

**NATIONAL WILDFIRE COORDINATING GROUP  
FIRELINE SAFETY REFRESHER TRAINING  
STRATEGIC PLAN  
2011 - 2015**

**Executive Summary**

The current National Wildfire Coordinating Group (NWCG) Annual Fireline Safety Refresher Training Strategic Plan (2006 – 2010) was adopted in October 2005. The strategy described a three-prong approach, which included annual refresher video, WFSTAR (Wildland Fire Safety Training Annual Refresher) website, and experiential learning. Under the current strategy, there has been a heavy reliance on the video component, leaving the other two components underutilized.

To more closely align the existing refresher components and provide a more cohesive and customizable format, the following strategy recommends a “topic based” approach produced on a twelve (12) month cycle. This strategy also recommends the move to a programmatic approach and formalizing the establishment of a distinct Refresher Program Unit under the NWCG Training Branch.

A Fireline Safety Refresher Training Subcommittee will be established under the Operations and Workforce Development Committee (OWDC). The Subcommittee will coordinate with the Refresher Program Unit to ensure the products being produced by the Refresher Program are meeting the field’s needs, as well as provide a common communication link between the field and the Refresher Program Unit.

The move to a topic based programmatic approach will be implemented in phases. Phase 1 includes formally standing up a Refresher Program Unit under the NWCG Training Branch, and establishing a Fireline Safety Refresher Training Subcommittee under OWDC. Phase 2 includes the development of a topic based cross reference system, modification of the WFSTAR website to support the topic based strategy, and conversion of existing refresher materials.

**Background**

In January 2005 and again in 2009, the NWCG clarified that annual refresher training is a NWCG responsibility and is their highest training priority for the wildland fire workforce. The Fireline Safety Refresher Training Task Group (FSRTG) was chartered to develop an organizational strategy to be adopted by NWCG for those positions identified in the Wildland Fire Qualification System Guide (PMS 310-1) as requiring annual refresher training.

The NWCG Annual Fireline Safety Refresher Training Strategic Plan 2006 – 2010 was adopted by NWCG in October 2005. The strategy described a three-prong approach, which included:

- A web-based system for dissemination of information to instructors of annual fireline safety refresher training. This is currently being accomplished through the Wildland Fire Safety Training Annual Refresher (WFSTAR) website.
- Development of an annual video training package that addresses current issues and updates in wildland fire safety. This is currently being accomplished by the NWCG Training Development Unit and Instructional Media Unit.
- A curriculum of experiential training such as staff rides, sand table exercises, tactical decision games, and other simulations for annual refresher training. This is currently being accomplished by the Leadership Subcommittee and the Fire Leadership website.

The Wildland Fire Lessons Learned Center (LLC) was to provide support to each of the three elements described above.

To coordinate these efforts, the Annual Fireline Safety Refresher Training Steering Committee was chartered under the NWCG Training Working Team (TWT), with representatives from the Federal Fire and Aviation Safety Team (WFSTAR Lead), TWT Leadership Committee, NWCG Training Development Unit, and the Wildland Fire Lessons Learned Center.

## **Refresher Training Intent**

The intent of fireline safety refresher training is to focus line-going personnel on operations and decision making issues related to fireline and all hazard incident safety in order to recognize and mitigate risk, maintain safe and effective practices, and to reduce accidents and near misses. Utilizing the three-prong approach, refresher training ensures firefighters have current information regarding safety issues, new initiatives, the upcoming fire season, and any policy or guidance changes.

## **Refresher Training Target Audience**

There are four (4) distinct audiences utilizing the fireline safety refresher training products: firefighters, supervisors of firefighters, support personnel, and agency administrators. Additionally, the users are increasingly non-federal such as municipal and volunteer fire departments, contractors, military, and a small international audience as well.

The age spectrum for the program users ranges from early twenties to late fifties. These age differences imply different jobs with different levels of exposure, experience, and

different learning styles. With the majority of the users utilizing the interactive video component of the refresher program, this means everyone reviews the same topics whether they are relevant to their job or not. This also means that many of the users who are not operationally oriented get limited, useful information and are unable to participate effectively in the exercises which accompany the video modules.

Options to leverage existing resources, i.e., locally developed curriculum and funding sources from users, will be explored. The idea is to have users contribute what they can to sustain refresher training development.

