

Chapter 13

Training and Qualifications

The FWS Fire Management Handbook incorporates, by reference, all guidance in the [Interagency Standards for Fire and Fire Aviation Operations Handbook](#) (Redbook, NFES #2724) Chapter 13 in addition to the following FWS specific clarifications:

Policy

Refuge personnel will meet NWCG PMS 310-1, Wildland Fire Qualification Guide training, experience, and fitness levels for prescribed fire and suppression positions unless otherwise specified in this handbook. All personnel funded with fire funds who are hired under a position description containing firefighting duties will meet PMS 310-1 requirements for the appropriate fire position. Individuals will not be assigned to duties for which they lack training and qualification. All personnel hired as primary firefighters must meet the arduous fitness standard to maintain full fire funding and if the position is career status, arduous is required to meet special retirement considerations for fire.

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Exceptions

Suppression Fitness Exemption – Refuges (Region 6 only) which do not have dedicated fire personnel, normally have a light wildland fire workload (minimal occurrence and acreage), do not perform initial actions using direct attack with hand tools, and have no cooperators/contractors to perform timely initial actions on refuge wildland fires can request an exception to NWCG fitness requirements for personnel classified as Firefighter Type 2, Firefighter Type 1, or Incident Commander Type 5. The request is to be made to the Regional Office and will involve review by the Regional Fire Management Coordinator and approval at the Regional Office level. Exception approvals are to be documented in the Refuge Fire Management Plan.

Factors that must be addressed within the request include but are not limited to: fuels, terrain, and tactics employed. Exceptions may be granted where wildland fires occur in light fuels over gentle terrain and initial actions using equipment such as dozers, tractor plows, and engines, as opposed to direct attack with hand tools, are performed. Refuges that demonstrate that an arduous physical fitness rating is not necessary to safely perform initial actions on a wildland fire may use **non-fire personnel** who qualify at the Moderate fitness level to perform initial actions.

Exceptions will apply only to initial actions. Should a wildland fire become an extended attack incident (Type III) where personnel are requested through the mobilization system, NWCG wildland fire qualified personnel will be used. No exceptions from arduous fitness levels are allowed for personnel hired as primary firefighters.

Prescribed Fire Fitness Exemption- If a Refuge Manager or Project Leader believes the arduous fitness requirement is not appropriate in their local prescribed fire operations they may request an exception using the Prescribed Fire Crewmember Exception Request found at the end of this chapter to use the Prescribed Fire Crewmember (RXCM) qualification at a moderate fitness level in lieu of Firefighter Type 2 (FFT2). This qualification can not be used for suppression operations and prescribed fire burn plans must address contingency resources accordingly. A prescribed fire crew member can be used to hold an original prescribed fire perimeter while initial attack is being conducted on an escape by fully

qualified suppression personnel. If suppression operations move into extended attack the entire fire must be staffed with resources qualified for suppression operations. Exception approval must be documented in the applicable Refuge Fire Management Plan and shall be used on approved Service managed lands only. State, local cooperators and contractors working on federal agency prescribed fires must meet the NWCG PMS 310-1 standards unless local agreements and/or contracts specify otherwise. For more information see the PMS 310-1, Wildland Fire Qualification Guide (2008), and the Interagency Prescribed Fire Planning and Implementation Procedures Guide. The Prescribed Fire Crewmember position (RXCM) is available in IQCS for use in tracking individual experience at a Moderate fitness level.

Fire Management Curriculum - The curriculum supporting fire management qualifications and position certification is explained in detail in the Wildland and Prescribed Fire Qualification System Guide, PMS 310-1 (<http://www.nwcg.gov/pms/docs/docs.htm>). Details relating to course descriptions and trainee/instructor qualifications are provided in the NWCG Field Manager's Course Guide, PMS 901-1 (NFES 2194) (http://www.fire.blm.gov/training/twt/sect_fieldmanagers_courseguides.htm). Training needs analyses are developed each year at refuge, regional and national levels. A refuge or region is responsible for sponsoring 100 and 200 level courses. The Regional Fire Management Coordinator (RFMC) determines intermediate level (300 and 400) training needs. Nominations for intermediate level courses should be routed to Regional Fire Management Coordinators for prioritization. Each course lead instructor provides successful trainees with certificates of completion upon conclusion of the course. All NWCG-approved training packages and course materials are readily available through the Publications Management System at the National Interagency Fire Center. NWCG National Fire Equipment System Catalog Part 2: Publications, PMS 449-2 (NFES 3362), identifies all materials and ordering procedures and is updated each spring.

