



# United States Department of the Interior

BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT  
Fire and Aviation  
3833 South Development Avenue  
Boise, Idaho 83705-5354  
<http://www.nifc.gov>



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Instruction Memorandum No. FA IM-2007-027  
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To: All Field Offices  
From: Assistant Director, Fire and Aviation  
Subject: Wildland Firefighter Burn Injury Protocols

**Program Area:** Fire Management

**Purpose:** This Information Memorandum establishes burn injury protocols for treatment and transportation of wildland firefighters who sustain burn injuries during wildland fire operations.

**Policy/Action:** The following procedures will be used when Bureau of Land Management (BLM) employees sustain burn injuries, regardless of agency jurisdiction. These procedures will also apply to federal employees, casuals, and other personnel covered by the Federal Employee's Compensation Act who are burned during a wildland fire operation within BLM jurisdiction.

After on-site medical response, initial medical stabilization, and evaluation are completed, District/Field Managers will coordinate with the attending physician to ensure that an employee whose injuries meet *any* of the following burn injury criteria (identified by the American Burn Association as warranting immediate referral to an accredited burn center) is immediately referred to the nearest regional burn center. A list of possible burn care facilities can be found at <http://www.blm.gov/nifc/st/en/prog/fire/im.html>.

The decision to refer the employee to a regional burn center will be made directly by the attending physician or may be requested of the physician by the Agency Administrator.

## Burn Injury Criteria

1. Partial thickness burns (second degree) involving greater than 5% Total Body Surface Area (TBSA).
2. Burns involving the face, hands, feet, genitalia, perineum, or major joints.
3. Third-degree burns of any size are present.
4. Electrical burns, including lightning injury are present.

5. Inhalation injury is suspected.
6. Burns are accompanied by traumatic injury (such as fractures).
7. Individuals are unable to immediately return to full duty.

It is imperative that action is expeditious, as burn injuries are often difficult to evaluate and may take 72 hours to manifest themselves. When there is any doubt as to the severity of the injury, the required action is to immediately refer and transport the employee to a regional burn center.

**Time Frame:** Effective immediately.

**Budget Impact:** Budget impacts will include the cost of transportation and treatment of injured personnel. Charges associated with the treatment of injured personnel will generally be administered by the Department of Labor's Office of Workers' Compensation Programs.

**Background:** Burn injuries are often difficult to diagnose and may continue to worsen if they do not receive immediate, specialized treatment. The initial evaluation and treatment of these burns often happens in rural medical facilities with limited experience in burn injury care. In the past, this has resulted in evaluation and treatment that did not provide the best care to injured firefighters. Therefore, victims with either severe burns or burns that meet any of the above criteria should be immediately referred and transported to a regional burn center.

**Manual/Handbook Sections Affected:** The *Interagency Standards for Fire and Fire Aviation Operations* will be amended to reflect this direction.

**Coordination:** FA-300, Division of Operations, Fire and Aviation Directorate, Bureau of Land Management Safety and Health Management Team

**Contact:** Michelle Ryerson, Fire Safety Manager, Fire and Aviation Directorate, 208-387-5175

Signed by:  
Roy Johnson  
Acting Assistant Director

Authenticated by:  
Pat Lewis  
Supervisory Mgmt. Asst.

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