

CHAPTER 5: NIIMS WILDLAND FIRE QUALIFICATION SYSTEM GUIDE (PMS 310-1)

Introduction

The *NIIMS Wildland Fire Qualification System Guide, PMS 310-1*, commonly referred to as [PMS 310-1](#) or [310-1](#) (<http://www.nwcg.gov/pms/docs/docs.htm>), is designed to provide guidance for participating agencies of NWCG. The guide establishes minimum standards required for all Incident Command System and skill positions which all participating agencies have agreed to meet for national mobilization purposes. These minimum standards include physical fitness, required training, and prerequisite experience.

Policy

Agency policy dictates that only qualified personnel will be assigned duties in wildland fire suppression or prescribed fire. All employees assigned dedicated fire program management responsibilities at the local, geographic area, or national levels shall meet established interagency and agency competencies (knowledge, skills, and abilities) and associated qualifications. NWCG's *National Interagency Incident Management System (NIIMS) Wildland Fire Qualification System Guide, PMS 310-1* is the policy.

The National Response Framework (NRF) and the PMS 310-1



The NRF (http://www.dhs.gov/dhspublic/interapp/editorial/editorial_0566.xml) was developed to establish a comprehensive, national, all-hazards approach to domestic incident management across a spectrum of activities including prevention, preparedness, response, and recovery.

The primary mission of the BLM fire program is wildland fire management. However, the [PMS 310-1](#) maintains the skills necessary for success in all-risk incidents and supports the preparedness elements of the NRF.

Regardless of source, wildland fire agencies have the ability to make significant contributions to emergency management requirements. [PMS 310-1](#) supports the ability of agency personnel to meet the requirements of the NRF.

Description of the NWCG Performance Based System

The NWCG Wildland Fire Qualification System is a “performance-based” qualifications system. Qualification is based upon demonstrated performance on wildland fires, prescribed fires, events, incidents, job activities, and in simulated exercises or classroom activities.

Personnel who have learned skills from other sources (structural fire, law enforcement, search and rescue, or other agency-specific training programs), rather than through actual performance on wildland fire or NWCG curricula, may *not be required* to complete specific NWCG courses in order to qualify in an NWCG position.

The primary criterion for qualification is individual performance as observed by an evaluator certified in that position and properly documented in an approved Position Task Book (PTB). PTBs contain all critical tasks which are required to perform the job. The process of demonstrating the abilities to perform the position is the completion of a PTB. The tasks in each PTB have been established by subject matter experts from all NWCG agencies and geographical areas of the United States and tested and approved by NWCG.

PTBs are formatted to allow for documentation of a trainee’s ability to perform each task. Tasks pertaining to tactical decision making and safety are coded as a “W” or “RX” and require position performance on a wildland or prescribed fire. Remaining tasks may be evaluated through other means such as a simulation or emergency/non-emergency incident or event.

Successful completion of all required tasks of the position, as determined by the evaluator(s), will be the basis for recommending certification. Certification and documentation of completed PTBs is the responsibility of the employing agency certifying that the individual is qualified to perform in a specific position. Individuals are responsible for providing proof of qualification on an incident.

Components of the Wildland Fire Qualification System

1. Position Task Books (PTBs) contain all critical tasks which are required to perform the job. PTBs are formatted to allow for documentation of a trainee’s ability to perform each task. Successful completion of all tasks required of the position, as determined by an evaluator, will be the basis for recommending certification.
2. Training courses and job aids provide the specific skills and knowledge required to perform tasks as prescribed in the PTB.
3. Agency certification is issued in the form of an Incident Qualification Card certifying that the individual is qualified to perform in a specified position.

Responsibilities of Administering the Wildland Fire Qualification System

The local office is responsible for selecting trainees, proper use of PTBs, and certification of trainees. See Appendix A of NWCG's [NIIMS Wildland Fire Qualification System Guide, PMS 310-1](#), for further information.

