

Chapter 13 Training & Qualifications

A. Introduction

1. Agency standards for training and qualifications which may exceed the minimum standards established by NWCG, are coordinated through National Fire and Aviation Executive Board. Such additional standards will be approved by the Fire Directors, and implemented through the Incident Qualifications and Certification System (IQCS).

B. Policy

1. It is agency policy 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 level shall meet established interagency and agency competencies (knowledge, skills, and abilities) and associated qualifications. The National Wildfire Coordination Group (NWCG), *Wildland and Prescribed Fire Qualifications Systems Guide* PMS 310-1 is the policy.
2. **BLM-** *BLM Manual 9215, Fire Training and Qualifications, identifies the training and experience requirements for BLM personnel to perform jobs associated with the fire management program. The manual section also establishes state and field office responsibility for maintaining fire qualification records and position certification. BLM minimum qualification standards for wildland and prescribed fire are developed jointly with other federal and state agencies through the NWCG. These qualification standards are published in the NWCG Wildland and Prescribed Fire Qualification System Guide, PMS 310-1.*
3. **FWS-** *Reference Service Manual 232 FW6, Firefighter Training and Fire Management Handbook, 1.5 Training, Qualifications and Certification for FWS direction.*
4. **NPS-** *Reference RM-18, Chapter 3 Safety and Health; Chapter 6, Training, Qualifications, and Certification for NPS direction.*
5. **USFS-** *Standards which may exceed the minimum standards established by NWCG are identified in FSH 5109.17.*

C. Certification & Record Keeping

1. Incident Qualification and Certifications System (IQCS)

The Incident Qualification and Certifications System (IQCS) is the DOI's fire qualifications and certification record keeping system. The master file report provided by the IQCS meets the agency requirement for maintaining fire qualification records. The system is designed to provide managers at the local, state/regional, and national levels with detailed qualification, experience, and training information needed to certify employees in wildland and prescribed fire positions. The IQCS is a tool to assist managers in certification decisions; it does not replace the manager's responsibility to validate that employees meet all requirements for position performance based on standards.

A hard copy file folder will be kept for each employee. The contents will include, but are not limited to: training records for all agency required courses, evaluations from assignments, position Task Book verification, yearly updated IQCS forms, and an Individual Employee Master File Report from IQCS.

- a. **BLM** – All records will be stored and/or destroyed in accordance with agency policies. These policies can be found at www.blm.gov/nhp/records/blmgrs/subject.html
- b. **USFS** – The Forest Service process for certification and record keeping is outlined in FSH 5109.17.

2. Certification of Non-Agency Personnel

Non-agency firefighters will be certified by state or local fire departments. Agencies will not assist in the administration, or sponsor the work capacity test (WCT), as the certifying agency.

3. The Incident Qualifications and Certification Card (Red Card)

The agency administrator (or delegate) is responsible for annual certification of personnel serving in wildland and prescribed fire positions. Agency certification is issued annually in the form of an Interagency Incident Qualification Card (Red Card), which certifies that the individual is qualified to perform in a specified position. The Red Card must be reviewed for accuracy and signed by the agency administrator or delegated official. The agency administrator, fire manager, and individual are responsible for monitoring medical status, fitness, training, and performance, and for taking appropriate action to ensure the employee meets all position performance requirements.

Training, medical screening, and successful completion of the appropriate WCT must be properly accomplished. All Red Cards

issued to agency employees, with the exception of EFF-paid or temporary employees at the FFT2 level, will be printed using the DOI IQCS. Red Cards issued to EFF or temporary employees at the FFT2 level may be printed at the local level without use of the IQCS.

Each agency will designate employees at the national, regional/state, and local levels as Fire Qualifications Administrators, who ensure all incident experience, incident training, and position Task Books for employees within the agency are accurately recorded in the IQCS. All records must be updated annually or modified as changes occur.

Red Card certification will have a 12-month currency.

D. Qualification System

1. Minimum Training Requirements

All personnel filling ICS positions on the fireline must have completed a minimum of 32 hours of basic wildland fire training, including the modules on basic firefighting, basic fire behavior, and standards for survival.

