

**ANNEX C
THE STATE OF FLORIDA
EMERGENCY RESPONSE TEAM GUIDELINES FOR WILDFIRE
OPERATIONS**

(To The State Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan)

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Executive Summary

The State of Florida Emergency Response Team Guidelines for Wildfire Operations, Annex C to the Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan identifies the actions that may be taken by the Florida Division of Forestry and those State and local agencies in support of the Division of Forestry 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 the Florida Division of Forestry in its statutory responsibilities in responding to, controlling and suppressing wildfires.

The Department of Community Affairs, Division of Emergency Management has the overall responsibility for coordination of the support. The Division of Emergency Management, in cooperation with the Division of Forestry, will update and coordinate the plans with other response and support agencies. Within the Division of Emergency Management, the Bureau of Preparedness and Response has the responsibility for coordinating with the Division of Forestry the state planning for wildfire events.

The Annex is a document is constantly under development and is presently divided into five (5) 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 will be 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 (Division of Forestry, the Division of Emergency Management, the Florida Fire Chiefs Association, and the State Fire Marshals Office), several guidelines for the three levels of activation (Monitoring, Partial, and Full) for the State Emergency Operations Center 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. Information will be disseminated to the public within the Unified Command. 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 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 Warning Point, the coordination of situation reports and incident action plans.

References and Authorities

The authority for the development, implementation, and maintenance of this Annex and all compatible county/municipal plans in support of the Division of Forestry 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 Division of Forestry under **Chapter 590 of the Florida Statutes**.

The Federal Emergency Management Agency policy on requesting Fire Suppression Assistance is contained within **44 CFR Part 206, Subpart L**.

The Federal Emergency Management Agency's **Interim Policy on Fire Suppression Assistance**, April 1999.

CHAPTER I – INTRODUCTION

I. General

Annex C (The State of Florida Emergency Response Team Guidelines for Wildfire Operations) identifies the actions that may be taken by the Florida Division of Forestry and those State and local agencies in support of the Division of Forestry 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 the Florida Division of Forestry in its statutory responsibilities in responding to, controlling and suppressing wildfires.

II. Purpose

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

III. Scope

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

IV. Assumptions

1. The Division of Forestry 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 through 1998, an average of 5,656 wildfires occurred per year, burning an average of 209,371 acres. In 1999, the wildfire season saw 4,500 wildfires consume more than 365,000 acres statewide.
5. Because of changing weather conditions, the yearly figures ranged from a low of 3,343 wildfires (with 48,586 acres burned) in 1995 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 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, 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 Division of Forestry's 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 Forestry 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 wildfire. A major change since 1998 was in the organization of statewide oversight. In 1999, a Unified State Command comprised of in-state personnel was utilized. The Unified State Command structure will be the process used to manage serious wildfire events.