Field input such as suggested curriculum changes, updates to course material, modifications, qualification issues, etc., should be channeled to the appropriate BLM NWCG team representative (TWT, FUWT, IOSWT, etc.). The NWCG team representative carries the issue(s) to the team for adjudication. BLM representatives for the various NWCG teams can be found in [Chapter 4](#).

Course coordinators should forward course facilitation feedback and instructor course evaluations to the NWCG Standards Unit at NIFC (E-mail address: nwcg_standards@nifc.blm.gov). The Standards Unit will file the comments and forward them to the appropriate NWCG training developer. All NWCG and BLM developers must review the files that the Standards Unit has compiled regarding their projects.

Subcomponents of Position Qualifications

Required Training

Required training provides a direct link between training and job performance to provide for responder health and safe operations on wildland fires. Required training must be completed and cannot be challenged. Agency equivalent courses may be substituted for required courses when learning and performance objectives meet or exceed required course learning and performance objectives.

Note: PTBs can be initiated prior to attending required training in order for trainees to complete "O" coded tasks as part of successfully completing the course. Employees must be certified as a trainee on their Incident Qualification Card.

Recurrent Training

In order to maintain currency, some positions have identified recurrent training (RT) at various intervals. An example of this is Annual Fireline Safety Refresher Training (RT-130).

Required Experience

Required experience includes qualification in any prerequisite position and successful position performance through completion of the PTB. Required experience cannot be challenged.

Fitness Standards

Personnel must meet established physical fitness standards for wildland fire assignments. Agencies may determine the method of evaluating the physical fitness level of their personnel. However, the testing method should be a measurable evaluation process.

The following four categories of physical fitness have been established:

Arduous

Duties involve field work requiring physical performance calling for above-average endurance and superior conditioning. These duties may include an occasional demand for extraordinarily strenuous activities in emergencies under adverse environmental conditions and over extended periods of time. Requirements include running, walking, climbing, jumping, twisting, bending, and lifting more than 50 pounds; the pace of work typically is set by the emergency situation.

Moderate

Duties involve field work requiring complete control of all physical faculties and may include considerable walking over irregular ground, standing for long periods of time, lifting 25 to 50 pounds, climbing, bending, stooping, squatting, twisting, and reaching. Occasional demands may be required for moderately strenuous activities in emergencies over long periods of time. Individuals usually set their own work pace.

Light

Duties mainly involve office type work with occasional field activity characterized by light physical exertion requiring basic good health. Activities may include climbing stairs, standing, operating a vehicle and long hours of work, as well as some bending, stooping, or light lifting. Individuals can usually govern the extent and pace of their physical activity. For any position that is assigned to the fireline for non-suppression tasks, the required fitness level shall be “Light.”

None Required

This designation applies to positions that do not require a physical fitness test.

Other Training Which Supports Development of Knowledge and Skills

Personnel are not required to complete NWCG courses referenced under “Other Training Which Supports Development of Knowledge and Skills” in order to qualify for an NWCG position— unless specific agency policy dictates otherwise.

Personnel may learn skills from other sources (structural fire, law enforcement, search and rescue, or other agency specific training programs) rather than through actual performance on a wildland fire or in NWCG curricula. Although training referenced in the [PMS 310-1](#) is not “required,” the training provided in the identified courses or job aids, or knowledge and skills

acquired through on-the-job training, work experience, or training determined by one's agency, is a primary means by which personnel can prepare for position performance evaluation by obtaining specific knowledge and skills required to perform tasks identified in the PTB. For more information on training courses, job aids, curriculum history, and course revision schedule, refer to the NWCG Training Working Team Web site at <http://training.nwcg.gov>. The *Field Manager's Course Guide, PMS 901-1*, at <http://www.nwcg.gov/pms/training/training.htm> is the authoritative reference for all courses within the NWCG curriculum.

Currency Requirements of the NIIMS Wildland Fire Qualification System PMS 310-1

For the positions identified in the [PMS 310-1](#), the maximum time allowed for maintaining currency is three (3) years for air operations and dispatch positions and five (5) years for all others.