- a. *NPS – It is NPS policy that two or more assignments be experienced after completing a Position Task Book, and receiving certification, before an individual begins movement to the next higher level. It is also NPS policy to require two or more qualified assignments be experienced in a position before an individual may become a position performance evaluator. Exceptions to this should be rare and well founded.*

2. Annual Fireline Safety Refresher Training

Annual Fireline Safety Refresher Training is required for all personnel participating in fire suppression or prescribed fire activities who may be subject to assignments on the fireline. Any unescorted visitors must meet the requirements specified in Chapter 06 of this volume. Annual Fireline Safety Refresher Training must include the following core topics:

- a. **Entrapments** – Use training and reference materials to study the risk management process (as identified in the Incident Response Pocket Guide) and rules of engagement (e.g., LCES, 10, 18, Look Up, Look Down, Look Around).
- b. **Current Issues** – Review and discuss identified “hot topics” and “national emphasis topics”. Review forecasts and assessments for the upcoming fire season and discuss implications for firefighter safety.
- c. **Fire Shelter** – Review and discuss last resort survival. Conduct “hands-on” fire shelter inspections. Practice shelter deployments in applicable crew/module configurations. No

“live fire” exercises for the purpose of fire shelter deployment training will be conducted.

- d. **Other Hazards and Safety Issues** – Choose additional hazard and safety subjects, which could include SAFENET, current safety alerts, site/unit specific safety issues and hazards.

These core topics must be sufficiently covered to ensure that personnel are aware of safety concerns and procedures and can demonstrate proficiency in fire shelter deployment. The minimum refresher training hour requirements for each agency is identified below. Training time may be extended in order to effectively complete this curriculum or to meet local training requirements.

- a. **BLM** – 4 hours
- b. **FWS** – 8 hours
- c. **NPS** – 8 hours
- d. **USFS** – 8 hours

Annual Fireline Safety Refresher Training will have a 12-month currency.

A web site titled “Wildland Fire Safety Training Annual Refresher (WFSTAR)” is available to assist in this training. It can be reached through the National Interagency Fire Center’s homepage “Safety” link at www.nifc.gov.

- a. **USFS**- *The Incident Complexity Analysis found on page 13-12 will be shared with all Type 3, 4, & 5 Incident Commanders. Review of this guide should be a part of your annual refresher training.*

Entrapment avoidance and deployment protocols have been revised and issued in the *Incident Response Pocket Guide* (PMS No. 461/NFES No. 1077). The guide contains a specific “Risk Management Process”, and “Last Resort Survival Checklist”. An *Incident Pocket Response Guide* will be issued to every fireline supervisor.

3. **Non-NWCG Agencies’ Qualifications**

Personnel from other agencies who do not subscribe to the NWCG qualification standards may be used on agency managed fires. However, agency fire managers must ensure these individuals are only assigned to duties commensurate with their abilities, agency qualifications, and equipment capabilities.

4. Qualification and Certification Process

Each unit with fire management responsibilities will establish a Red Card qualification and certification process. In areas cooperating with other federal, state, or local agencies, an interagency qualification and certification committee should include representatives from each unit. These qualification and certification committees provide management oversight and review of the wildland and prescribed fire positions under their jurisdiction. The committee also:

Ensures that qualifications generated by IQCS or other agency systems for employees are valid by reviewing the training and experience of each employee.

Evaluates if each employee possesses the personal characteristics necessary to perform the wildland and prescribed fire positions in a safe and efficient manner.

Makes recommendations to the appropriate agency administrator or designee who is responsible for final certification signature.

Develops interagency training needs and sponsors courses that can be offered locally.

Ensures training nominees meet minimum requirements for attending courses.

E. Physical Fitness**1. Physical Fitness and Conditioning**

Agency administrators are responsible for ensuring the overall physical fitness of firefighters. The agency administrator may authorize employees who are available and/or serving in wildland or prescribed fire positions that require a physical fitness rating of arduous, one hour each day for fitness condition. All other wildland firefighting personnel may be authorized up to three hours per week of duty time for fitness conditioning. Furthermore, individuals who have a position with an arduous physical requirement may be periodically tested during the fire season to ensure they are retaining the required level of fitness and conditioning.

Fitness conditioning periods may be identified and structured to include aerobic and muscular exercises. Team sports are not authorized for fitness conditioning. Chapters 7, 8, and 9 of *Fitness and Work Capacity, 2nd ed. (1997)*, provide excellent guidance

concerning training specifically for the pack test, aerobic fitness programs, and muscular fitness training.

