

## Chapter 13 Training & Qualifications

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### Introduction

Agency standards for training and qualifications which may exceed the minimum standards established by NWCG, are coordinated through the 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).

### Policy

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 Coordinating Group (NWCG), *Wildland and Prescribed Fire Qualifications Systems Guide* PMS 310-1 is the policy.

Requirements for fire management positions are outlined in the *Interagency Fire Program Management Qualifications Standards and Guide*, referred to as the IFPM Standard. The supplemental Qualification Standard for professional GS-0401 Fire Management Specialist positions, approved by the Office of Personnel Management, is also included in the IFPM Standard. *The Interagency Fire Program Management Qualification Standards and Guide* can be found in its entirety on the IFPM website: <http://www.ifpm.nifc.gov>

- *FS - Standards which may exceed the minimum standards established by NWCG are identified in FSH 5109.17. AD hires will meet FSH 5109.17 qualification standards.*

### Incident Qualifications and Certification System (IQCS)

The Incident Qualifications and Certification System (IQCS) is the fire qualifications and certification record keeping system. The Responder Master Record 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 fire positions. The IQCS is a tool to assist managers in certification decisions, however, 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 Responder Master Record (RPTC028) from IQCS.

1 All records will be stored and/or destroyed in accordance with agency policies.

- 2 • **BLM** - *These policies can be found at:*  
3 *<http://www.blm.gov/nhp/records/blmgrs/toc.html>*

4  
5 **Certification of Non-Agency Personnel**

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

11  
12 **Incident Qualifications Card (Red Card)**

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

23  
24 Training, medical screening, and successful completion of the appropriate WCT  
25 must be properly accomplished. All Red Cards issued to agency employees,  
26 with the exception of Emergency Firefighter (EFF)-paid or temporary  
27 employees at the FFT2 level, will be printed using the IQCS. Red Cards issued  
28 to EFF or temporary employees at the FFT2 level may be printed at the local  
29 level without use of the IQCS.

30  
31 Each agency will designate employees at the national, regional/state, and local  
32 levels as Fire Qualifications Administrators, who ensure all incident experience,  
33 incident training, and position Task Books for employees within the agency are  
34 accurately recorded in the IQCS. All records must be updated annually or  
35 modified as changes occur.

36  
37 **The Incident Qualifications Card Expiration Dates**

- 38 • Red Card positions requiring Work Capacity Tests (WCT) are valid  
39 through the fitness expiration date listed on the card.  
40 • Red Card positions not requiring WCT for issuance are valid for 12 months  
41 from the date the card was signed by a certifying official.

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1 **Qualification System**

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3 **Minimum Training Requirements**

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

- 7 • *NPS - It is NPS policy that two or more assignments be accomplished after*  
8 *completing a Position Task Book, and receiving certification, before an*  
9 *individual begins movement to the next higher level. It is also NPS policy*  
10 *to require two or more qualified assignments be accomplished in a*  
11 *position before an individual may become a position performance*  
12 *evaluator. Exceptions to this should be rare and well founded. The only*  
13 *exceptions to this policy are unit leader positions leading to Planning*  
14 *Section Chief, Logistics Section Chief, or Finance Section Chief.*  
15 *Subordinate unit leader positions require a minimum of one assignment*  
16 *after the PTB completion and position certification.*

17

18 **Annual Fireline Safety Refresher Training**

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

- 24 • **Entrapments** - Use training and reference materials to study the risk  
25 management process as identified in the *Incident Response Pocket Guide*  
26 and rules of engagement as appropriate to the participants, e.g., LCES,  
27 Standard Firefighting Orders, Eighteen Watch Out Situations, Wildland  
28 Fire Situation Analysis (WFSA) direction, Fire Management Plan  
29 priorities, etc.
- 30 • **Current Issues** - Review and discuss identified “hot topics” as found on  
31 the current *Wildland Fire Safety Training Annual Refresher (WFSTAR)*  
32 website. Review forecasts and assessments for the upcoming fire season  
33 and discuss implications for firefighter safety.
- 34 • **Fire Shelter** - Review and discuss last resort survival. Conduct “hands-  
35 on” fire shelter inspections. Practice shelter deployments in applicable  
36 crew/module configurations. No “live fire” exercises for the purpose of  
37 fire shelter deployment training will be conducted.
- 38 • **Other Hazards and Safety Issues** - Choose additional hazard and safety  
39 subjects, which could include SAFENET, current safety alerts, site/unit  
40 specific safety issues and hazards.