Currency for a position can be maintained by meeting any of the following requirements:

- Successful performance in the position qualified for within the given time frame.
- Successful performance in a position identified in the PMS 310-1 as "Other Position Assignments That Will Maintain Currency."
- Successful performance in a higher position(s) for which that position is a prerequisite, providing the individual was previously qualified in that position.

Currency requirements for air operations positions may also be met by performing on a day-to-day basis or on special projects, such as aerial spraying, search and rescue, and aerial ignition on prescribed burns.

Position experience is considered as qualifying only if the individual has previously met all training and prerequisite requirements for the position assignment.

Annual Fireline Safety Refresher Training (Refresher Training) is required for all personnel participating in fire suppression or prescribed fire activities who may be subject to assignments on the fireline; for example, technical specialists, bus drivers, and ground support personnel delivering resources to the fireline. The Fire Management Officer shall assess the potential for risk and determine which additional non-operations personnel may benefit from the Refresher Training. Any non-escorted visitors must meet the requirements specified in Chapter 7 of the Interagency Standards for Fire and Fire Aviation Operations.

At a minimum, Refresher Training shall consist of fire shelter purpose and use, practice deployments, entrapment avoidance, and deployment survival, and any pertinent fire safety related topics such as near misses on the fireline, entrapments, current safety alerts, site/unit specific safety issues and hazards. A Red Card, Form PMS 310-3, shall not be issued to individuals until supervisors certify that the individuals have completed annual Fireline Safety Refresher Training.

Position Recertification and Decertification

Position Recertification

Management's evaluation of an individual's competency is key to recertification where qualifications have expired. If currency has lapsed, the individual shall revert to the trainee level in the position for which currency has lapsed and shall be issued a PTB for the position; complete on-the-job-training, if needed; and requalify in a position performance assignment. By returning to the trainee level in the position for which currency has lapsed, the person recertifying is introduced to new technology that assists with recalling position duties and responsibilities.

Individuals who are retired and are now pursuing reinstatement into previous qualifications shall be required to follow the recertification process. The Fire Management Officer is responsible for certifying any retirees who are returning as AD employees and shall be required to assess additional training requirements for these individuals.

Position Decertification

The decertification procedures in this section are intended to ensure safe and effective individual performance in assigned ICS, wildland fire skill, technical specialist, and fire use skill positions.

Decertification is the process of removing or reducing an individual's fire suppression, fire use, and/or prescribed fire management position(s) qualifications. Decertification is not an adverse action; an employee may be recertified according to the procedures set out in the above section.

Performance Issues Outside Fire Suppression, Fire Use, and Prescribed Fire Management

Different procedures are utilized to address individual performance issues in areas other than fire suppression, fire use, and prescribed fire management. If applicable, refer to the following:

- Misconduct is covered by procedures in Title 5, Code of Federal Regulations, part 752.
- Regular performance issues are covered according to procedures in 5 CFR part 430.
- Suspensions and other adverse actions shall follow established agency procedures.

Interagency Policy on Certification and Decertification

According to the [*Wildland Fire Qualification System Guide, PMS 310-1*](#), "Agency certification and documentation is the responsibility of the employing agency certifying that the individual is qualified to perform in a specific position." Decertification of an individual's ability to perform is the responsibility of the employing line officer at the Washington Office, State, or District level.

Additionally, according to [PMS 310-1](#), “A key component in the certification or recertification process is the subjective evaluation by the appropriate agency official of an individual’s capability to perform in a position.” Judgment must be used in both the certification and decertification process.

Causes for Decertification

There are three causes for losing certification (decertification):

- An employee who currently holds a certification does not meet the currency requirements as specified in the [PMS 310-1](#) and in this job aid.
- An employee voluntarily surrenders the employee’s certification of qualifications or requests to be qualified at a lower level of responsibility.
- As an individual or a member of a crew, incident management team, or fire use team, an employee performs actions that violate recognized standard operational procedures or identified safety procedures that are determined to have been instrumental in the endangerment of fire management personnel or the public.

