

## Lesson 17 –Rationale

*Estimated time to complete: 15 minutes*

In this lesson, you will develop the rationale for a decision. Rationale is typically one of the last inputs developed for a pending decision and its completion is required before you can submit a pending decision for publishing.

If you've completed the suite of WFDSS 101 lessons, Rationale is the last set of required inputs you must create before you can submit your decision for publishing. Once Rationale is complete, you use the Decision Editor to fine tune your document and add supporting text, images or formatting. You will learn how to use the Decision Editor in Lesson 18 and how to edit your decision document in Lesson 19.

### About Rationale

The Rationale portion of a decision is developed by the decision Approver, or by an Incident Editor that can effectively communicate the Line Officer's wishes. Rationale accomplishes two things, it:

- Documents why a specific course of action was chosen,
- Records the risk decision dialog that has occurred among agency administrators and incident managers, and
- Provides the opportunity to tell "story" of the incident.

Rationale can only be entered:

- After a pending decision has been created on the **Decisions** tab, and
- Using a Decision Editor, which you can access from the **Decisions** tab once a pending decision has been created.

Developing Rationale for an incident is typically one of the last inputs you document before submitting a pending decision for review. You can add supporting text, images, and other information to help relate incident events using a Decision Editor.

### Decision Content: Rationale

The decision Rationale provides the opportunity to tell the "story" of an incident.

- Document why the decision was made to implement the selected course of action.
- Document the risk decision dialog among the Agency Administrators and Incident Managers.

Consider using the outline below to address the most important information in paragraph form:

*My Decision is...* Discuss what is allowed in the overarching land management plan, the probability of being successful, expected duration of the incident, what was considered but rejected

*The cooperators involved in sharing the decision process are...* discuss who and why

*The values of concern are...* Summarize why they are important and the likelihood of there being impacts and area closures.

*The relative risk assessment and organization needs indicate...* Tie to values, highlight expected firefighter exposure, Incident Management Team needs

*The current fire situation is...* Describe the area the fire is burning in and the fire environment

*The following triggers would indicate revisions to this decision or that a new decision is needed...* Describe low probability/high consequence events

Additional content to consider when creating the Rationale:

- Document why the decision was made to When creating the Rationale, consider the following questions and content:
- What caused you to make this decision?
- What caused you to choose the course of action?
- What are the opportunities to manage the fire to meet land management plan objectives?
- What alternatives (objectives, strategies and tactics) are being considered?
- What is the relative probability of success associated with the alternatives being considered?
- What are the causes and influences on the incident?
- What are the social and political concerns/pressures?
- Who are the stakeholders that should be consulted prior to making a decision?
- What does the Relative Risk tell the user?
- What is the exposure to responders for the alternatives being considered?
- What alternative provides for the best balance between the desired outcome and exposure to responders?
- What are the critical values at risk, and are they addressed effectively in the Incident Objectives and Requirements, as well as the corresponding Course of Action?
- What is the chance the critical values will be impacted, and if so what are the consequences? What are the possible low probability/high consequence events?
- Are there smoke concerns?
- What Fire Behavior Models informed the decision?
- Did you document your qualitative and quantitative decision support elsewhere in the document? If so where?
- How was your estimated cost constructed? What are your concerns related to the cost?
- What are the critical thresholds that will trigger reconsideration of the proposed alternative and how will they be monitored?
- Add text, images, data and analyses to support your decision.

Oftentimes, there are many layers of ‘why’ that may need to be documented, and the tickler list above may help you derive all the reasons that support why you’ve developed a particular decision for an incident.

### *To develop Rationale for a decision:*

1. From the Incident list, select the incident you want to develop Rationale for.
2. Click **View Information**. The Edit Incident page appears.
3. Choose the **Decision** tab, and then locate the pending decision in the list.
4. If the parts of the pending decision are not listed (Assessment, Objectives, etc.), click the blue expansion arrow to the left of the pending decision. The decision opens to display nine parts (ten if you include the ‘whole’ decision at the top of the list).
5. Select the ‘Pending Decision: Rationale’ portion of the decision, and then click **Edit**. The Decision Editor opens to the Rationale portion of the decision.
6. The next steps will depend on which decision editor you are using:
  - If using the default decision editor, you can add content in sections. Add a Title if you choose, and then start typing the Rationale into the Text Before field. You can select an image if you choose to support your rationale, as well as add text after the image. To insert additional sections, click *Insert Section*. You can add one section or many sections to the Rationale. Click Save when you are finished and click the Check In link atop the page if you are finished with your edits.
  - If using the advanced decision editor (necessary if you want to create tables or utilize formatting/style tools: place the curser in the Decision Editor pane and begin to type. You can also use the cut and paste tools if you choose to cut and paste from other documents (do not cut and paste hyperlinks to external website or tables from Word documents as these can corrupt the document structure). Click Save frequently, and when you are finished.

### **Is my Decision Ready for Publishing?**

Although Rationale is typically one of the last inputs you develop before submitting a pending decision for review, you may still need to fine tune your document and prepare it for publishing. You can add supporting text, images and other information to help tell the ‘story’ of your incident and you can do this using either the default or advanced Decision Editors, as both are available from the Decisions tab. You will learn how to do this in Lessons 18 and 19.

### **Search for these related topics in the Help:**

- [Decision Content: Rationale](#)
- [About Decisions: Rationale](#)
- [About the WFDSS Decision Editors](#)