41

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

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**13-3**

- 1 • **BLM** - 4 hours
- 2 • **FWS** - 8 hours
- 3 • **NPS** - 8 hours
- 4 • **FS** - 8 hours
- 5
- 6 Annual Fireline Safety Refresher Training will have a 12-month currency.
- 7 A web site, <http://www.nifc.gov/wfstar/index.htm>, titled *Wildland Fire Safety*
- 8 *Training Annual Refresher (WFSTAR)*” is available to assist in this training.
- 9 • **BLM** - The “Do What’s Right” video is required pre-season training in
- 10 addition to Annual Fireline Safety Refresher Training.
- 11 • **FS** - The Incident Complexity Analysis found in Appendix M will be shared
- 12 with all Type 3, 4, & 5 Incident Commanders. Review of this guide should
- 13 be a part of your annual refresher training.
- 14

15 Entrapment avoidance and deployment protocols are identified in the *Incident*

16 *Response Pocket Guide* (PMS No. 461/NFES No.1077). The guide contains a

17 specific “Risk Management Process”, and “Last Resort Survival Checklist”.

18

19 An *Incident Pocket Response Guide* will be issued to every fireline supervisor.

20

#### 21 **Non-NWCG Agencies’ Qualifications**

22 Personnel from other agencies who do not subscribe to the NWCG qualification

23 standards may be used on agency managed fires. However, agency fire

24 managers must ensure these individuals are only assigned to duties

25 commensurate with their abilities, agency qualifications, and equipment

26 capabilities.

- 27 • **BLM/NPS** - Other agencies personnel, meeting NWCG 310-1,
- 28 prerequisites, can participate in and receive certificates for successful
- 29 completion of BLM/NPS taught courses. BLM/NPS employees can
- 30 complete the Task Blocks, Evaluation Record and Verification/  
31 Certification sections of a cooperating organizations employee Position  
32 Task Book. BLM/NPS employees will not initiate or complete the Agency  
33 Certification sections of Position Task Book for non-agency employees.
- 34

#### 35 **Qualification and Certification Process**

36 Each unit with fire management responsibilities will establish a Red Card

37 qualification and certification process. In areas cooperating with other federal,

38 state, or local agencies, an interagency qualification and certification committee

39 should include representatives from each unit. These qualification and

40 certification committees provide management oversight and review of the

41 wildland and prescribed fire positions under their jurisdiction. The committee

42 also:

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

- 1 • Evaluates if each employee possesses the personal characteristics  
2 necessary to perform the wildland and prescribed fire positions in a safe  
3 and efficient manner.
- 4 • Makes recommendations to the appropriate Agency Administrator or  
5 designee who is responsible for final certification signature.
- 6 • Develops interagency training needs and sponsors courses that can be  
7 offered locally.
- 8 • Ensures training nominees meet minimum requirements for attending  
9 courses.

## 11 **Physical Fitness**

### 13 **Physical Fitness and Conditioning**

14 Agency Administrators are responsible for ensuring the overall physical fitness  
15 of firefighters. The Agency Administrator may authorize employees who are  
16 available and/or serving in wildland fire positions that require a physical fitness  
17 rating of arduous, one hour each day for fitness condition. Non fire personnel  
18 who hold arduous ratings on their red card may be authorized up to three hours  
19 per week of duty time for fitness conditioning. All other wildland firefighting  
20 personnel may be authorized up to three hours per week of duty time for fitness  
21 conditioning. Individuals who have a position with an arduous physical  
22 requirement may be periodically tested during the fire season to ensure they are  
23 retaining the required level of fitness and conditioning.