2. *USFS – Forest Service direction is found in FSH 5109.23-3.*

F. Work Capacity Tests (WCTs)

1. Work Capacity Tests

The agencies have adopted the NWCG approved Work Capacity Tests (WCT) as the official method of assessing wildland firefighter fitness levels. See “*Work Capacity Tests for Wildland Firefighters, Test Administrator’s Guide*” PMS 307, NFES 1109.

WCTs are administered annually to all employees, including ADs and emergency hires, who will be serving in wildland or prescribed fire positions that require a fitness level. The currency for the WCT is 12 months.

Administration of the WCT and certification of non-agency firefighters is prohibited for liability reasons. Potential emergency firefighters who would be hired under AD Emergency Hire authority by the agency must be in AD pay status or sign an agency-specific volunteer services agreement when given the WCT.

Personnel taking the WCT will only complete the level of testing (Pack, Field, Walk) required by the highest fitness level identified for a position on their Red Card.

Agency administrators (or delegates) are responsible for ensuring that the Health Screen Questionnaire (HSQ) is administered prior to initiating a physical training program and/or the WCT, and that accurate documentation on a WCT Record is retained until the next testing. Test results must also be entered in the IQCS annually to update the fitness level and date that will appear on the Red Card. Physical fitness dates entered in IQCS will reflect the date the employee passed the fitness test. The information on this health screen is considered confidential and must be filed in the employee’s Official Medical File.

2. *USFS – The Forest Service also uses the WCT as the official method of assessing wildland firefighter fitness levels. The specific direction, Implementation Guide, Health Screen Questionnaire, and required processes can be found at the following web site:*
www.fs.fed.us/fire/fire_new/.

3. WCT Categories

The *NWCG Wildland and Prescribed Fire Qualification System Guide, 310-1* identifies WCTs for agency specific positions. There are three fitness levels – Arduous, Moderate, and Light – which require an individual to demonstrate their ability to perform the fitness requirements of the position. Duties in the “None” category are normally performed in a controlled environment, such as an incident base.

Any position required to be on the fireline unescorted for suppression or non-suppression tasks will be required to have passed the WCT at the “light” physical fitness level. This requirement applies even to positions which are identified in the 310-1 with a fitness level of “None.”

Work Capacity Test

Work Category	Test	Distance	Weight	Time
Arduous	Pack Test	3 miles	45 lb.	45 min.
Moderate	Field Test	2 miles	25 lb.	30 min.
Light	Walk Test	1 mile	None	16 min.

- a. **Arduous** – Duties involve field work requiring physical performance with 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 the work typically is set by the emergency conditions.
- b. **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, 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.
- c. **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.

4. WCT Administration

- a. An HSQ will be administered prior to initiating a physical training program and/or the WCT with the following objectives:
 - 1) To identify, prior to the WCT, at-risk personnel.
 - 2) To identify existing injuries or illness and minimize the probability of new injuries.
 - 3) To establish the need for a medical examination (see Medical Examinations criteria below).

A Job Hazard Analysis (JHA) shall be developed and approved for each field office prior to administering the WCT. (See the sample JHA on page 13-14)

Administer the test using the JHA as a briefing guide. Document using the HSQ (see page 13-13) and WCT Record (see page 13-17). These documents must be retained until the next testing.

- b. *NPS – For those parks that experience severe winter conditions and must test personnel during those conditions, work capacity testing may be conducted using industrial grade treadmills. This least-preferred option should only be considered when all other indoor facilities are unavailable (gyms, indoor tracks, malls etc.), and requires Regional Fire Management Officer approval. For safety reasons, these treadmills must have suitable handrails and kill-switches, preferably switches physically attached to the user via a cord. The Job Hazard Analysis must address all possible balance/fall mitigations. Specific questions are answered in the “Work Capacity Administrators Guide” (PMS 307,NFES 1109).*

5. Health Screen Questionnaire HSQ

The purpose is to identify individuals who may be at risk in preparing for and completing the WCT, which may result in a recommended exercise program and/or medical examination.

Title 5 CFR Part 339 – Medical Qualification Determinations, which provides a determination of an individual’s fitness-for-duty, authorizes solicitation of this information. The HSQ can be found on page 13-13.

The information on the HSQ is considered confidential and must be kept in the employee’s OPF medical file. The identity of the individual must be protected.

Solicitation of this information is authorized by Title 5 U.S. Code Section 3301, which provides for a determination of an individual’s fitness-for-duty.

