

CHAPTER 4: THE NATIONAL WILDFIRE COORDINATING GROUP (NWCG) AND ITS TRAINING PROCESS



BLM policy requires that employees work jointly with other federal, state, and local agencies through the NWCG to establish minimum incident qualifications standards acceptable to all agencies. Interagency standards allow a cost-effective exchange of personnel and resources and reduce duplication among agencies. BLM also participates with other federal agencies through the National Fire and Aviation Executive Board (NFAEB). Standards for federal agencies, which may exceed the minimum standards established by NWCG, are coordinated through the NFAEB. Such additional standards will be approved by the Fire and Aviation Director (F&A Director) and implemented through the Incident Qualifications and Certification System (IQCS).

NWCG Qualifications and Training Responsibilities

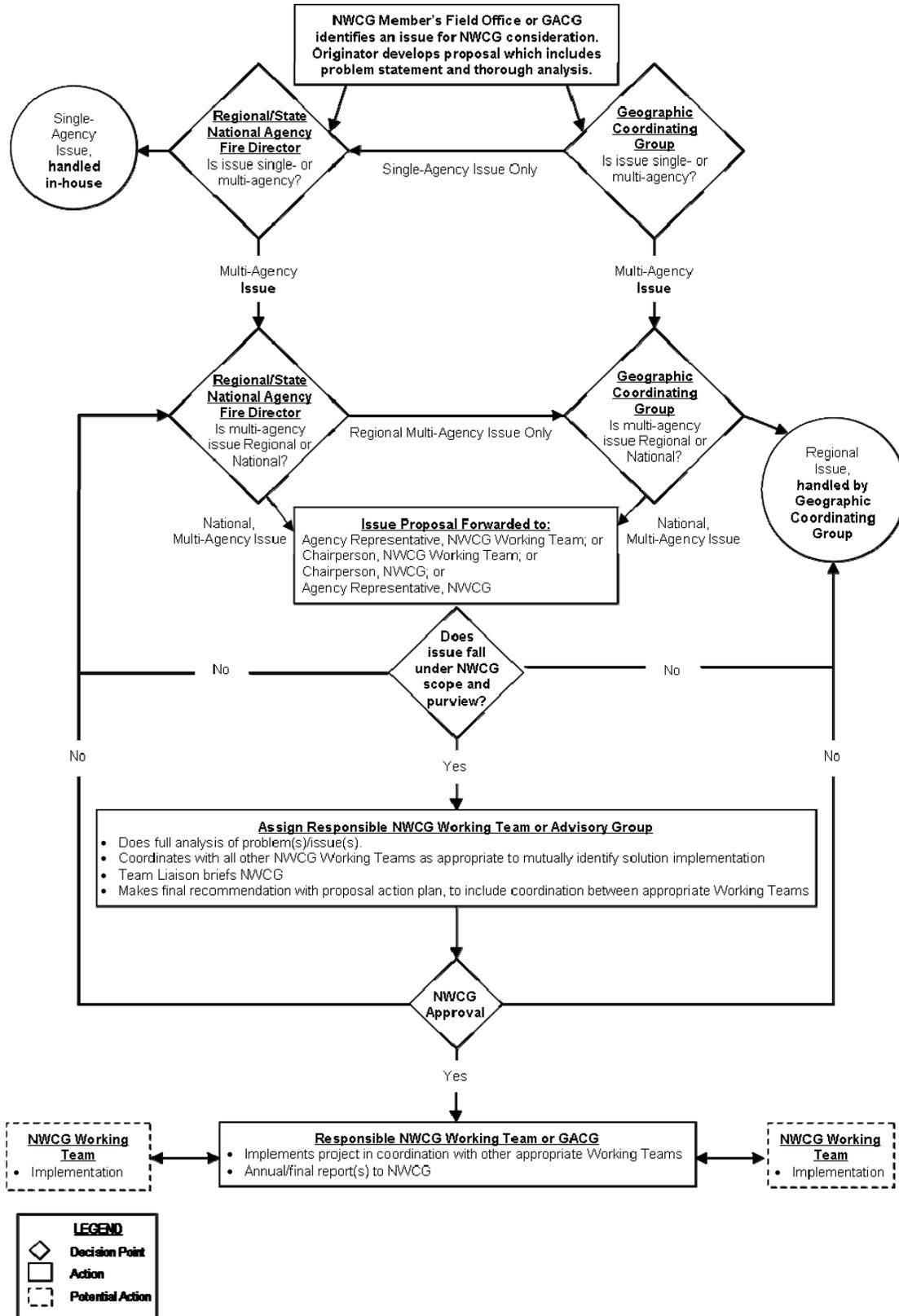
The NWCG “Systems Umbrella and Process,” [Illustration 1](#) on page 2, describes the NWCG parent group’s and working teams’ responsibilities for development and maintenance of the wildland fire qualifications, Incident Command System (ICS), and training systems. This approved NWCG process is intended to improve and clarify procedures between the field, working teams, and NWCG in the identified areas.