24  
25 Fitness conditioning periods may be identified and structured to include aerobic  
26 and muscular exercises. Team sports are not authorized for fitness conditioning.  
27 Chapters 7, 8, and 9 of *Fitness and Work Capacity, 2nd ed. (1997)*, provide  
28 excellent guidance concerning training specifically for the pack test, aerobic  
29 fitness programs, and muscular fitness training.

- 30 • *FS - Forest Service direction is found in FSH 5109.17.*

### 32 **Medical Examinations**

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

36  
37 Established medical qualification programs, as stated in 5 CFR 339, provide  
38 consistent medical standards in order to safeguard the health of employees  
39 whose work may subject them or others to significant health and safety risks due  
40 to occupational or environmental exposure or demand.

41  
42 Information on any medical records is considered confidential and must be kept  
43 in the employee's medical file.

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1 **Federal Interagency Wildland Firefighter Medical Qualification Standards**  
2 The Federal Interagency Wildland Firefighter Medical Qualification Standards  
3 continue to be implemented throughout the DOI and FS organizations. Those  
4 units who have not yet implemented the new standards must continue to comply  
5 with the current agency standards as stated under Agency Specific Medical  
6 Examinations section below until implementation of the new standards is  
7 accomplished. Additional information regarding the Federal Interagency  
8 Wildland Firefighter Medical Qualification Standards program can be obtained  
9 at [www.nifc.gov/medical\\_standards](http://www.nifc.gov/medical_standards).

10  
11 All permanent, career-seasonal, temporary, Student Career Experience Program  
12 (SCEP) employees, and AD/EFF who participate in wildland fire activities  
13 requiring a fitness level of arduous must participate in the Federal Interagency  
14 Wildland Firefighter Medical Qualification Standards program at the appropriate  
15 level (see Medical Examination Requirements Appendix FF) and must be  
16 medically cleared prior to attempting the WCT.

17  
18 Under the Federal Interagency Wildland Firefighter Medical Qualification  
19 Standards, the *Health Screen Questionnaire (HSQ)* will only be required for  
20 arduous duty AD/EFF hires less than 45 years of age. The HSQ is not required  
21 prior to taking the WCT for all other employment categories.

22  
23 No employee or applicant who fails to meet the Federal Interagency Wildland  
24 Firefighter Medical Qualification Standards as a seasonal/temporary or  
25 permanent employee may be hired as an AD/EFF.

#### 26 **Agency Specific Medical Examinations**

27 This section applies only to those units who have not yet implemented the  
28 Federal Interagency Wildland Firefighter Medical Qualification Standards for  
29 arduous duty and for all employees and AD/EFF who participate in wildland fire  
30 activities requiring a fitness level of moderate or light.

31  
32 The *Health Screen Questionnaire (HSQ)* will be utilized as a means to identify  
33 individuals who may be at risk in taking the Work Capacity Test (WCT) and  
34 recommend an exercise program and/or medical examination prior to taking the  
35 WCT.

36  
37  
38 If any “Yes” answer is indicated on the HSQ, a medical examination is required  
39 prior to the employee taking the WCT. If there is a known pre-existing medical  
40 condition that is already being monitored under medical care (e.g., high blood  
41 pressure), a medical clearance statement will be provided by the physician in  
42 lieu of a medical examination prior to taking WCT.

43  
44 Medical examinations will be performed utilizing the U.S. Civil Service  
45 *Commission Certificate of Medical Examination Form, SF-78*. Stress EKGs are  
46 not required as part of the medical examination and will only be approved if

1 recommended and administered by the medical examining physician. Cost for  
2 exams will be borne by the home unit. If medical findings during exam require  
3 further evaluation, then the cost of any further evaluation or treatment is borne  
4 by the employee/applicant.

5

6 The examining physician will submit the completed SF-78 (and applicable  
7 supplements) to the employee's servicing human resources office, where it will  
8 be reviewed and retained in the employee's medical file.