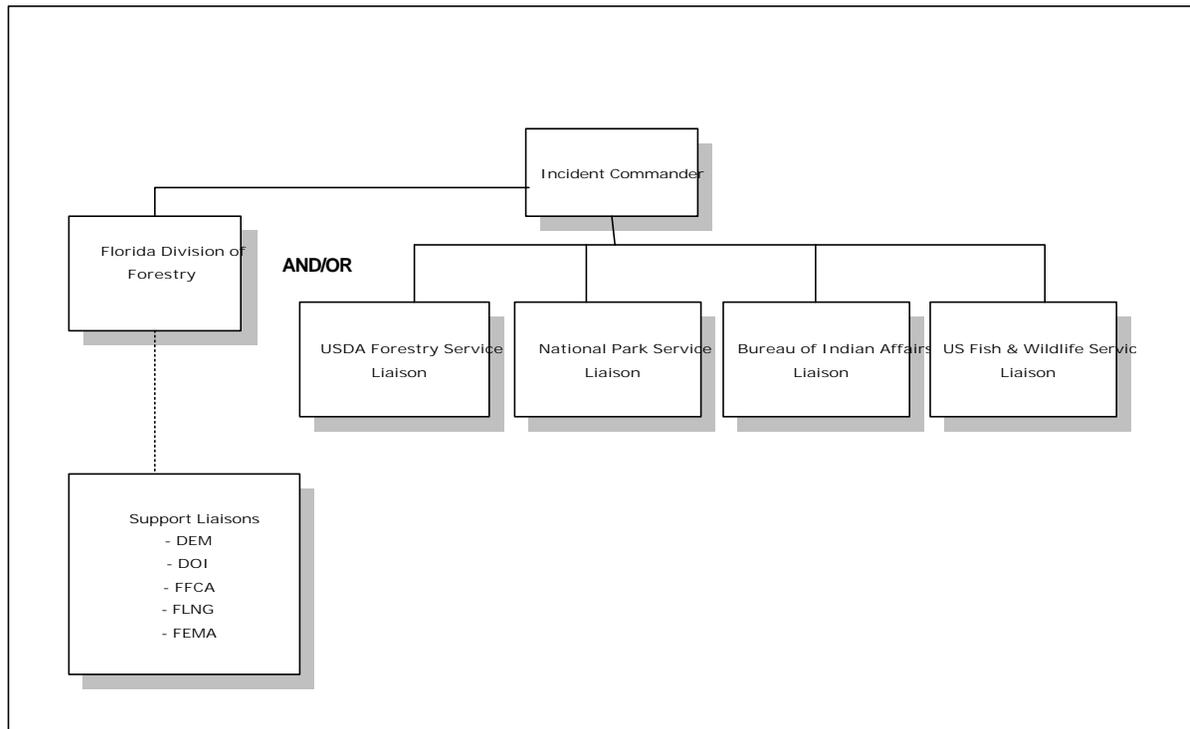
II. Response Organization

The Unified State Command 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. Unified State Command is organized like a State Multi-agency Coordination (MAC) group, but with the important difference being that the Unified State Command also retains operational command of resources as well as provides logistical coordination.

The Unified State Command is set up so that an Incident Commander is provided from the primary jurisdictional agencies on which the wildfires are occurring. Unified State Commanders will include the Florida Division of Forestry and either the USDA Forest Service, National Park Service, the United States Fish and Wildlife Service, or the Bureau of Indian Affairs (**see Exhibit One**).

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 Division of Emergency Management, Division of State Fire Marshal, Florida Fire Chiefs Association; Florida National Guard and if involved the Federal Emergency Management Agency (**see Exhibit One**).

EXHIBT 1 UNIFIED COMMAND ORGANIZATION



III. Responsibilities

A. Department of Agriculture and Consumer Service, Division of Forestry

The Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, Division of Forestry has statutory responsibility for the suppression of wild land fires in the State of Florida. The Division of Forestry has the lead role in determining when a State Unified Command will be established. In consultation with other State and federal partners, the Division of Forestry will appoint one member of their organization and at least one alternate to serve as State incident commander. The incident commander will determine the scope and structure of the unified command for the wild land(s) burning in the State.

B. Division of Emergency Management

The Florida Division of Emergency Management has statutory responsibility for coordinating State and local support to the Division of Forestry in the response and recovery from wild land fires. A liaison will be appointed to coordinate the Division's support role. Various support elements will be initiated as requested by the incident commander.

C. Florida Fire Chiefs Association

The Florida Fire Chiefs Association provides the Division of Forestry logistical support through the services of fire departments throughout the State. This support effort will be initiated according to the Florida Fire Chiefs Association's Disaster Response Plan that is activated by request of for Emergency Support Function 4, Firefighting.

D. Division of State Fire Marshal

The State Fire Marshal appoints an emergency coordination officer for Emergency Support Function 4, Firefighting. Emergency Support Function 4 is responsible for logistical request from State and local governments for firefighting resources. These resources are then dispatched according to the requirements of the Florida Fire Chiefs Association Disaster Response Plan.

IV. Delegation of Authority

Incident Management Team(s) for the incidents will be organized in Unified Command with liaisons from the Division of Emergency Management and the Division of State Fire Marshal or the Florida Fire Chiefs Association.

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 Interagency Incident Management System (NIIMS) as the emergency response organizational management structure.

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

II. Level Three, Monitoring Phase:

The Division of Emergency Management will maintain a liaison with the Division of Forestry. The Division of Forestry will maintain contact with the liaison and or the on-duty Operations Officer for the Division of Emergency Management, and notify them of any significant wildfire activity. This activity may require increased awareness or activity from the Division of Emergency Management or Emergency Support Functions in the State Emergency Operations Center. The Emergency Management liaison will remain in contact with the Division of Forestry and the Operations Chief for the State Emergency Operations Center and a joint determination will be made as to if and when to increase the level of activation in the State Emergency Operations Center. The Division of Emergency Management's liaison will be a part of the Unified Command Team once established by the Division of Forestry.

III. Level Two, Partial Activation

The State Emergency Operations Center may be activated to a Level Two based on a variety of considerations.

