



**FOREST SERVICE HANDBOOK  
NATIONAL HEADQUARTERS (WO)  
WASHINGTON, DC**

**FSH 5109.17 - FIRE AND AVIATION MANAGEMENT  
QUALIFICATIONS HANDBOOK**

**CHAPTER - ZERO CODE**

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Deputy Chief for State and Private Forestry

**Date Approved:** 04/05/2004

**Posting Instructions:** Amendments are numbered consecutively by Handbook number and calendar year. Post by document; remove the entire document and replace it with this amendment. Retain this transmittal as the first page(s) of this document. The last amendment to this Handbook was 5109.17-2003-6 to 5109.17\_40.

<b>New Document</b>	5109.17_zero_code	7 Pages
<b>Superseded Document(s) by Issuance Number and Effective Date</b>	5109.17_zero_code (Amendment 5109.17-2003-1, 06/25/2003)	8 Pages

**Digest:**

03 - Adds a description for “non-Federal cooperators.” Provides guidance on certification of non-Federal cooperator retirees who desire to be hosted as Administratively Determined (AD) employees by a National Forest.

05 - Adds a definition for “Forest Fire Program Management Staff Officer.”

06 - Adds additional references from which information has been incorporated into this Handbook.

07 - Changes REDCARD Project Leader title to Incident Qualifications Database Account Manager.

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## **02 - OBJECTIVE**

To establish positions, qualifications, and certification requirements in fire and aviation management to ensure Forest Service personnel have the organization, training, and qualifications to carry out fire and aviation management policies and programs in a safe, cost-efficient manner, consistent with land and resource management objectives.

## **03 - POLICY**

1. Comply with the qualifications requirements for the skills and knowledge unique to fire and aviation management and the Incident Command System (ICS) as established by the National Wildfire Coordinating Group (NWCG) in the Wildland and Prescribed Fire Qualification System Guide, PMS 310-1 (sec. 12 and FSM 5108). Comply with any additional Forest Service requirements for additional training and qualifications as set forth in sections 25.1 through 25.3 of this Handbook, FSH 5109.17, which is the controlling document with respect to all fire and aviation management qualifications for Forest Service employees.

2. Accept personnel currently employed by State agencies or other non-Federal cooperators (such as, local city and rural fire departments) hired as Administratively Determined (AD) personnel participating in cooperative fire management efforts, provided they meet the minimum position requirements as specified in the NWCG Wildland and Prescribed Fire Qualifications Systems Guide, PMS 310-1 (sec. 12 and FSM 5108).

In instances where a non-Federal cooperator is retired and desires to be “hosted” as an Administratively Determined (AD) employee by a National Forest, the Forest Fire Program Management Staff Officer, who serves as the Certifying Official, may determine additional training requirements, as outlined in this Handbook, prior to issuance of the Incident Qualifications Card.

## **04 - RESPONSIBILITY**

1. The Washington Office Staff Directors, Regional Foresters, Station Directors, Area Director, Forest Supervisors, and District Rangers are responsible for assessing the training development needs of employees in their units and providing appropriate training opportunities.

2. Employees are ultimately responsible for their own development and should respond to training opportunities that will improve their performance.

3. Managers and employees have the responsibility to review direction and propose necessary revisions as part of the annual review and revision process for this Handbook (sec. 07).

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## **05 - DEFINITIONS**

For additional definitions of terms related to the Incident Command System (ICS), refer to FSM 5105 and the Glossary of Terms for the Fireline Handbook, NWCG 410-1 (FSH 5109.32a, sec. 05). The following definitions are designed to supplement the glossary contained in Appendix D of the PMS 310-1.

**Certification.** The process in which a manager confirms that an individual has met all minimum qualifications and is qualified to perform in a specified position based on performance. The certification is documented on a data management system program and with the issuance of Form PMS 310-3, Qualification Card Incident Command System, to the qualified individual.

**De-certification.** The process of removing or reducing an individual's fire suppression, fire use, and/or prescribed fire management position(s) qualification(s).

**Evaluator.** A person who is certified in the position in which the trainee is being evaluated and who is assigned to evaluate a trainee's performance. Prior to evaluating a trainee's performance, the Evaluator must have served in a minimum of two assignments as fully qualified in the position.

**Experience.** Documented, satisfactory performance in specified ICS positions that is needed to qualify for another (usually higher level) position; in the case of a trainee, satisfactory performance in the position for which the trainee is to qualify.

**Forest Fire Program Management Staff Officer.** The Staff Officer who has been delegated Fire Program Management responsibility for a National Forest(s) fire program by the Forest Supervisor. This individual usually serves as the Certifying Official for the Incident Qualifications Card. This authority cannot be re-delegated to the District level, except where identified in this Handbook.