This process specifically advises the field of the procedures required to forward a qualification, ICS, or performance issue to NWCG, and then potentially into the NWCG Publications Management System (PMS).

[Illustration 1](#) outlines the route qualification/performance/training issues take from initial identification by BLM field personnel, consideration by NWCG, assignment to a working team, to completion of the project.

All projects leading to publication of materials for distribution through PMS must be sponsored by the responsible working team and approved by NWCG. Guidance for product development may be found in the *NWCG Publications Management System Procedures Guide*, PMS 922, (<http://www.nwcg.gov/teams/pmswt/index.htm>) and the *NWCG Course Development and Format Standards*, PMS 901-2, (http://icbs.nwcg.gov/project_reference_materials.html).

NWCG SYSTEM UMBRELLA AND PROCESS



NWCG Team/Committee Qualification and Training Responsibilities

NWCG is responsible for the coordination of interagency fire training. NWCG approves all qualification systems and curricula as recommended by working teams and assures appropriate coordination with the Incident Operations Standards Working Team (IOSWT) and Training Working Team (TWT).

A brief description of each working team is presented below. [Illustration 2](#) on page 6 shows the various NWCG working teams including chairpersons and BLM representatives. More information regarding the NWCG working teams can be found at <http://www.nwcg.gov/teams/teams.htm>.

Incident Operations Standards Working Team (IOSWT)

IOSWT establishes job performance requirements for fire positions identified as common among agencies. The team also establishes standards of experience, training, physical fitness, and other qualifications necessary for certification in these positions. The IOSWT maintains the *Fireline Handbook*, PMS 410-1, (<http://www.nwcg.gov/pms/pubs/pubs.htm>) as well as the *NWCG NIIMS Wildland Fire Qualification System Guide*, PMS 310-1, (<http://www.nwcg.gov/pms/docs/docs.htm>). The team works closely with the TWT.

Training Working Team (TWT)

Through the TWT and its member agencies, NWCG identifies interagency training needs, establishes training priorities and standards, and coordinates the development and implementation of courses for the interagency fire curriculum. The team provides guidance to other teams on the development process and standards.

Fire Use Working Team (FUWT)

Through FUWT and its member agencies, NWCG identifies interagency training needs, establishes training priorities and standards, and coordinates with TWT development and implementation of courses for the interagency fire use curriculum. The team also recommends modifications to other qualification and training systems and materials developed by others; and develops non-curriculum materials for PMS distribution.

Wildland Fire Education Working Team (WFEWT)

WFEWT and its member agencies recommend for approval the prevention qualification and training curriculum, coordinate with IOS and TWT to assure overall NWCG consistency and compatibility, and develop prevention and education training materials following the NWCG

process. The team also recommends modification to other qualification and training systems and materials developed by others and develops non-training materials for PMS distribution.

Fire Equipment Working Team (FEWT)

FEWT and its member agencies recommend equipment and chemical use modifications to established qualification and training systems, coordinate with appropriate teams to assure NWCG consistency and compatibility, and develop associated training and non-training materials following established NWCG standards.