- 9 • **BLM/FWS** - *In addition to the SF-78, the Physical Requirements for*  
10 *Firefighting and Smokejumper Positions, Supplemental to SF-78, BLM*  
11 *Form 1400-108 is required for firefighter and smokejumper positions.*
- 12 • **BLM/FWS** - *All new employees being hired as a wildland firefighter will*  
13 *receive a medical exam utilizing the SF-78 and Supplemental to SF-78*  
14 *forms.*
- 15 • **BLM** - *Employees 40 years of age and older must have a physical exam*  
16 *every three years or as indicated by the HSQ.*
- 17 • **FWS** - *All permanent employees over 45 years of age who take the pack or*  
18 *field test to qualify for a wildland or prescribed fire position are required to*  
19 *take an annual physical examination before taking the WCT.*
- 20 • **NPS** - *"Wildland Firefighter" Defined: Those employees who perform*  
21 *duties of a hazardous and/or strenuous nature are targeted. Therefore,*  
22 *within this section, "wildland firefighter" hereinafter refers to an*  
23 *employee whose wildland fire position(s) qualifications require an*  
24 *"Arduous" fitness level, as defined in the current PMS 310-1 "Wildland*  
25 *and Prescribed Fire Qualifications System Guide" and in RM-18, Chapter*  
26 *6.*
- 27 • **NPS** - *For health and fitness purposes, those who are fire-qualified at less*  
28 *than the Arduous fitness level are not required to meet the mandatory*  
29 *fitness program requirements of DO-57 for wildland fire management.*  
30 *However, they are strongly encouraged to participate in the voluntary*  
31 *fitness program, and must still meet physical fitness/work capacity*  
32 *requirements as outlined in 310-1 "Wildland and Prescribed Fire*  
33 *Qualification System Guide" for positions with Moderate and Light fitness*  
34 *requirements.*
- 35 • **NPS** - *Health Screening: Arduous duty medical exams must be taken once*  
36 *every 3 years by wildland firefighters. They do not include stress EKGs,*  
37 *except for those 41 years or older if required by the examining physician.*  
38 *Those cases would be considered exceptional. FIREPRO funding will not*  
39 *be used to pay for stress EKGs, except in exceptional cases, which require*  
40 *prior approval by the regional fire management officer.*
- 41 • **NPS** - *FIREPRO funding may be used to pay for medical exams for*  
42 *mandatory fitness program participants within the following limits:*
  - 43 ➤ **NPS** - *Those who meet the definition of "wildland firefighter" will*  
44 *have costs of all required medical examinations paid for by*  
45 *FIREPRO, not to exceed \$350. Anything in excess of \$350 requires*

- 1            *prior approval of the regional fire management officer. This includes*  
2            *recent requirements for blood screenings.*
- 3            ➤ *NPS - In the event an employee-selected physician indicates that an*  
4            *EKG or other advanced test is needed, the government may require a*  
5            *second opinion from an appointed physician.*
- 6            • *NPS - The law enforcement medical exam for NPS rangers, who are*  
7            *collateral duty wildland firefighters, will suffice for wildland fire health*  
8            *screening purposes.*
- 9            • *NPS - Employees requiring medical exams on the 3-year cycle will have*  
10           *exams conducted prior to taking the Arduous fitness WCT (Pack Test).*

#### 12 **Health Screen Questionnaire HSQ**

13 Title 5 CFR Part 339 - Medical Qualification Determinations, which provides a  
14 determination of an individual's fitness-for-duty, authorizes solicitation of this  
15 information.

16  
17 The HSQ can be found in Appendix W.

18  
19 The information on the HSQ is considered confidential and once reviewed by  
20 the test administrator to determine if the WCT can be administered, it must be  
21 kept in the employee's medical file (EMF). This file may only be viewed by  
22 Human Resource Management (HRM) or Safety personnel.

- 23            • *FS - Servicing Personnel Office will notify the test administrator once the*  
24            *employee is cleared to complete the WCT.*

#### 26 **Work Capacity Tests (WCTs) Administration**

27 The Work Capacity Tests (WCT) is the official method of assessing wildland  
28 firefighter fitness levels. See "*Work Capacity Tests for Wildland Firefighters,*  
29 *Test Administrator's Guide*" PMS 307, NFES 1109.

30  
31 WCT Administrators must ensure that WCT participants have been medically  
32 cleared, either through *Wildland Firefighter Medical Qualification Standards* or  
33 agency specific medical examination.

