisons initially provided by FFS during a Level Three activation are overwhelmed with the amount of coordination required.
3. The number of wildfire incidents requires the formation and possible forward insertion of an Area Command or multiple Area Commands.
4. Key operational decisions made by the Unified Command rely on and or directly affect those ESFs dealing with the question of consequence management in response to the operational decisions made by Command.

Until (and if) the Unified Expanded Dispatch is moved, coordination for this effort will be directed by the following guidelines:

1. ESF 4 will provide logistical support to the Expanded Dispatch where all requests for structural fire resources within the state will be coordinated.
2. The Logistics Section will provide a liaison to the Unified Expanded Dispatch for coordination of out of state requests that may go through the Emergency Management Assistance Compact (EMAC).
3. All firefighting assets (FFS, USDA Forest Service, FFCA, SFM and/or the EMAC) will be directed into the wildfire incident through the Unified Expanded Dispatch. This will ensure that all fire resources are coordinated from a central command, logistically supported, and are efficiently utilized in the affected area.

V. Medical Unit Activation

A medical unit may be activated when an incident management team (IMT) is put in place to coordinate large numbers of firefighters or emergency personnel. If the IMT requests a Medical Unit, the request will go through the Unified Expanded Dispatch. The Unified Expanded Dispatch will request specific elements of the medical team through the SEOC who will task ESF 8.

VI. Air Operations

FFS and the USDA Forest Service may, under increased wildfire activity, establish Unified Air Operations for statewide wildfire aviation coordination. The Unified Air Operations will establish an Air Operations Plan that will coordinate all aircraft associated with fire operations or flying within wildland fire aviation air space. This includes:

- Forestry Aircraft
- Fire agency aircraft
- Law Enforcement aircraft
- Military aircraft
- Contractor aircraft
- Media aircraft

VII. Resources

FFS, in its Unified State Command role with the USDA Forest Service or other federal jurisdictional agencies, will be responsible for command and control of all operational elements of the wildfire response to include resource ordering for wildfire incidents through state wildfire compacts or the national ordering system. DEM will support FFS operations by managing and coordinating any non-wildfire resource ordering through the ESFs, EMAC, FEMA, and fiscal issues as they relate to resources. All resource ordering will be coordinated within the expanded dispatch system when established.

VIII. Logistical Support

This section identifies the roles of the agencies involved in the logistical support of the Unified Command during wildfire events. Separate processes exist for the ordering of resources and other logistical support for the wildfire events and the Incident Management Teams commanding the suppression of wildfires. In addition, the linkage needed between these resource and logistical ordering processes provide the correct resource, ensure that it is provided it in a timely manner, and that it is provided cost-effectively.

The primary methods in which resources and logistical support are ordered for wildfire events include:

1. Unified Expanded Dispatch, including State Wildfire Compacts and the national Resource Ordering Status System (ROSS).
2. FFCAs Disaster Response Plan in support of SFM as the lead agency for ESF 4 (Firefighting).
3. The Logistics Section of the SEOC.
4. EMAC through the Mutual Aid Branch.

Included within these processes will be the triggers for resource prioritization and re-allocation of resources throughout the state based on established criteria.

CHAPTER 4 – REQUESTING FIRE MANAGEMENT ASSISTANCE

I. General

The President of the United States is authorized to provide federal assistance to any state for the suppression of any fire on publicly or privately owned forest or grassland that would constitute a major disaster. Such assistance may be in the form of grants, equipment, supplies, and personnel in accordance with the Federal Emergency Management Agency's (FEMA) policy on requesting Fire Management Assistance as contained in 44 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) Part 206, Subpart L.

II. Purpose of Fire Management Assistance

Through the Fire Management Assistance Program, FEMA's role in combating grassland, wildland, or wildland/urban interface fires is to provide financial assistance to states for fire management. The program is unique in that FEMA actively provides assistance to suppress fires that threaten such destruction as would constitute a major disaster. When it has been determined that a wildland fire or fires on publicly or privately owned forest or grassland threaten such destruction as would constitute a major disaster, supplemental assistance may be provided in the form of a single grant, to reimburse eligible fire management costs.

III. Scope of Fire Management Assistance

A fire management declaration is the authorization of federal assistance that is made with FEMA when a fire or fires constitute the threat of a major disaster.

A. Criteria for Fire Management Assistance

FEMA will authorize a fire management declaration if the eligible damage and potential impact of the fire is of a magnitude that it could result into a major disaster declaration for Public Assistance and/or Individual Assistance.