## **Refresher Training Strategy**

This strategy is targeted at those positions identified in the 2011 version of PMS 310-1, Wildland Fire Qualification System Guide, which require annual fireline safety training. Agencies which determine that other positions need some type of initial or annual fire safety training may use some or all of the products produced under this strategy, but are not constrained to this material.

Due to ease in preparation and facilitation, the majority of instructors rely heavily on the video component, leaving the other two components underutilized. In addition, modules from previous year's videos are underutilized.

To provide a more customizable format for the instructor that can better align with their target audience, the overall refresher strategy will be "topic based" rather than focused on the three separate areas of video, WFSTAR website, and experiential learning. The existing components will remain a part of the overall refresher strategy; however, they are to be organized so there is a closer alignment between the material to allow more customization by the facilitator based on target audience, geographic differences, etc.

The primary purpose, development, and interaction of the three components are:

### **Video Component**

- Individual video modules are to be produced on a 12 month cycle utilizing a "no year" refresher format.
- As video modules are completed, they are posted to a video library on the WFSTAR website and cross referenced with all supporting documentation (facilitator and student guide, reference material, tactical decision games, research papers, etc.).
- Previous modules, whose information is timeless, will be posted to the video library and cross referenced with supporting documentation for re-use.

- All video modules are to be in a downloadable format (the intent is not to stream the videos).
- If needed, a DVD could be produced and distributed once a year incorporating current modules and modules from previous years that focuses on current “Hot Topics.” This will provide access to locations that may not have internet access or be able to support downloading video files.
- Development of the video modules would fall under the Refresher Program Unit.

### **WFSTAR Website**

- The WFSTAR website is the main point of entry and dissemination of all refresher material including video modules, reference materials, experiential learning products, etc.
- Oversight and maintenance of the website would shift from the Risk Management Committee (RMC) and NIFC External Affairs to the Refresher Program Unit.
- Ideas, information, and suggestions for content would be coordinated by the Refresher Program Manager in conjunction with the Refresher Program Oversight Subcommittee.
- Annual “Hot Topics” would remain, but the timeframe for posting would be more flexible so that critical information could be presented in a timely manner and to account for different fire seasons and refresher schedules.

### **Experiential Learning**

- The Leadership Subcommittee will remain as the lead for the development and collection of experiential learning material.
- There will be closer coordination between the Refresher Program Manager and Leadership Subcommittee to determine future needs of experiential material based on video module production, hot topics, etc.
- The fireleadership.gov website will continue to host the experiential learning material, but a cross reference system will be established on the WFSTAR website tying the video modules to material on the fireleadership.gov website.

A “no-year” refresher strategy will provide timely dissemination of information to geographic areas that are not on the same refresher schedule as the western United States. It will also allow for individual video modules and supporting documentation to be utilized throughout the year for general safety training.

This strategy will be reviewed in five (5) years for necessary revisions. Annual reviews of the attached Action Plan (Appendix A) will occur for validation and revision as needed.

## **Refresher Training Program Organization and Staffing Needs**

To meet the intent and provide a more cohesive strategy and consistent message to the field, the Refresher Program will be organized and managed as a distinct “Refresher Program Unit” under the NWCG Training Branch.

Funding needs (labor and operations) will be addressed external to this document.

## **Refresher Training Program Oversight Subcommittee**

A Fireline Safety Refresher Training Subcommittee will be chartered under the NWCG Operations and Workforce Development Committee (OWDC), with representatives from the following entities:

- NWCG Training Branch (Refresher Program Manager)
- NWCG’s Risk Management Committee (RMC)
- NWCG’s Operations and Workforce Development Committee (OWDC)
- OWDC Leadership Subcommittee
- National Association of State Foresters (NASF) State Representative
- Wildland Fire Lessons Learned Center (LLC).

The purpose of the Subcommittee is to coordinate with the Refresher Program Manager to ensure the products being produced by the Refresher Program Unit are aligned with relevant issues and are meeting the field’s needs. In addition, the subcommittee would provide a consistent mechanism for communication between the field and the Refresher Program Unit.