34  
35 WCTs are administered annually to all employees, including AD/EFF who will  
36 be serving in wildland fire positions that require a fitness level. The currency  
37 for the WCT is 12 months.

38  
39 The WCT Record (see Appendix Y) captures information that is covered under  
40 the Privacy Act and should be maintained in accordance with agency Freedom  
41 of Information Act (FOIA) guidelines.

42  
43 Administration of the WCT of non-federal firefighters is prohibited for liability  
44 reasons. Potential emergency firefighters who would be hired under Emergency  
45 Hire authority by the agency must be in AD pay status or sign an agency-  
46 specific volunteer services agreement when given the WCT.



1 A Job Hazard Analysis (JHA) shall be developed and approved for each field  
2 office prior to administrating the WCT. See the sample JHA found in Appendix  
3 X. Administer the test using the JHA as a briefing guide.  
4 Document using the WCT Record (see Appendix Y). This document must be  
5 retained until the next testing. Units may also be requested to provide data from  
6 these records to assist in the evaluation of the WCT process.

7  
8 Personnel taking the WCT will only complete the level of testing (Pack, Field,  
9 Walk) required by the highest fitness level identified for a position on their red  
10 card.

11  
12 Test results must also be entered in the IQCS annually to update the fitness level  
13 and date that will appear on the Red Card. Physical fitness dates entered in  
14 IQCS will reflect the date the employee passed the fitness test.

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

#### 25 26 **WCT Retesting**

27 Those who do not pass the WCT will be provided another opportunity to retest.  
28 Employees will have to wait at least 48 hours before retaking the WCT. If an  
29 employee sustains an injury (verified by a licensed medical provider) during a  
30 test, the test will not count as an attempt. Once an injured employee has been  
31 released for full duty, the employee will be given time to prepare for the test (not  
32 to exceed 4 weeks). The numbers of retesting opportunities that will be allowed  
33 include:

- 34 • Three opportunities for permanent employees required to pass a test for  
35 duties in the fire program.
- 36 • One opportunity for temporary employees required to pass a test (a second  
37 chance maybe provided at the discretion of fire management).
- 38 • *FS - The Forest Service also uses the WCT as the official method of*  
39 *assessing wildland firefighter fitness levels. The specific direction,*  
40 *Implementation Guide, Health Screen Questionnaire, and required*  
41 *processes can be found at the following web site: <http://www.fs.fed.us/fire/>*

#### 42 43 **WCT Categories**

44 The *NWCG Wildland Fire Qualification System Guide, 310-1* identifies fitness  
45 levels for specific positions. There are three fitness levels - Arduous, Moderate,  
46 and Light - which require an individual to demonstrate their ability to perform

- 1 the fitness requirements of the position. Duties in the “None” category are  
 2 normally performed in a controlled environment, such as an incident base.  
 3 • **BLM/FWS** - *Law Enforcement physical fitness standard is accepted as*  
 4 *equivalent to a “light” WCT work category.*  
 5

6 **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.

- 7 **Arduous** - Duties involve field work requiring physical performance with above  
 8 average endurance and superior conditioning. These duties may include an  
 9 occasional demand for extraordinarily strenuous activities in emergencies under  
 10 adverse environmental conditions and over extended periods of time.  
 11 Requirements include running, walking, climbing, jumping, twisting, bending,  
 12 and lifting more than 50 pounds; the pace of the work typically is set by the  
 13 emergency conditions.  
 14 **Moderate** - Duties involve field work requiring complete control of all physical  
 15 faculties and may include considerable walking over irregular ground, standing  
 16 for long periods of time, lifting 25 to 50 pounds, climbing, bending, stooping,  
 17 twisting, and reaching. Occasional demands may be required for moderately  
 18 strenuous activities in emergencies over long periods of time. Individuals  
 19 usually set their own work pace.  
 20 **Light** - Duties mainly involve office type work with occasional field activity  
 21 characterized by light physical exertion requiring basic good health. Activities  
 22 may include climbing stairs, standing, operating a vehicle, and long hours of  
 23 work, as well as some bending, stooping, or light lifting. Individuals can usually  
 24 govern the extent and pace of their physical activity.