National level (500 and 600) training needs are determined by the Fire Management Branch. A call for nominations to 500 level courses, except S-520/S-620, will be issued from the Fire Management Branch annually. Regional Fire Management Coordinators will prioritize these nominations within the region and forward a priority list and the nominations to the Fire Management Branch for national prioritization. Regional nominations should be consistent with regional or geographic board direction. Regions shall follow established Geographic Area and National Advanced Fire and Resource Institute protocol when nominating employees to S-520 or S-620.

Fire Management Instructors - Each Region is responsible for the selection, training, and certification of an adequate number of Fish and Wildlife Service instructors for fire management training. The funding for fire training instructors for local and geographic area level courses is a local or Regional fire management responsibility. The funding for fire training instructors for national level courses is a responsibility of the Fire Management Branch.

NWCG Course Equivalency – An equivalent course is determined by agency identified “evaluators” to be equal to a NWCG approved course. Awarding course equivalency is an agency specific responsibility. Only agencies have the authority to certify their employees

meet NWCG training requirements when alternative course offerings are used. Courses being reviewed for equivalency must have:

- A reason the alternative course was used or developed;
- A benefit gained through awarding course equivalency such as:
 - cost savings
 - broadened target audience
 - enhanced learning experience for students

The Region seeking a course equivalency should conduct a detailed analysis and document their findings on the USFWS Course Equivalency template. The analysis will then be forwarded to the National Office for final approval. A new analysis must be completed when the equivalent NWCG course is revised to ensure course equivalency continues. All course equivalency determinations will be posted on the Fire Management Intranet (<https://intranet.fws.gov/>) found under Region 9 of the intranet site.

Incident Qualifications and Certification System - The Refuge Fire Management Officer is responsible for input and maintenance of all pertinent refuge employee data and for ensuring that employees are trained, qualified, and certified at levels which meet preplanned needs for appropriate management response, initial attack and prescribed fire, and for ensuring the accuracy of annual Incident Qualification Cards. The Certifying Official (i.e. Refuge Manager or Project Leader) confirms through the issuance of an incident qualification card that an individual is qualified to perform in a specified position. The Incident Qualification Card has a currency of 12 months.

The Incident Qualifications and Certification System (IQCS) allows individuals to track experience gained on severity assignments where wildland fires do not occur. Individuals should use the event code PP (Preparedness/Preposition/Mobilization) in IQCS to track experience gained on severity assignments. All wildland fire experience gained while on a severity assignment will be coded to the appropriate incident identifier in IQCS.

Trainees may complete appropriate tasks in a position task book while on a severity assignment. Consult the PMS 310-1, Wildland Fire Qualification Guide, for event code definitions. A severity assignment does not constitute a wildfire, wildland fire use, or prescribed fire assignment until such time as an actual fire occurs.

Only PMS 310-1 and USFWS specific positions are approved for use by agency employees. Approved agency positions are identified in IQCS under the FWS SetID. Service employees should not utilize agency specific positions available under other agency specific SetID's. IQCS Account Managers will proactively maintain organization codes for which they are responsible. Employees that are no longer employed by the FWS should be placed in INAC upon termination of duty.

National Incident Management System (NIMS) Training Requirements

Service personnel, who may become involved in emergency response activities, including wildland fire, are required to meet minimum training requirements established by the Department of Homeland Security in order to be NIMS compliant. Information regarding specific position requirements is outlined in the Service NIMS required training memorandum from the Director dated December 5, 2008 and the DOI Bulletin dated May

31, 2007. NIMS training standards will be enforced for agency specific wildland fire positions in IQCS on January 1, 2010.

Interagency Fire Program Management (IFPM) Requirements

Service personnel in IFPM covered positions must meet the NWCG qualification and additional required training requirements identified for their position by October 1, 2010. Information regarding specific position requirements is available at <http://www.ifpm.nifc.gov/guide/electronic.htm>.

Law Enforcement Medical Standards

Law enforcement officers wishing to perform in PMS 310-1 or USFWS wildland fire positions with a fitness requirement of arduous must participate in the Federal Interagency Wildland Firefighter Medical Qualification Standards physical at the appropriate level. Individuals must be medically cleared prior to attempting the work capacity test.

Physical Fitness and Conditioning

Employees serving in wildland fire positions that require a fitness rating of arduous as a condition of employment are authorized one hour of duty time each work day for physical fitness conditioning. Employees not having a fitness rating of arduous as a condition of employment, but who are required by a Critical Performance element or other written agreement to maintain an arduous level, will be authorized three hours per week of duty time for physical fitness condition. All other wildland firefighting personnel holding qualifications requiring ratings of moderate or arduous may be authorized, by their supervisor, up to three hours per week of duty time for fitness conditioning. Prior to any duty time being allowed for physical fitness conditioning, employees and supervisors must agree, in writing, what physical conditioning activities the employee will engage in, and when and where they will occur. Activities outside of the agreement will not be authorized or allowed. A combination of activities designed to increase both physical strength and aerobic fitness, while minimizing the possibility of physical injury, should be utilized. Specific information is outlined in Director's memo dated September 11, 2007.

