



Firefighters United for Safety, Ethics, and Ecology

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: Thursday, August 21, 2008

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All Federal Wildland Firefighting Policies Are Changing

Firefighters Release New Citizen's Guide

Eugene, OR __ Federal wildland firefighting policies will change dramatically over the next year and citizens must become informed about upcoming changes to assure effective wildfire management, according to “Fire Watch: A Citizen’s Guide to Wildfire Monitoring,” released today by Firefighters United for Safety, Ethics & Ecology (FUSEE).

“The new policy change recognizes that it is simply not humanly possible to attack all wildfires in all places at all times,” said noted fire sociologist Dr. Timothy Ingalsbee, author of the new 44-page Guide. “We must learn to work with and use the benefits of fire where we can, suppress it where we must, but become far more strategic and selective in the places and methods we choose to commit firefighters to aggressive suppression.”

Formerly, when wildfire was detected, fire managers had to immediately decide whether to suppress the fire or to let it burn for ecological benefits, said Ingalsbee. “Under a new federal policy called Appropriate Management Response or ‘AMR,’ for the first time fires can be managed for both community protection and ecosystem restoration at the same time,” he said.

Whereas in the past, wildfire suppression operations frequently occurred without the aid of informed public involvement, local knowledge will now become crucial to fire managers, Ingalsbee said. Citizens, particularly those living in the increasingly fire-prone West, need to learn how to monitor and critically analyze wildfire operations, and perform more of a partnership role with the fire services, he said.

“Fire Watch: A Citizen’s Guide to Wildfire Monitoring” provides the public with the tools necessary to get informed and involved,” Ingalsbee said. The Guide contains chapters on the ecological effects of wildfire suppression, monitoring wildfires on the Internet, the federal Freedom of Information Act, and communicating local concerns.

“A passive, uninvolved public that is blindly supportive of any and all suppression actions conducted in their name does NOT provide the best support for firefighters on the ground,” Ingalsbee said. “Our hope is that the more the public understands the risks to firefighters, costs to taxpayers, and damage to ecosystems caused by aggressively fighting fires, the more attractive wisely managing fires will become,” he concluded.

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“Fire Watch: A Citizen’s Guide to Wildfire Monitoring” is available at:
http://www.fusee.org/content_pages/docs/august%202008/FUSEE_CitGuide2008_FINAL.pdf

FUSEE is a national nonprofit organization dedicated to public education and policy advocacy promoting safe, ethical and ecological fire management. FUSEE members include wildland firefighters, other fire management workers, fire researchers and educators, forest conservationists, and rural homeowners. A “fusee” is a quick-igniting handheld torch used by firefighters to secure firelines, create safety zones, reduce hazardous fuel loads and restore fire-adapted ecosystems. For more information on FUSEE: <http://www.fusee.org/>

Ingalsbee is slated to present an in-depth review of Appropriate Management Response, or AMR, at the International Association of Wildland Fire’s conference, "The '88 Fires: Yellowstone and Beyond" in Jackson, Wyoming on September 22-27, 2008. For information, go to: <http://www.iawfonline.org/yellowstone/>.

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