A. The request for issuing an Executive Order

When appropriate, the Division of Emergency Management will request an Executive Order, signed by the Governor, that is based on the following factors:

1. When the Division of Forestry requires the assistance of the Florida National Guard air assets for wildfire suppression. The Division of Forestry will estimate the need for the National Guard assets more than 24 hours before initiating the request.
2. When a Division of Forestry overhead team requires the support of the State Emergency Response Team for a wildfire that is out of control for longer than 24 hours.
3. When Emergency Support Function 4 (Firefighting) partially activates for any of the following criteria:
 - a. A wildfire event requiring the mobilization and deployment of Florida Fire Chiefs Association 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 (un-checked) into the urban/interface where multi-family homes and large subdivisions are being threatened.
 - c. When the Division of Forestry, in consultation with the Florida Fire Chiefs Association, identifies a need for out of State resources that can best be obtained through the Emergency Management Assistance Compact (EMAC).

Only those Emergency Support Functions needed to support the Division of Forestry will be activated.

B. The Division of Forestry's Liaison to the State Emergency Operations Center

Once the State Emergency Operations Center has gone to Level Two, the Division of Forestry will provide liaisons to the State Emergency Operations Center and provide information coordination for the State Emergency Support Functions.

IV. Level One, Full Activation

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

The State Coordinating Officer (usually the Director of the Division of Emergency Management), in consultation with the State Emergency Response Team Chief, will make the decision when to activate the State Emergency Operations Center 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 State Emergency Response Team's Emergency Support Functions.
2. When a wildfire event necessitates evacuations that require resource support from neighboring counties.

B. The Division of Forestry's Coordination With the Division of Emergency Management

The Division of Forestry and the Division of Emergency Management will coordinate several critical functions as follows:

1. Emergency Support Function 4 will provide logistical liaisons to the Florida Division of Forestry/US Forest Service offices or at the Unified Expanded Dispatch.
2. A Joint Information Center (JIC) will be established with Emergency Support Function 14 (Public Information). The Division of Forestry will provide briefing points on the wildfire situation through Emergency Support Function 14. Emergency Support Function 14 will then coordinate this consistent information message with other Public Information Officers throughout the State.
3. A Division of Emergency Management 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 State Emergency Response Team's Emergency Support Function 5 (Information and Planning) to consolidate the planning process and provide input into the situation reports issued from the State Emergency Operations Center.

5. The Division of Forestry will provide liaisons to the Division of Emergency Management for all financial matters regarding decisions to provide funding for the wildfire event and the consequences of the disaster.

Although the State Emergency Operations Center may be at Level One (full activation), the wildfire events may not have escalated to the point where all elements of the Division of Forestry staff will need to be co-located at the State Emergency Operations Center. The Division of Forestry may be a part of a Unified Command and co-located with the United States Forest Service due to the large logistical coordination needed with that agency.

C. The Division of Forestry's Co-location To The State Emergency Operations Center

The directors for the Division of Forestry and the Division of Emergency Management will jointly determine when and what portions of the Unified Command structure should co-locate to the State Emergency Operations Center. The Division of Emergency Management will provide all support resources for such co-location. The joint decision to co-locate will be based on guidelines including:

1. The Division of Forestry in its Unified Command with the United States Forest Service continues to command and control all operational elements of the wildfire incidents. The Division of Emergency Management 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 State Emergency Response Team Emergency Support Functions. The liaisons initially provided by the Division of Forestry 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 Emergency Support Functions dealing with the question of consequence management in response to the operational decisions made by Command.

Due to the large number of personnel that may need to be co-located to the State Emergency Operations Center, a decision will be made by the Unified Incident Commanders when and if to move the Unified Expanded Dispatch from the US Forest Service Center to the State Emergency Operations Center. Until (and if) the Unified Expanded Dispatch is moved, coordination for this effort will be directed by the following guidelines:

1. Emergency Support Function 4 will provide logistical support to the Expanded Dispatch where all requests for 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.
3. All firefighting assets (the Division of Forestry, the United States Department of Agriculture Forest Service, the Florida Fire Chiefs Association, the Division of State Fire Marshal and/or the Emergency Management Assistance Compact) 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 is put in place to coordinate large numbers of firefighters or emergency personnel. If the Incident Management Team requests a Medical Unit, the request will go through the Unified Expanded Dispatch. A mission will be tasked to Emergency Support Function 8 from the Unified Expanded Dispatch making the request for specific elements of the medical team.

