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United States Department of the Interior

BUREAU OF INDIAN AFFAIRS
Washington, DC 20240

AUG 26 2015

Memorandum

To: All Regional Directors
All Agency Superintendents
Attention: Forestry and Wildland Fire Management

From: Director, Bureau of Indian Affairs 

Subject: 2015 Wildland Fire Messages

For those of you on the fireline or headed there in the next few weeks, and for those who support firefighting operations at home or to assist other regions, we thank you and commend you for your commitment and tireless dedication to our bureau.

This has been a very challenging fire season and we want to stress that no structure or natural resource is worth jeopardizing the safety of our firefighting personnel. Our firefighting personnel are working in high risk environments and it is our responsibility to protect them.

Our most valuable resource is our personnel! Please keep the following talking points in mind as we progress through this long and busy season.

- High temperatures, dry fuels, drought, winds and thunderstorms are contributing to a long, challenging fire season. Because we will be working on these fires for weeks to come, we must ensure proper rest and safety guidelines for all firefighting personnel.
- Research has shown that fatigue is a consistent factor in serious accidents and fatalities. So far this fire season, we have experienced firefighter injuries and fatalities caused by heat related illnesses, snag/hazard tree strikes, burn overs and vehicle accidents. Providing adequate rest for all firefighters allows them to continue suppressing wildfires in a safe and efficient manner.
- As this fire season progresses into September, three management challenges will remain for firefighting personnel: high risk, fatigue, and exposure. We must work to mitigate these risks by ensuring that fire personnel receive adequate rest and follow safety guidelines.
- Most fire personnel are working 16 hour days on the fire lines. We have instructed wildland fire personnel to consider taking an additional day off to rest if they are becoming extremely fatigued. Ensuring adequate rest for firefighting personnel provides for more efficient and safe firefighting operations.
- Every agency administrator, every fire manager, every fireline supervisor, and every firefighter is responsible to ensure that established work-rest guidelines and safety practices are known and observed.