Fire Management Officer Training

All Fire Management Officers (FMO) are required to attend the M-581, Interagency Fire Program Management course, either as a student or as a member of the instructor cadre. If attending as an instructor the FMO must be present for the entire course.

Line Officer and Agency Administrator Training

Refuge managers/project leaders and Program and Assistant Regional Directors who are responsible for managing or providing oversight to a fire program on our lands must attend the current interagency fire management leadership course. The national or local level sponsors this course.

Firefighting Personnel

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Specific Position Standards and Criteria

Position taskbooks can be initiated prior to the completion of the required training. However, all position training requirements must be completed prior to position certification.

Any individual who has begun the evaluation process need not take any newly required course(s) for that position. Additionally, personnel who are qualified in a position prior to the implementation of this revision may retain certification at the discretion of their Certifying Official. To qualify in any other position, the individual must meet the standards identified herein.

Engine Operator (ENOP)

REQUIRED TRAINING

Intermediate Fire Behavior (S-290)
Followership to Leadership (L-280)
Local or Geographic Area Engine Academy
Annual Refresher Training (RT-130)

REQUIRED EXPERIENCE

Firefighter (FFT1), Experience on engine crew

+

Successful completion of the [BLM/FWS Engine Operator taskbook](#)

PHYSICAL FITNESS LEVEL

Arduous

OTHER POSITION ASSIGNMENTS THAT WILL MAINTAIN CURRENCY:

None

ADDITIONAL TRAINING WHICH SUPPORTS DEVELOPMENT OF KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS:

Portable Pumps and Water Use (S-211)
Driving for the Fire Service (S-216)
Fire Operation in the Urban Interface (S-215)

Additional Information:

- The ENOP position is available in IQCS under the FWS SetID. Service employees should not utilize positions available under other agency specific SetID's.

Prescribed Fire Burn Boss Type 3 (RXB3)**REQUIRED TRAINING**

Intermediate Fire Behavior(S-290)
Basic Wildland Fire Behavior Calculations (S-390)
Prescribed Fire Implementation (RX-301)
Prescribed Fire Plan Preparation (RX-341)
Annual Refresher Training (RT-130)

REQUIRED EXPERIENCE

Incident Commander, Type 5
Or
Advanced Firefighter/Squad Boss
+
Successful Completion of the [RXB3 taskbook](#)

PHYSICAL FITNESS LEVEL

Moderate

OTHER POSITION ASSIGNMENTS THAT WILL MAINTAIN CURRENCY:

Prescribed Fire Burn Boss Type 2
Prescribed Fire Burn Boss Type 1
Fire Use Manager Type 1
Fire Use Manager Type 2
Prescribed Fire Manager Type 1
Prescribed Fire Manager Type 2

ADDITIONAL TRAINING WHICH SUPPORTS DEVELOPMENT OF KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS:

Field Observer (S-244)
Initial Attack Incident Commander (S-200)
Ignition Operations (S-234)

Limitations:

The RXB3 position use guidelines can be found in the Interagency Prescribed Fire Planning and Implementation Procedures Reference Guide found at http://www.nifc.gov/fire_policy/rx/rxfireguide.pdf.

Additional Information:

- The RXB3 position is available in IQCS under the FWS SetID. Service employees should not utilize positions available under other agency specific SetID's.

Faller Class A/B/C

REQUIRED TRAINING

Wildland Fire Chain Saws (S-212)
Annual Chainsaw Refresher Training

REQUIRED EXPERIENCE

Successful Completion of the [BLM Faller A/B/C taskbook](#)

PHYSICAL FITNESS LEVEL

Arduous

OTHER POSITION ASSIGNMENTS THAT WILL MAINTAIN CURRENCY:

None

ADDITIONAL TRAINING WHICH SUPPORTS DEVELOPMENT OF KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS:

None

Additional Information:

- "A" positions can fell trees up to 8 inches DBH, "B" positions can fell trees up to 24 inches DBH, and "C" positions have no limit on tree size
- All FWS saw operators on wildland and prescribed fire incidents must complete the NWCG S-212 course, including the position Task Book appropriate to the "A" class operations.
- The individual tasks required for completion of the "B" Task Book and the final evaluation for the Class "B" saw operations must be verified by a qualified Class "B" or "C" saw operator.
- The individual tasks required for completion of the "C" Task Book and the final evaluation for the Class "C" saw operators must be verified by a region approved Class "C" Final Evaluator.
- Each of the regions will certify and maintain a list of current, qualified Class "B" and "C" saw operators, approved as Class "B" or "C" Final Evaluators.
- The certification of "C" class evaluators will remain the responsibility of the regional agency administrator or delegate.
- Faller A/B/C positions are available in IQCS under the FWS SetID. Service employees should not utilize positions available under other agency specific SetID's.