Examples of instances that may warrant decertification include:

- Deliberately disregarding identified safe practices.
- Taking insubordinate actions that lead to unsafe conditions.
- Intentionally misrepresenting fire qualifications.
- Ignoring prescriptive parameters identified in approved burn plans.

Performance Evaluation and Documentation

Performance of personnel should be evaluated on each incident. The BLM shall utilize the adopted interagency team and individual performance rating forms when evaluating the performance of individuals in ICS, Wildland Fire Skill, Technical Specialist, and Fire Use Skill positions. The two ICS forms for evaluating individual performance are the [ICS-225 Incident Personnel Rating](#) (<http://www.nwcg.gov/pms/forms/ics225.pdf>) or [ICS-226 Individual Performance Rating](#) (<http://www.nwcg.gov/pms/forms/ics226.pdf>).

All actions that violate established safety procedures shall be documented; associated deficient performance evaluations must also be completed. Performance reviews, especially those that trigger consideration of decertification, shall be coordinated and tracked.

Responsibility for Performance Evaluation and Decertification

Incident Commander (IC)

The Incident Commander and local unit manager are responsible for providing oversight of the initial performance review process. Inherent within the authority delegated to all ICs is the responsibility to relieve from assignment and demobilize any personnel for safety violations. ICs, however, do not have the authority to decertify individuals. ICs are responsible for providing documented reasons for relieving an individual, forwarding the information to the individual’s

home unit, and including a copy of the individual's performance rating in the documentation package.

Fire Management Officer (FMO)

The Fire Management Officer at the home unit is responsible for initiating an administrative review to determine if decertification is appropriate.

Any decision to decertify an individual should include a determination of whether remedial actions are appropriate to recertify the individual and a description of the recommended remedial actions.

During an evaluation of decertification, individual qualifications may be temporarily suspended. Judgments about qualifications can be made through expert mentoring, independent assessment, or the line officer's judgment relating to the individual's performance capabilities.

Individuals Relieved from a Fire Assignment

Individuals who have been relieved from an assignment shall not be reassigned to any incident until the certifying official approves the suitability of the individual to perform the duties associated with the position.

Type 1 and Type 2 Crews

Type 1 crews are decertified according to procedures developed nationally. Type 2 crews are decertified on a geographic or sub-geographic area basis.

Certification for Non-Agency Personnel

Non-agency firefighters will be certified by state or local fire departments, or private training providers with approved Memorandums of Understanding (MOU) through their local GACC. Agencies will not assist in administration, or sponsor the Work Capacity Test (WCT), as the certifying agency.

Review and Update Process for the PMS 310-1 and Position Task Books (PTBs)

A formal revision of the *PMS 310-1* will occur every five years. However, the Incident Operations Standards Working Team (IOSWT) may address special problems at any time. All NWCG agencies will be requested to review and provide input to the proposed revision prior to being adopted by NWCG.

Comments and recommendations on PTBs and the qualification process should be submitted through the appropriate agency official or Geographic Area Coordination Group (GACG) to the IOSWT. While the IOSWT may address issues at any time, the planned revision interval will be five (5) years. Users may submit proposed revisions as needs are identified. The IOSWT will review the proposal, consult with subject matter experts and other NWCG working teams as appropriate, and recommend adoption or rejection by the NWCG. PTBs, which may be developed for positions not identified within [PMS 310-1](#), must be submitted to the IOSWT for review and consideration for acceptance into the system.

The NWCG/PMS Web site (<http://www.nwcg.gov/pms/docs/docs.htm>) contains information regarding updates to the [PMS 310-1](#) and decisions affecting new positions, changes in qualifications, and new or revised PTBs. Downloadable, approved PTBs can be found at <http://www.nwcg.gov/pms/taskbook/taskbook.htm>.

Wildland Fire Qualification System National Training Curriculum (PMS 316)

The Wildland Fire Qualification System National Training Curriculum (<http://www.nwcg.gov/pms/training/training.htm>) is designed to give the user an orientation and overview of the Wildland Fire Qualification System. There are six modules included in the curriculum that provide practical information intended to familiarize the user with the [PMS 310-1](#).

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