Information Resources Management Working Team (IRMWT)

IRMWT recommends information and communication area modifications to approved qualification systems and training curricula and coordinates with appropriate teams to assure NWCG consistency and compatibility, and develops training and non-training materials associated with implementation information and communication systems.

Safety and Health Working Team (SHWT)

SHWT recommends qualification and training modifications to approved systems and course materials developed by other teams and develops non-training materials that will support multiple systems or are stand alone products.

Incident Business Practices Working Team (IBPWT)

IBPWT coordinates business practices for wildfire, non-fire, and FEMA emergencies. The team maintains the *NWCG Interagency Business Practices Handbook*, PMS 902, (<http://www.nwcg.gov/teams/ibpwt/documents/index.htm>).

Fire Environment Working Team (FENWT)

The purpose of FENWT is to provide interagency oversight, strategic direction and vision relating to measuring and predicting the wildland fire environment. The FENWT is comprised of the Fire Behavior, Fire Danger, and Fire Weather Committees.

Wildland/Urban Interface Working Team (WUIWT)

WUIWT provides a forum to increase public awareness of the wildland/urban interface problem. They develop local solutions to the issues and form partnerships among problem solvers and interest groups.

Wildland Fire Investigation Working Team (WFIWT)

WFIWT develops policies, methods and procedures, and other actions for systematic and science-based wildland fire investigations to adequately support criminal prosecution and cost recovery.

Publication Management System Working Team (PMSWT)

PMSWT makes available all qualification and training materials produced by the above teams, assures appropriate approvals are obtained, and assures products meet NWCG standards and are distributed appropriately.

NWCG Training Units at NIFC

NWCG Training Development Unit (Development Unit)

The NWCG Training Development Unit's mission is to develop relevant NWCG training in a cost-effective manner to meet the needs of the wildland fire community.

The Development Unit is responsible for the development and revision of approximately 100 courses, 100- through 400-level, in the NWCG curriculum. The unit has approximately seven project leaders and an editorial staff that support this effort. The Development Unit works very closely with the Distance Learning, Instructional Media, and Standards Units to accomplish their mission.

NWCG Training Standards Unit

The NWCG Training Standards Unit (Standards Unit) assists the project development groups at several critical times during the development process. A member of the Standards Unit presents an orientation during the first workshop to discuss the instructional systems design (ISD) process and how ISD applies to the development of NWCG course materials.

After the first workshop, the objectives and tests developed during this first workshop are sent to the Standards Unit for review. The objectives are reviewed to ensure that they are written with a clearly stated required action, a description of the condition in which the action will be performed, and what measurable standard will determine the success of the action. The tests are reviewed to ensure that all of the objectives are adequately tested and that the questions require the knowledge taught in the course materials to derive the correct answer.

A member of the Standards Unit reviews the entire course at three stages of development; prior to and during the formative test of the course, prior to and during the summative test of the course, and prior to certification. During these tests the reviewer/evaluator checks for proper format, consistency, instructional design, and English usage.

The Standards Unit maintains evaluation files for all the courses within the NWCG curriculum. Evaluation comments can be submitted by anyone by sending an e-mail to nwcg_standards@nifc.blm.gov. Comments will be considered when the course is revised. If the comment involves an immediate safety concern, an errata sheet will be issued as soon as possible.

The Standards Unit also maintains archives of NWCG course materials. These archives are used as the starting point for course revisions. They have also been made available, on occasion, to other countries to assist with the development of a wildland fire curriculum.

NWCG Courses and Training Materials

Courses and training materials developed to support qualifications and training needs established by the [NWCG NIIMS Wildland Fire Qualification System Guide, PMS 310-1](#), will be developed and certified in accordance with the NWCG Publications Management System Procedures Guide, PMS 922, (<http://www.nwcg.gov/pms/pubs/pubs.htm>), and the [NWCG Course Development and Format Standards, PMS 901-2](#).

