



FFAST Meeting October 17, 2008

Attendees:

Larry Sutton - USFS
Michelle Ryerson – BLM
Rod Bloms – FWS
Al King - NPS
Tony Beitia - BIA
Marie Bates - BLM
Michelle Moore – Interagency Medical Standards Program

Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) Refuge Law Enforcement/Medical Exams

Last spring there was a proposal from FWS Refuge Law Enforcement in the Washington Office to modify the current interagency wildland firefighter medical standards contract and add on Refuge Law Enforcement Officers. The issue of the involvement of other entities in the wildland firefighter contract and program was discussed at length by the FFAST and concerns were raised about potential impacts to both contract administration and program management such as: who would pay for program administration; cost accounting issues that would need to be kept separate from the wildland firefighter contract; workload involved trying to modify off the current contract; acquiring additional funding mechanisms; others wanting to join in at some point later and contract modifications to meet the needs of others.

Action Item: Rod will draft up a position paper on the ability of the Interagency Medical Standards Program (IMSP) to accommodate the needs of other organizations, have the FFAST review, finalize and distribute.

Agency/Interagency Interagency Medical Standards Program Requests to OPM

FFAST discussed the need of agencies to be able to go directly to Phil Spottswood (OPM) to request an opinion or get direction. There needs to be an avenue to obtain a written opinion with documentation.

Action Item: Rod will make the contact to Phil Spottswood to coordinate this process.

Waiver/Accommodation and Interagency Medical Review Board (IMRB) Procedures

Since implementation of the medical standards program, there has been an on-going issue in areas of the FWS agency on who should sign the Waiver/Accommodation Process letters (whose decision is it really, up to SHROs or FMOs?). Some SHROs feel they do not have the delegation of authority to sign the letters, that it is a supervisory role or a line officer role. Some SHROs feel they are responsible for putting together the letters but the final signature should come from a safety person or a supervisor with fire expertise. Rod has been instructed to come up with a different flow chart for the 1st level concurrence/non-concurrence approval process. Rod went to OPM for guidance on how this process can be changed and OPM says that all regions need to be consistent on the process they select. He will be writing up a briefing paper on this after receiving written documentation from OPM.

The role of the Supervisory Human Resource Office (SHRO) is responsible for advising/assisting management and the applicant through the waiver/accommodation process and maintaining HR-related documentation.

Action Item: Rod Bloms to request clarification and opinion from Phil Spottswood (OPM) on necessary authority for SHRO in waiver/accommodation process

Who to Contact When You Have a Question About The Interagency Medical Standards Program

This document is designed for users on “Who To Contact” for questions; it is designed to streamline the lines of communications. This draft updated version was sent from the IMSP to the FFAST for review and approval. The FFAST reviewed and will forward feedback to IMSP for posting on the IMSP website.

Action Item: Send FFAST consolidated comments on “who to contact” to Barb Sivey in IMSP.

Existing Medical Conditions

This change will describe the process of what you need to do when your medical condition changes. Included will be information on what WLFF need to provide during an exam to expedite being medically cleared. This information will appear in the WLFF-CHS section of the Web under Pending Further Evaluation and include verbiage like:

If you have an ongoing medical condition (diabetes, asthma etc.) and in past medical exams you have provided information in response to Further Evaluation Letters you can expedite the “Pending” Further Evaluation process for the next medical examination by bringing updated medical information to the clinic at the time of this year’s exam. Updated medical information should always be faxed to CHS at 800-288-5482. The fax must contain your name, last 4 digits on SSN, and DOB. It is recommended that the fax confirmation sheet is printed and saved to ensure transmittal.

Voluntary Withdrawal from Arduous Duty

During the Interagency Wildland Firefighter Medical Qualification Standards Waiver/Accommodation Process the option exists for the WLFF to choose to be removed from arduous duty. There will be an additional option added into the non-clearance letter that the WLFF can check to voluntarily withdraw from arduous wildland firefighting. If checked, a form will be sent from the SHRO to the employee confirming that decision. This will serve as documentation that an individual no longer wishes to pursue medical clearance for arduous duty. Signing it is voluntary and does not preclude a firefighter from pursuing medical clearance at a later date.

Decision: The FFAST concurred in allowing the use of this form and adding an additional option to check on the non-clearance letter.

Review IMSP Action Log

The FFAST and IMSP reviewed and updated the IMSP action log.

NIOSH Study on Firefighter Study

This report published by NIOSH in June, 2005 titled "Fire Fighters Sudden Cardiac Death While Performing Work Capacity Test – California" was reviewed by Dr. Jay Paulson, the Federal Occupational Health physician that is contracted with Comprehensive Health Services. He sent an email to IMST stating after reviewing recommendation #3 that states "Consider providing pre-placement and periodic medical evaluations to ALL firefighters consistent with NFPA 1582 or equivalent to determine their medical ability to perform duties without presenting a significant risk to the safety and health of themselves or others" he found it interesting that part of the study relates to whether or not a medical examination should be part of the screening of firefighters before taking the work capacity test (those who do not get the full exam due to their employment status). This information was forwarded to the FFAST and Larry Sutton emphasized that recommendation #2 states "Modify the Health Screening Questionnaire (HSQ) in the Pacific Regional Handbook to include all cardiovascular risk factors identified by the American Heart Association/American College of Cardiology". With this recommendation Larry questioned if the HSQ that we currently use is adequate in terms of the questions it asks, perhaps we need to revise the form to ensure that the cardiovascular risk factors identified by these organizations are covered.

The FFAST discussed this report and agreed that they want to have Dr. Paulsen review the risk factors identified by the two cardiac groups, review the HSQ form, and provide feedback to the FFAST for the purpose of revising the form.

Action Item: Larry to make contact with Dr. Jay Paulson to request review of the HSQ form as recommended by NIOSH in a post-fatality review, brief the FFAST on the results and make modifications on the HSQ form as needed.

Bin Items

- BIA will be developing an ATV policy and have it available by December, following an ATV accident with serious injury that occurred last week.
- There have been issues related to outdated fusees and proper storage. There is a draft report being developed that could affect the way we store fusees.
- The final draft report is out for review of an NPS fire use vehicle that was parked in the black and burnt back in 2006.
- The use of social security numbers in medical standards exam program has been an issue and there is no clear direction out yet on how to deal with the problem. Hope to have the issue resolved when the new medical standards contract is awarded so that the program complies with current agency policy.
- The FFAST is planning on having an AAR with the IMSP once the new medical exam contract is awarded, the new IMSP website is up and running, the IMSP customer service representatives are all in place, and IMSP training has been completed.
- Tim Stangler from FWS is working on the year-end SAFENET report for FY-2008. It will be ready next week for FFAST review and approval.

Review FFAST Action Log

The FFAST reviewed and updated the action log.

Set Next Meeting Date

The next regular monthly FFAST meeting will be Nov 13, at 0900 in Workshop #1 in the Old Admin Building.

November Meeting Agenda Item: Review Tim's SAFENET Report

December Meeting Agenda Item: Rod to bring FWS After Action Review from this past season hurricane assignments.