B. Key Factors for Fire Management Assistance

1. The Florida Forest Service (FFS), the State Coordinating Officer (SCO), the Principal Advisor, and FEMA will consider the following key factors when evaluating and analyzing the need for fire management assistance:
 - a. Threat to lives and improved property
 - b. Threat to critical facilities
 - c. Committed or unavailable state and local resources including resources through: state agencies; local fire departments; Cooperative Agreements; and Interstate/Regional Compacts; Emergency Management Assistance Compact (EMAC)
2. High fire danger conditions, as indicated by:

- a. Keetch-Byram Drought Index (KBDI) or similar nationally accepted indices
 - b. Energy release component
 - c. Current weather conditions
 - d. Rate of spread based on a nationally accepted behavior model
 - e. Spread component
 - f. Ignition component
 - g. Burning index
 - h. Relevant state restrictions in place and implemented
 - i. Topography of the land, including dry swamps
3. Threatened watershed areas
 4. Potential impact on the environmental and historic/cultural resources
 5. Potential major economic impact
 6. Existence of multiple wildfires/potential convergence of fires

IV. Gathering Information for Fire Management Assistance Request

Staff for FFS will be made aware of the potential need to document and gather information required to request federal fire management assistance.

A. Critical Information for Requesting Fire Management Assistance

When making a request for federal fire management assistance, the following critical information is required and must be gathered and considered:

1. If the state is unable to control or suppress wildfires or a complex of wildfires without out-of-state assistance.
2. If homes and/or structures are threatened and or evacuated due to the threat of the wildfire and the number of such homes, structures, or commercial businesses that are threatened.
3. If there is key infrastructure being threatened such as power plants, utility lines, water and/or sewage plants.
4. If the wildfire is not contained at the time of the request.

5. If the number of resources being utilized, including local fire/rescue resources, are documented and reported.
6. The current weather conditions.

B. Closing Fire Management Grant Assistance

To close out a Federal Fire Management Grant in the State of Florida, the Unified Command/FFS representative will notify the SCO of any Complexes in which all fires are controlled thus signaling the end to the grant period. It will then be FFS's responsibility to issue the notification to the principal advisor. All such notifications must be in writing.

V. Roles and Responsibilities for Fire Management Assistance

A. The Florida Forest Service Incident Commander

The Incident Commander will notify FFS's State Officer-in-Charge of the wildfire, as soon as possible and report the information that is available. The Incident Commander will coordinate this information with the county emergency management representative.

B. The Director of the Florida Forest Service

The Director or designee will coordinate with the Division of Emergency Management (DEM) Duty Officer to notify the SCO, if identified, when a fire meets the criteria for a fire management assistance grant. Such a notification to the SCO can be made via the State Watch Office (SWO).

C. The State Coordinating Officer

1. Will by telephone, fax, or through other rapid communications, contact the Region IV FEMA coordinator and make them aware of the situation and of the request.
2. Will follow-up in writing to the Region IV office of FEMA outlining some of the principal items in the request.
3. Will apply for assistance for wildfire complexes utilizing boundaries designated in the affected area encompassing varying numbers of counties and will continue to utilize these districts/centers when applying for additional assistance.

D. The Florida Forest Service Representative

1. A representative from FFS will fill out the FEMA request form **FEMA 90-58**. The form is then signed by the SCO and submitted to FEMA's Regional Office.
2. Will contact FEMA's Principal Advisor to make any requests and recommendations to be made on the grant request.

E. The Principal Advisor

The Principal advisor will complete their recommendation and submit it to FEMA on **FEMA form 90-32**.

CHAPTER 5 – PUBLIC INFORMATION AND INFORMATION FLOW

I. General

This chapter provides how information will be shared during a wildfire event during the activation of the State Emergency Operations Center (SEOC). Emergency Support Function 14 (ESF 14) (Public Information) has the responsibility to establish a mechanism that efficiently provides and disseminates information to the public. The State Coordinating Officer (SCO) and the Director of the Florida Forest Service (FFS) will mutually agree to appoint a lead Public Information Officer who will facilitate the logistical support and orientation for all public information officers working in the State Emergency Operations Center (SEOC).

II. Unified Public Information

When the SEOC is activated (Level 2 or 1), state, local, and federal agencies will provide experienced Public Information Officers (PIOs) to ESF 14 or provide access to PIOs to respond to information requests of that particular agency. In the initial stages of a Unified Public Information flow, a plan will be developed. During a Level 2 activation, the PIOs represented in Unified Command for ESF 14 may include:

- The Florida Division of Emergency Management (DEM)
- FFS; and
- United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Forest Service.

During a Level 1 activation, staffing may increase based on the needs of the response and may include the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), the Florida National Guard (FLNG), and others as warranted. Each agency will become part of the Unified Public Information.

III. Information Flow

A. Fire Activity

1. The FFS State Officer-in-Charge will notify the State Watch Office (SWO) of any significant fires that develop.
2. The SWO will contact the FFS State Officer-in-Charge of any significant fires that are reported to the State outside of those reported by FFS.
3. The criteria for significant fires includes:
 - a. Wildfires that threaten structures, or where structures are lost.
 - b. Wildfires that force or have the potential to force evacuations of citizens.

- c. Wildfires that cause the injury or death of state or local responders.
- d. Wildfires that create significant smoke problems that may cause road closures to major thoroughfares.
- e. Large significant wildfires that require movement of out-of-district forestry resources.

B. Situation Report Information

1. FFS will continue to produce a daily wildfire summary, which is available on their website. The Forest Protection Bureau can be contacted for any clarifications that may be required from the raw data on the summary.
2. DEM will extract pertinent information from that site for its situation reports, which will be completed as deemed appropriate for the event.