**Grandfathering.** Linking unrecognized or uncertified position experience and/or training together to establish a qualification. There is no "grandfathering" allowed for any position contained in this Handbook, FSH 5109.17.

**Incident Command System (ICS).** The combination of facilities, equipment, personnel, procedures, and communications operating within a common organizational structure, with responsibility for the management of assigned resources to effectively accomplish stated objectives pertaining to an incident.

**Qualified Individual.** An individual whose agency has documented that the individual has successfully completed all requirements for training, experience, and physical fitness for a specific ICS position.

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Re-certification. Reissuance of Form PMS 310-3, Incident Qualifications Card, certifying that an individual has regained qualification for an ICS position.

Satisfactory Performance. Performance by an individual that meets or exceeds the written standards for a specific ICS position as evaluated by the individual's incident or agency supervisor.

Skill Position. A position that requires specific skills and knowledge to perform on a wildland fire incident. Examples include Firefighter, Fire Behavior Analyst, Single Resource Boss, Prescribed Fire Burn Boss, or Ignition Specialist.

Subject Matter Expert. A person who has a thorough technical knowledge and recent field experience in performing and/or supervising the task in question. A person generally recognized among working associates as being very competent at performing the task(s).

Technical Specialist. A person having unique skills performed in an everyday job that are needed to support an incident operation. Examples include Contracting Officer, Environmental Specialist, Electrician, and Meteorologist.

Trainer/Coach. A qualified individual who provides instruction to a trainee in the classroom, on the job, or on an incident. A Trainer/Coach must be currently qualified in the position being observed and must have successfully performed in a minimum of two assignments in the position for which the Trainer/Coach is training others.

Training Specialist. A person who identifies incident evaluation opportunities for trainees and ensures that the assignment is properly documented. On initial attack and extended attack incidents the Training Specialist's duties would be performed by unit personnel.

## **06 - REFERENCES**

For additional direction and information, consult the references listed in FSM 5108, FSM 5706, and the following references:

1. Forest Service World Wide Web/Internet Fire website: <http://www.fs.fed.us/fire>.
2. Interagency Helicopter Operations Guide, NFES 1885 (FSM 5716.03).
3. Interagency Air Tactical Group Supervisor Guide, NFES 1393 (FSM 5706 and 5716.03).
4. Interagency Incident Business Management Handbook, PMS 901-1 (FSH 5109.34).
5. Fireline Handbook, PMS 410-1 (FSH 5109.32a).

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6. Interagency Aerial Ignition Guide NFES 1080 (FSM 5142.2 and 5706).
7. Interagency Single Engine Air Tanker Operations Guide, NFES 1844 (FSM 5716.03 and 5706).
8. Interagency Helicopter Rappel Guide (FSM 5711.11).
9. Standards for Fire and Aviation Operations (FSM 5108).
10. Interagency Aviation Training Guide (FSM 5706).
11. Interagency Fire Program Management Qualifications Standards and Guide (FSM 5108).

## **07 - REVIEW AND REVISION**

To maintain the currency of FSH 5109.17, Fire and Aviation Management Qualifications Handbook, the Director, Fire and Aviation Management Staff, Washington Office, has established a process for annual review and revision of the direction in this Handbook.

1. The Director of Fire and Aviation Management, Washington Office, shall issue an annual call letter by September 1 to field units and Washington Office Staffs requesting their review of this Handbook and submission of responses. Comments and proposed revisions are due back by October 1.
2. Field units should submit proposed revisions to their respective Regional Fire Training Officers.
3. The Regional Fire Training Officers shall consolidate responses for their Regions and forward them to the Branch Chief for Fire Training, Fire and Aviation Management Staff, Washington Office or the representative designated in the call letter.
4. The Branch Chief for Fire Training, Fire and Aviation Management Staff, Washington Office, shall annually assemble a working team to review the consolidated comments submitted by field units and Washington Office Staff Units; consult with subject matter experts and Regional Fire Training Officers as appropriate; and determine the need for revision.

The working team shall include a Partnership Council Representative and Forest Service Incident Qualifications Database Account Manager, as well as selected Regional Fire Training Officers and appropriate subject matter experts (for example, Fuels Specialists, or Helicopter Operations Specialists).

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5. A FSH 5109.17 ad hoc committee has been established by the Branch Chief, Fire Training, Fire and Aviation Management Staff, Washington Office, with members who serve as:

- a. Contacts representing the Branch Chief for Fire Training, and
- b. Subject matter experts in the functional areas of the ICS positions, including the technical specialist. A listing of the ad hoc committee representatives and contact phone numbers, along with the functional areas they represent, can be found on the National Training Information Communications System (TICS) world wide web/Internet: *<http://www.nationalfiretraining.net>*.