

The Participation Commitment

Utah's Wildland Policy and Fire Management System

This system, when implemented over the years, will result in a true reduction in wildland fire risk, catastrophic fire, property loss, injury, and even death.

In the Winter 2017 *Straight Tip*, Utah's new wildland fire policy was introduced ("Utah's New Wildland Fire Policy and Fire Management System"). In this issue we will cover ways your community and fire department can meet the annual "participation commitment" as a participating entity within the new system and track your wildfire risk reduction efforts through the year.

In the image shown here (*blue sheet on page 18*), there are numerous options suggested for how to meet your wildfire risk reduction participation commitment. This document, along with complete information about the new fire management system, is available from your county fire warden and local Utah Division of Forestry, Fire & State Lands

(FFSL) area office. FFSL's area offices are located in Logan, Salt Lake City, Heber, Richfield, Moab, and Cedar City, and contact information is included at the end of this article.

As you look over the blue sheet of possible risk reduction actions, keep in mind that if your department comes up with an idea that is not listed, your FFSL area manager has the authority to further discuss and potentially approve such projects. The key factor being, "Does the proposed project truly reduce the risk of wildfire to the community?"

Using the actions listed in the blue sheet, let's outline a possible scenario for a participating entity to meet its annual participation commitment.

WILDFIRE PREVENTION

The first option in this category to tackle, and a statutory requirement for every participating entity, is a Community Wildfire Preparedness Plan (CWPP). As you work with your local FFSL area office staff, including the county fire warden and FFSL WUI (wildland-urban interface) coordinator, identify a neighborhood or community at risk of wildfire. Once this is done, schedule the first meeting and publicize the event by using your social media and distributing fliers on doors. At the meeting, have a sign-in sheet and document the total number of participant hours. At the end of each meeting, schedule the next meeting to continue the planning process.

So let's look at what this may bring towards a participation commitment this far:

- Printing of door invites = **\$97.50**
- Door invites placed by volunteers: Let's say you have ten citizens or volunteer firefighters, and it takes them two hours to distribute the fliers. Ten times the federal government's volunteer rate of \$23.56 times two hours = **\$471.20**
- Meeting attendees: Let's say you get ten residents plus four firefighters to participate in the meetings to create the CWPP, and it lasted four hours. Then you'd calculate 14 times the federal volunteer rate of \$23.56 times four hours = **\$1,319.36**

So between advertising and the first CWPP meeting, you have created **\$1,888.06** toward your first year participation commitment!

WILDFIRE PREPAREDNESS

(25% participation commitment maximum each year)

This category is how you can get credit for all of training and equipment purchased to improve your initial attack capabilities. If the department holds wildland fire training, such as the S-130 and S-190 Basic Wildland Firefighter courses, the time spent by each firefighter can count toward your participation commitment. This will be calculated using the actual hourly rate for full-time firefighters or, once again, the federal volunteer rate for volunteer firefighters. These training hours can be tracked on a sign-in sheet.

If the firefighters certify through UFRA, then any associated fees can also be counted.

- S-130/S-190: 40 class hours times the federal volunteer rate of \$23.56 = **\$942.40**. Then multiply this total by the number of firefighters trained and you have a great way to help meet your annual participation commitment.

Another option in the preparedness category could be when a department purchases wildfire-specific equipment, such as a Type VI wildland engine. So for example, say your fire department purchases a Type VI engine for \$100,000. The value of this type of larger purchase may be “carried over” for a three-year period, up to the 25% maximum per year for the Preparedness category. In this example, therefore, a municipality with a \$20,000 annual participation commitment could claim up to \$5,000 of Preparedness spending that year, not to exceed the total value of the initial purchase over the course of the three years. This tracking could get a bit technical, so please ask questions of and work closely with your local county fire warden and FFSL area manager. We want to ensure you’re properly credited for the preparedness work and purchases you make each year.

WILDFIRE MITIGATION

(50% participation commitment minimum each year)

This category is really the on-the-ground work that will, over time, reduce risk for large, catastrophic wildland fires in Utah; therefore, at least 50% of your annual participation commitment should come from this type of work. Depending on the type of projects outlined in the local CWPP, a department could have several options to meet the mitigation category requirement:

- fuels reduction and forest thinning projects (if the participants have proper chainsaw training, experience, and PPE);
- community chipper days;
- defensible space vegetation removal.

Any or all of these options would count towards your participation commitment.

Contracted crews and hourly employees should be tallied at their actual rate. The value of a volunteer’s time would be calculated using the federal volunteer rate.

Let’s say you do a defensible space project with four volunteer firefighters and six residents. The firefighters do the cutting with one acting as the safety officer. As they move along, residents come in behind them from a safe distance and stack the cut vegetation into piles. They do this for four hours:

- Ten volunteers times the federal volunteer rate (\$23.56) times four hours = **\$942.40**

Next comes the community chipper day and you return to chip all of the piles. This time you get ten residents and four volunteer firefighters; plus you can count the rental and time spent picking up and dropping off the chipper:

- Chipper rental = **\$750**
- 14 volunteers times the federal volunteer rate of \$23.56 times four hours = **\$1,319.36**

And the total amount counted toward your participation commitment would be **\$3,011.76**.

As you can see, it will take some effort to reach your annual participation commitment; however, the combined effort statewide will pay off for all of us as wildfire risk is continuously and systematically reduced. This system, when implemented over the years, will result in a true reduction in wildland fire risk, catastrophic fire, property loss, injury, and even death. The benefits from this new policy and wildfire management system far outweigh the potential financial burden that could be placed on a community for the suppression cost of a multi-day wildland fire, not to mention the far more extensive total costs of wildfire (which would make another great *Straight Tip* article!).

As seen in the image on the next page, a standardized form to help you track the progress of your participation commitment efforts is available from your local FFSL area office. Please reach out to them and seek their assistance with learning

more about the new fire management system, including such things as how to create a CWPP or track your participation commitment. Our area managers and their staff are excited to be working with you to help make the new wildfire policy a success for your community.

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The Participation Commitment Actions graphic is on the next page.