Certified NWCG training courses will be used to meet the training needs of personnel seeking qualification in wildland fire suppression or prescribed fire positions established in the PMS 310-1. Certified NWCG courses must be taught in their entirety; i.e., all course and instructional objectives must be met. Additional material or information may be added, if necessary. Details relating to course descriptions and trainee/instructor qualifications are provided in the *NWCG Field Manager's Course Guide*, PMS 901-1, (<http://www.nwcg.gov/pms/training/training.htm>).

Ordering NWCG Course Materials

NWCG courses and course materials can be ordered through the Great Basin Cache at NIFC. A complete listing and ordering information of all NWCG courses and training materials can be found in the *NFES Catalog—Part 2: Publications*, PMS 449-2, (<http://www.nwcg.gov/pms/pubs/pubs.htm>).

When ordering courses and course materials, the order should be sent directly to the Great Basin Cache. All the items listed in this catalog are stocked at the Great Basin Cache. Mail or fax orders (no phone orders accepted) to:

National Interagency Fire Center
Attn: Great Basin Cache Supply Office
3833 S. Development Avenue
Boise, ID 83705
FAX: (208) 387-5573/5548

The Great Basin Cache performs inventory during January every year. **Please call in early December to verify ordering cut-off date. During inventory, resource orders for active incidents are the ONLY orders processed.** All other orders are processed after inventory in the order they were received.

If you have questions about items listed in the catalog, about the status of your order, or about the ordering procedures, please call the Great Basin Cache Supply Office: (208) 387-5104.

Use the order and/or credit card forms provided or any other order form as long as the essential criteria are stated:

- Correct shipping address (**do not use P.O. Box address**), contact person and phone number
- Payment method: ***Do not send any payment (cash, check) with the order.***
 - **Credit card:** All ordering units may use credit cards. The Great Basin Cache requires the use of Visa/Mastercard/Discover/Amex credit cards for orders by *private individuals, university/college bookstores and military units*. Orders from these groups will not be processed without a credit card number, expiration date, and card holder information. *For credit security, Visa/Mastercard/Discover/Amex information needs to be separate from order form.*
 - **Invoice:** *As of October 2003, federal agencies must have a reimbursable work authorization in place before any order can be processed. Questions regarding this may be directed to the NIFC BLM Finance Office at (208) 387-5521/5104.*
All other agencies/businesses: order number and invoice address are required.
 - **Requisition:** BLM units may use Purchase Requisition/Oral Order (Form 1510-8)
- Shipping method
- For **each** item being ordered, the following information is necessary:
 - NFES (catalog) number
 - Short description/title
 - Quantity ordered **and** unit of issue (e.g., each, package, set)

Understanding NWCG Course Numbering System

The NWCG has an established alphanumeric course numbering system. Each alphanumeric combination designates a meaning unique to the specified curriculum.

Alpha

The current NWCG endorsed curricula are:

- “D” – Courses developed for the Dispatcher Curriculum
- “FI” – Courses developed for the Fire Investigation Curriculum
- “I” – Courses developed for the all-risk application of the Incident Command System
- “J” – “How to” documents that contain skill material related to the specific position. They are not formal courses and not controlled by an instructor or coordinator.
- “L” – Courses developed for the Leadership Curriculum

- “M” – Courses developed outside a specific curriculum but determined to be supporting more than one, such as managerial type courses.
- “P” – Courses developed for the Fire Prevention Curriculum
- “RT” – Courses developed for the Refresher Curriculum
- “RX” – Courses developed for the Prescribed Fire Curriculum
- “S” – Courses are developed for the Wildfire Suppression Skills Curriculum
- “TS” – Courses and job aids developed for technical specialist positions that are not part of the NWCG curricula

For example, RX-300, Prescribed Fire Burn Boss, is in the Prescribed Fire Curriculum.

Numeric Digits

First Digit

The first numeric digit of a course number designates the complexity level at which the course is designed to be presented and also indicates the organizational level at which the course is to be given.