Prescribed Fire Crew Member (RXCM)**REQUIRED TRAINING**

Firefighter Training (S-130)
Introduction to Fire Behavior (S-190)
Introduction to ICS (I-100)
Human Factors on the Fireline (L-180)*
Annual Refresher Training (RT-130)

REQUIRED EXPERIENCE

Release Date: February 2009

None

PHYSICAL FITNESS LEVEL

Moderate

OTHER POSITION ASSIGNMENTS THAT WILL MAINTAIN CURRENCY:

None

ADDITIONAL TRAINING WHICH SUPPORTS DEVELOPMENT OF KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS:

Wildland Fire Chain Saws (S-212)
Portable Pumps and Water Use (S-211)

Additional Information:

- L-180, Human Factors on the Fireline has been incorporated into the 2003 revision of S-130, Firefighter Training.
- Upon the release of this version of the Fire Management Handbook the RXCM position may be used by personnel on approved Service lands in lieu of Firefighter Type 2 (FFT2) if proper authorization has been granted by the appropriate regional line officer. Approval procedures are outlined earlier in this chapter of the Fire Management Handbook, 2008.
- The RXCM position is available in IQCS under the FWS SetID. Service employees should not utilize positions available under other agency specific SetID's.

Dozer Operator (DZOP)**REQUIRED TRAINING**

Firefighter Training (S-130)
Introduction to Fire Behavior (S-190)
Introduction to ICS (I-100)
Human Factors on the Fireline (L-180)
Annual Refresher Training (RT-130)
Intermediate Fire Behavior (S-290)
FWS Heavy Equipment Course SAF2002 (Dozer) or SAF2000 (Agricultural Tractor)

REQUIRED EXPERIENCE

None

PHYSICAL FITNESS LEVEL

Moderate

OTHER POSITION ASSIGNMENTS THAT WILL MAINTAIN CURRENCY:

None

ADDITIONAL TRAINING WHICH SUPPORTS DEVELOPMENT OF KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS:

S-232 Dozer Boss (Single Resource)

Release Date: February 2009

S-233 Tractor/Plow Boss (Single Resource)

Additional Information:

- The Dozer Initial Attack (DZIA) position is not approved for FWS use.
- The DZOP position is available in IQCS under the FWS SetID. Service employees should not utilize positions available under other agency specific SetID's.

Tractor Plow Operator (TPOP)**REQUIRED TRAINING**

Firefighter Training (S-130)

Introduction to Fire Behavior (S-190)

Introduction to ICS (I-100)

Human Factors on the Fireline (L-180)

Annual Refresher Training (RT-130)

Intermediate Fire Behavior (S-290)

FWS Heavy Equipment Course SAF2002 (Dozer) or SAF2000 (Agricultural Tractor)

REQUIRED EXPERIENCE

None

PHYSICAL FITNESS LEVEL

Moderate

OTHER POSITION ASSIGNMENTS THAT WILL MAINTAIN CURRENCY:

None

ADDITIONAL TRAINING WHICH SUPPORTS DEVELOPMENT OF KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS:

S-232 Dozer Boss (Single Resource)

S-233 Tractor/Plow Boss (Single Resource)

Additional Information:

- The Tractor Plow Initial Attack (TPIA) position is not approved for FWS use.
- The TPOP position is available in IQCS under the FWS SetID. Service employees should not utilize positions available under other agency specific SetID's.

Refuge Name: _____

Provide a situational assessment of the refuge's prescribed fire program:

1. How many prescribed fires do you anticipate will require the use of the Prescribed Fire Crew Member (RXCM) qualification per year? _____
2. Describe the refuge's previous experience using the moderate fitness rating on prescribed fire projects. _____

Provide a hazard assessment:

1. Discuss the range of fuels to be burned using the RXCM qualification and the associated fire behavior. _____

2. Describe refuge topography and walking conditions. _____

Describe the hazard controls the refuge will put in place to minimize risk to employees with the RXCM qualification:

1. Can smoke exposure be limited during operations? _____

2. What resources are available for suppression operations requiring arduous fitness in the event of an escape requiring immediate initial action and can contingency plans properly cover this situation? _____

3. Describe the tactics and equipment used by the RXCM position. _____

Provide an evaluation plan in which an exception decision will be monitored and reviewed:

Prepared by/Date

Refuge Manager/Project Leader/Date

Regional Fire Mgmt. Coordinator/Date

Regional Line Officer Approval/Date