



CHAPTER 6: INTERAGENCY FIRE PROGRAM MANAGEMENT (IFPM) STANDARD AND GUIDE

BACKGROUND

Following the South Canyon Fire in 1994, an interagency team was formed to investigate the fatalities and contributing factors. The subsequent *1995 Federal Wildland Fire Policy and Program Review*, signed by both Secretaries of Agriculture and the Interior, directed federal wildland fire agencies to establish fire management qualifications standards to improve firefighter safety and increase professionalism in fire management programs.

The Interagency Fire Program Management Qualifications Task Group, empowered by the Federal Fire and Aviation Leadership Council (now called the NFAEB—National Fire and Aviation Executive Board), developed the Interagency Fire Program Management Qualifications Standard and Guide (IFPM) that identifies minimum qualifications standards and competencies for key fire management positions.

An interagency IFPM Implementation Team was formed in June 2004 to develop an implementation plan and provide oversight and guidance to the implementation process. Since October 1, 2004, the IFPM Implementation Team has reviewed issues and made recommendations to NWCG on modifications to the IFPM Standard and the implementation process itself.

Information regarding IFPM can be found at <http://www.ifpm.nifc.gov/default.htm>.

The key fire management positions are:

- National Fire Program Manager (professional)
- Geographic Area Fire Program Manager (professional)
- Unit Fire Program Manager (professional)
- Wildland Fire Operations Specialist (professional or technical)
- Prescribed Fire and Fuels Specialist (professional or technical)
- Interagency Hotshot Crew Superintendent (technical)
- Engine Supervisors - Supervisory Engine Operator & Engine Module Supervisor
- Helicopter Manager (technical)
- Senior Firefighter (technical)
- Center Manager (professional or technical)
- Initial Attack Lead Dispatcher/Assistant Center Manager (technical)
- Initial Attack Dispatcher (technical)

The IFPM minimum qualifications standards have been accepted by all federal agencies with wildland fire management responsibilities and the Office of Personnel Management (OPM).

Minimum qualifications standards which must be met by October 1, 2010, include:

- Additional required training
- Specialized experience
- NWCG incident management qualifications
- And in some cases, positive education applicable to the GS-0401 series

In addition to the minimum qualifications above, position-specific and common competencies have been developed. A “**competency**” is defined as a combination of knowledge, skills and abilities which, when acquired, allows a person to perform a task or function at a specifically defined level of proficiency. Employees obtain these common competencies through personal education and experiences, through agency orientation and mission renewal programs, and through interaction with peers, teams, and supervisors. Competencies are described in terms of three expertise levels (working, journey, and expert). The “working” level of expertise is defined as the minimum level of experience and/or training that it takes to produce work of acceptable quality and meet safety standards. It is **not** intended that a prospective job applicant have all the defined competencies in their entirety when first selected for any position at any level (unless the hiring unit so chooses, and indicates same in a vacancy announcement). Timelines for achieving full-performance level standards should be specified in vacancy announcements and other personnel documents.

The position-specific and common competencies should be used as a guide by the employee and supervisor in developing an Individual Development Plan (IDP) and assessing employee performance. Competency checklists and planning tools for each of the 13 key positions can be found at http://www.ifpm.nifc.gov/standard/electronicver/Common_Competencies.pdf.

IMPLEMENTATION OF IFPM

There are many steps and personnel involved with the implementation of IFPM. Some people designated as training leads will be involved with more of the implementation steps, but the most common steps in which Training Officers will be involved are Steps 5 and 6.

Step 5: Assessing Employee Development Needs – The employee’s developmental needs must be assessed to determine what is needed in order for him/her to meet the goals outlined in the IFPM Standard. This assessment will serve as the basis for Step 6.

Step 6: Initiate Individual Development Plans (IDPs) – An IDP must be developed to meet the requirements found in the IFPM for the employee’s current position. An IDP template can be found on the IFPM Web site, in Appendix E.

http://www.ifpm.nifc.gov/plan/impplan/IFPM_Implementation_Plan_Appendix_E.pdf

ADDITIONAL IFPM RESOURCES

IFPM Position Matrix

The IFPM Position Matrix (<http://www.ifpm.nifc.gov/standard/electronicver/electronic.htm>) provides minimum qualification information for all key fire management positions.

Position Planning Tools

The Position Planning Tools (<http://www.ifpm.nifc.gov/tools/tools.htm>) describe some of the developmental activities an employee can use to achieve the requisite competencies for his/her position. The planning tools should be used during the IDP process.

Competency/Specialized Experience Documentation

Each position has specific specialized experience requirements. Each State office should set up a process for gaining these specialized experience requirements for their employees.

Eventually the competency portion of the IFPM will be tracked in documents similar to an NWCG position task books. These documents are currently under development. In the meantime, employees should track the accomplishment of those competencies using a copy of the competencies within the appropriate IFPM position section. The supervisor will initial and date the line of the corresponding competency as they are met.

NWCG and Agency Training Requirements

Each position has specific developmental training requirements. An employee will need to be placed on the priority list (developed by their home unit) for receiving NWCG training and also be provided opportunities to take agency-related training as applicable to their position. This should be their key training-related concern, foregoing other training if conflict in schedule arises or budgetary constraints exist.

NWCG Fire Training and Incident Qualifications Worksheets

Each position has specific incident management qualification requirements. An employee will need to be placed on the priority list (developed by their home unit) for receiving trainee assignments. Their supervisor should make them available to get this accomplished.

The Incident Qualifications Worksheets can be used to assess an employee's NWCG training and incident qualifications to aid in the development of an IDP.

NOTE: Some positions have more than one worksheet; select the worksheet that corresponds to the complexity of the fire program in which the employee works. Refer to the IFPM Web site (<http://www.ifpm.nifc.gov/tools/tools.htm>) to download the appropriate worksheet.

ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATIONS

Positive Educational Component of the GS-0401 Fire Management Specialist Series

Some Training Officers may be expected to assist employees with the planning of coursework to enable employees to meet the GS-0401 series. If this is the case, the Training Officer must work closely with Human Resources personnel to ensure that the coursework meets the requirements of the GS-0401 supplemental standard. Information on the Supplemental Standard and some of the NWCG and agency-sponsored courses can be found at http://www.ifpm.nifc.gov/hr/pb/Personnel_Bulletin_No_07-13.pdf

Documentation System for IFPM Standards

A group is currently working on the interagency system that will maintain the IFPM records. The system will be IQCS, with additional functionality for IFPM. Refer to the IFPM and IQCS Web sites (<http://www.ifpm.nifc.gov> and <http://iqcs.nwcg.gov/>, respectively) for the current status.

Changes to IFPM Standard and Implementation Plan

For “Recent Updates” refer periodically to the IFPM Web site homepage (<http://www.ifpm.nifc.gov/default.htm>) and view past changes in the introduction to the IFPM Standard document at <http://www.ifpm.nifc.gov/standard/electronicver/Introduction.pdf>.

FUNDING

The *Interagency Fire Program Management Standards and Guide Implementation Plan* states, “It is the responsibility of each bureau or agency to assist every **incumbent** affected by the *IFPM Standard* to ensure they meet the minimum qualification standards before the implementation period deadline of October 1, 2010.”