6. Work Capacity Test (WCT) Record

Units will document the administration of the WCT to all employees and job applicants. This documentation must be retained until the next WCT is administered. Units may also be requested to provide data from these records to assist in the evaluation of the WCT process.

The information on the WCT Record is considered confidential and must be kept in the employee's OPF medical file. The identity of the individual must be protected.

Solicitation of this information is authorized by Title 5 U.S. Code Section 3301, which provides for a determination of an individual's fitness-for-duty. A copy of the WCT Record is found on page 13-17.

G. Medical Examinations

Agency administrators and supervisors are responsible for the occupational health and safety of their employees performing wildland and prescribed fire activities, and may require employees to take a medical examination at any time.

Established medical qualification programs, as stated in 5 CFR 339, provide consistent medical standards in order to safeguard the health of employees whose work may subject them or others to significant health and safety risks due to occupational or environmental exposure or demand. The new Federal Interagency Wildland Firefighter Medical Qualification Standards continue to be implemented throughout the DOI and USFS organizations. Those units who have not yet implemented the new standards must continue to comply with the current standards as stated below until implementation of the new standards is accomplished.

All employees who participate in wildland or prescribed fire activities requiring a fitness level (Arduous, Moderate, Light) must answer all the questions on the HSQ prior to taking their WCT.

The information on any medical records is considered confidential and must be kept in the employee's OPF medical file.

All permanent, career-seasonal, temporary, and student career experience program (SCEP) employees who participate in wildland or prescribed fire activities requiring a fitness level of Arduous must have a pre-employment medical examination as a condition of employment. Thereafter, employees 40 years of age and older must have a physical every three years or as indicated by the Health Screen Questionnaire.

Stress EKGs are not required as part of the medical examination and will only be approved if recommended and administered by the medical exam physician.

If any “Yes” answer is indicated, a medical examination is required prior to the employee taking the WCT or if there is a known pre-existing medical condition that is already being monitored under medical care (e.g., high blood pressure), a medical clearance statement will be provided by the physician prior to taking WCT.

1. *NPS – “Wildland Firefighter” Defined: Those employees who perform duties of a hazardous and/or strenuous nature are targeted. Therefore, within this section, “wildland firefighter” hereinafter refers to an employee whose wildland fire position(s) qualifications require an “Arduous” fitness level, as defined in the current PMS 310-1 “Wildland and Prescribed Fire Qualifications System Guide.”*
2. *NPS – For health and fitness purposes, those who are fire-qualified at less than the Arduous fitness level are not required to meet the mandatory fitness program requirements of DO-57 for wildland fire management. However, they are strongly encouraged to participate in the voluntary fitness program, and must still meet physical fitness/work capacity requirements as outlined in 310-1 “Wildland and Prescribed Fire Qualification System Guide” for positions with Moderate and Light fitness requirements.*
3. *NPS – Health Screening: Arduous duty medical exams must be taken once every 3 years by wildland firefighters. They do not include stress EKGs, except for those 41 years or older if required by the examining physician. Those cases would be considered exceptional. FIREPRO funding will not be used to pay for stress EKGs, except in exceptional cases, which require prior approval by the regional fire management officer.*
4. *NPS – FIREPRO funding may be used to pay for medical exams for mandatory fitness program participants within the following limits:*
 - a. *NPS – Those who meet the definition of “wildland firefighter” will have costs of all required medical examinations paid for by FIREPRO, not to exceed \$350. Anything in excess of \$350 requires approval of the regional fire management officer. This includes recent requirements for blood screenings. In the event an employee-selected physician indicates that an EKG or other advanced test is needed, the government may require a second opinion from an appointed physician.*

5. *NPS – Pending implementation of the federal interagency wildland firefighter medical qualification standards in a geographic area, NPS units will continue to use the U.S. Civil Service Commission Certificate of Medical Exam, SF-78, Wildland Fire Medical Examination Standard, for use by examining physicians.*
6. *NPS – The examining physician will submit the completed SF-78 to the employee's park, where it will be reviewed by the personnel office and retained in the employee's Official Personnel Medical File.*
7. *NPS – The law enforcement medical exam for NPS rangers, who are collateral duty wildland firefighters, will suffice for wildland fire health screening purposes.*
8. *NPS – Employees requiring medical exams on the 3-year cycle will have exams conducted prior to taking the Arduous fitness WCT (Pack Test).*