## **Refresher Training Delivery**

To be consistent with the instructor requirements for S-130, Firefighting Training, as stated in the PMS 901-1 Field Manager’s Course Guide, Fireline Safety Refresher Training **lead instructors must at least be single resource boss (SRB) qualified, and unit instructors must at least be firefighter type one (FFT1) qualified or a subject matter expert (SME) on the material in the unit.** This will continue to ensure that an appropriate level of expertise and knowledge is available to facilitate exercises and lead discussions.

Agencies will maintain the autonomy to determine the length of safety refresher training courses. Likewise, the material provided for use during refresher is not required training.

However, no matter the length of the course or if provided resources are used or not, course participants will follow agency-specific core topics, but the minimum shall be:

- ***Entrapment Avoidance*** - Use training and reference materials to study the risk management process (as identified in the Incident Response Pocket Guide) and rules of engagement (as appropriate to the participants, e.g., LCES (Lookouts, Communications, Escape Routes, and Safety Zones), Standard Firefighting Orders, Eighteen Watch Out Situations, Fire Management Plan priorities, etc.).
- ***Current Issues*** - Review and discuss identified hot topics and national emphasis topics as found on the current WFSTAR website. Review forecasts and assessments for the upcoming fire season, and discuss implications for firefighter safety.
- ***Fire Shelter*** - Review and discuss last resort survival. Conduct hands-on fire shelter inspections. Practice shelter deployments in applicable crew/module configurations while wearing typical fireline personal protective equipment. When possible, practice shelter deployments in rough terrain and windy conditions. No live fire exercises for the purpose of fire shelter deployment training will be conducted.
- ***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.

It is incumbent upon instructors to be prepared to facilitate a quality refresher that engages all students no matter their ICS qualification or experience level. No product should be produced that is simply a plug and play with no student interaction. The core topics should be addressed in such a manner that is appropriate for the audience. Classes with a wide array of experience and qualification can be an excellent opportunity for the less experienced to be mentored and for the more experienced to rethink old habits.

## Appendix A.

### Fireline Safety Refresher Training Strategic Action Plan

| <b>Strategic Goal</b>  | <b>Strategy</b>  | <b>Objective</b>   | <b>Responsibility</b>  | <b>Timeline</b>                     |
|--|--|--|--|-------------------------------------|
| 1. Provide Fireline Safety Refresher to NWCG members that enhance firefighter safety | 1.1 Stand up a Refresher Program Oversight Subcommittee under the OWDC                             | 1.1.1 Provide direction and oversight to the development of fireline refresher products              | OWDC and RMC   | FY 2011                             |
|  | 1.2 Establish a Refresher Program Unit under NWCG Training   | 1.2.1  | NWCG Program Management Unit (PMU)                                     | FY 2011                             |
|  | 1.5 Develop annual work plan for Refresher Program   | 1.5.1 Establish development priorities for the three components                                      | Refresher Program Manager and Refresher Program Oversight Subcommittee | January 1 <sup>st</sup><br>Annually |
|  | 1.6 Develop a “topic based” cross reference model for the three refresher components               | 1.6.1 Provide closer alignment between all components of refresher training                          | Refresher Program Manager  | FY2011                              |
|  | 1.7 Reconfigure WFSTAR website for no-year “topic based” model and begin to populate video library | 1.7.1 Provide closer alignment between all components of refresher training                          | Refresher Program Manager  | FY2011                              |
|  | 1.8 Begin to convert timeless video modules to a downloadable format and post on WFSTAR website    | 1.8.1 Allow for the development of new material and reduce redundancy                                | Refresher Program Manager  | FY2011                              |
|  | 1.9 Adapt each refresher class to the target audience  | 1.9.1 Ensure annual fireline refresher training sessions are tailored appropriately to the attendees | Individual annual fireline refresher training instructors              | As appropriate                      |

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|--|---|--|---|----------------------------------|
|  | 1.10 Develop and deliver Tactical Decision Games and Staff Rides              | 1.10.1 Continually increase the type and amount of experiential training available | Leadership Committee<br>Geographic Area Training Representatives    | Ongoing                          |
|  | 1.11 Annual Action Plan review  | 1.11.1 Validate and revise as needed   | Refresher Program Oversight Committee and Refresher Program Manager | January 1 <sup>st</sup> Annually |
|  | 1.12 Review NWCG Fireline Safety Refresher Training Strategic Plan, 2011-2015 | 1.12.1 Validate and revise as needed   | OWDC and RMC  | May 2015                         |