VI. Air Operations

The Division of Forestry and the United States Department of Agriculture, 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

The Division of Forestry, in its Unified State Command role with the United States Department of Agriculture, 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. The Division of Emergency Management will support the Division of Forestry operations by managing and coordination any non-wildfire resource ordering through the Emergency Support Functions, Emergency Management Assistance Compact, Federal Emergency Management Agency, 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 to provide the correct resource, to ensure that it is provide it in a timely manner, and that they are provided cost-effectively is identified.

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

1. Unified Expanded Dispatch, including State Wildfire Compacts and the National Wildfire Resource Ordering System.
2. The Florida Fire Chiefs Association Disaster Response Plan in support of the Division of State Fire Marshal as the lead agency for Emergency Support Function 4 (Firefighting).
3. The Logistics Section of the State Emergency Operations Center.
4. Emergency Management Assistance Compacts 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 SUPPRESSION 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 policy on requesting Fire Suppression Assistance as contained in 44 CFR Part 206, Subpart L.

II. Purpose of Fire Suppression Assistance

Through the Fire Suppression Assistance Program, the Federal Emergency Management Agency's role in combating grassland, wildland, or wildland/urban interface fires is to provide financial assistance to states for fire suppression. The program is unique in that the Federal Emergency Management Agency 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 suppression costs.

III. Scope of Fire Suppression Assistance

A fire suppression declaration is the authorization of Federal assistance that is made the Federal Emergency Management Agency when a fire or fires constitute the threat of a major disaster.

A. Criteria for Fire Suppression Assistance

The Federal Emergency Management Agency will authorize a fire suppression 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 Suppression Assistance

1. The Division of Forestry, the State Coordinating Officer, the Principal Advisor, and the Federal Emergency Management Agency will consider the following key factors when evaluating and analyzing the need for fire suppression 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; the Emergency Management Assistance Compact.
- 2. High danger fire conditions, as indicated by:
 - a. Keetch-Byram Drought Index (KBDI) or similar nationally accepted index.
 - 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.
 - 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 Suppression Assistance Request

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

A. Critical Information for Requesting Fire Suppression Assistance

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

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 controlled or 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. If current weather conditions are being reported and documented.

B. Closing Fire Suppression Grant Assistance

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

V. Roles and Responsibilities for Fire Suppression Assistance**A. The Division of Forestry Incident Commander**

The Incident Commander will notify the Division of Forestry'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 Division of Forestry

The Director or designee will coordinate with the Division of Emergency Management liaison or Duty Officer to notify the State Coordinating Officer, if identified, when a fire meets the criteria for a fire suppression grant. This notification can be done by contacting the State Warning Point.

C. The State Coordinating Officer

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

D. The Division of Forestry Representative

1. A representative from the Division of Forestry will fill out the Federal Emergency Management Agency request form **FEMA 90-58**. The form is then signed by the State Coordinating Officer and submitted to the Federal Emergency Management Agency's Regional Office.
2. Will contact the Federal Emergency Management Agency's Principal Advisor to make any request a recommendation be made on the grant request.

E. The Principal Advisor

The Principal advisor will complete their recommendation and submit it to Federal Emergency Management Agency 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. Emergency Support Function 14 (Public Information) has the responsibility to establish a mechanism that efficiently provides and disseminates information to the public. The State Coordinating Officer will 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.

II. Unified Public Information

When the State Emergency Operations Center is activated (Level 2 or 1), State, local and federal agencies will provide experienced Public Information Officers to Emergency Support Function 14 or provide access to public information officers 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 Public Information Officers represented in Unified Command for Emergency Support Function 14 may include:

- The Florida Division of Emergency Management;
- The Florida Department of Agriculture, Division of Forestry; and,
- The United States Department of Agriculture-Forest Service.

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

IV. Information Flow

A. Fire Activity

1. The Division of Forestry State Officer in Charge will notify the State Warning Point of any significant fires that develop.
2. The State Warning Point will contact the Division of Forestry State Officer in Charge of any significant fires that are reported to the State outside of those reported by the Division of Forestry.
3. The criteria for significant fires includes:

- a. Wildfires that threaten structures, or where structures are lost.
- b. That forces or has 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. The Division of Forestry will continue to produce a daily wildfire summary, which is available at their website. The Forest Protection Bureau can be contacted for any clarifications that may be required from the raw data on the summary.
2. The Division of Emergency Management will extract pertinent information from that site for its situation reports, which will be completed as deemed appropriate for the event.