The NWCG Training Development Unit assigns the appropriate complexity/organizational level designation to the course. Assignments are based on the formula listed below, the analysis of the project development team, the target group, the recommendations from the project team leader and input from other NWCG teams that may be involved.

- Entry-Level Course
 - 100 = Local entry-level skills development
 - 200 =
- Mid-Level Course
 - 300 = Mid-level and/or geographic area level management skills
 - 400 =
- Advanced-Level Course
 - 500 = Advanced/national-level management skills
 - 600 =

For example, RX-300, Prescribed Fire Burn Boss, is a mid-level course generally put on at the geographic area level.

Second Digit

The second digit of a course number designates the subject area of the course.

- 000 = Command and General Staff
- 010 = Skills
- 020 = Organization
- 030 = Operations

040	=	Planning
050	=	Logistics
060	=	Finance/Administration
070	=	Air Operations
080	=	General
090	=	Fire Behavior and Fire Danger Rating System

For example, RX-300, Prescribed Fire Burn Boss, is in the subject area Command and General Staff.

Third Digit

The third digit of a course number is assigned sequentially, or as appropriate to maintain continuity, as courses are certified within a particular subject area.

For example, RX-30, Prescribed Fire Burn Boss, is the first course in this sequence.

Index of NWCG Courses



A complete list of NWCG courses can be found in the *Field Manager's Course Guide* located online at <http://www.nwcg.gov/pms/training/fmcg.pdf>.

Obtaining Subject Matter Experts (SMEs) for NWCG Course Development Projects

An SME is a person who has thorough technical knowledge and recent field experience in performing and/or supervising the task in question. A person generally recognized among his/her working associates as being competent at performing the task(s). SMEs are used to develop all NWCG courses.

A Field Reviewer has the same qualifications as an SME. After the completion of the first test course, review copies of the draft course material will be mailed to the Field Reviewers with a timeline to evaluate the material and return input to the NWCG Development Unit. A field review is done on every new or revised course.

The NWCG Training Working Team (TWT) in conjunction with the NWCG Training Development Unit at NIFC sends out a letter soliciting SMEs for various course development projects on a yearly basis. The BLM TWT representative receives letters back from the prospective SMEs and passes the nominated SMEs to the Development Unit. At this point the Development Unit contacts the SMEs and schedules times for development meetings. The SMEs

usually represent adequate geographic area and interagency demographics. SMEs that are not solicited for development work are used as Field Reviewers.

NWCG Course Testing Protocols

NWCG training courses provide the specific knowledge and skills required to perform tasks identified in the various NWCG Position Task Books. This provides a direct link between training and job performance. Required training has been held to the minimum required to provide for safe operations on wildland and prescribed fires. Although most training courses are not “required,” all courses are available and considered to be a primary means by which personnel can prepare for position performance evaluation.

During the development process of new and revised NWCG courses, typically a two-year period of time, the courses will be tested twice. The first is the formative test course and the second is the summative test course. To provide a valid test of the course, it is important that the project leader communicate the course instructions to the course coordinator including student prerequisites, instructor prerequisites, pre-course work, course evaluations, etc.

Formative Test Course

The formative test course is the first test of the course to see if it meets the students’ needs and accomplishes the objectives that the SMEs developed. In the formative test course, the SMEs will usually serve as instructors. At this time the Standards Unit at NIFC will monitor and review the course material as it is being presented.

Between the first and second test courses, a field review of the course materials will be completed. This process is done once the comments from the first test course have been incorporated into the draft package of the course. The field review is an opportunity for NWCG member agencies to critique the package prior to certification and publication of the course. The field review period will be eight weeks. Initial field reviewers are determined through the SME nomination process.

Summative Test Course

The summative test course provides a test of course materials as they approach final form. The intent is to determine if a cadre of instructors who have not been involved in the development process can teach the course with the materials developed by the SME group. The Standards Unit also monitors and reviews the material and course.

For more information on courses scheduled for revision, see the NWCG Training Development Web site (<http://training.nwcg.gov>).