

# Interagency Fire Program Management Qualifications Standards and Guide

## Implementation Plan October 1, 2008 to October 1, 2010

### I. Background

Studies of wildland fire incidents for a number of years highlighted the fact that more stringent, uniform qualification standards were needed for certain fire management positions to assure firefighter safety. The *1995 Federal Wildland Fire Policy and Program Review*, signed by the Secretaries of Agriculture and Interior, directed federal wildland fire agencies to establish fire management qualifications standards to improve firefighter safety and increase the level of skill and competence in fire management programs. An Interagency Fire Program Management Qualifications Task Group was established to develop these qualification standards.

The resulting *Interagency Fire Program Management Qualification Standards and Guide (IFPM Standard)* was approved by the Federal Fire and Aviation Leadership Council (FFALC) in January 2000. In August 2002 the Supplemental Qualification Standard for the GS-0401 Fire Management Specialist was approved for use by the Office of Personnel Management (OPM). In June 2004 Dale Bosworth, Chief, United States Department of Agriculture Forest Service (USDA-FS) and Department of Interior (DOI) Assistant Secretary P. Lynn Scarlett issued memorandums establishing October 1, 2004 as the date to officially begin implementing the *IFPM Standard*.

The National Wildfire Coordinating Group (NWCG) has chartered an interagency IFPM Implementation Team consisting of human resources, training and fire management personnel to develop, revise and post/distribute this implementation plan and associated guidance. The Implementation Team has and will continue to make adjustments to the IFPM Standard until the group is dissolved by NWCG.

### II. Implementation Plan Update

This implementation plan has been updated to reflect 2008 policy changes. The overall intent of the implementation plan has not changed.

### III. Scope

The *IFPM Standard* is a guide for developing future fire managers. Full implementation of this plan will require the cooperation of fire program managers, supervisors, affected employees and human resources (HR) specialists at all levels in both the Forest Service and DOI Bureaus.

#### **IV. Communications**

The *IFPM Standard* has broad impact across all agencies and bureaus and across all levels of the fire community. The *IFPM Standard* and related documentation on the implementation process can be found on the Internet at: <http://ifpm.nifc.gov>.

#### **V. Funding**

It is the responsibility of each bureau or agency to assist every **incumbent** affected by the *IFPM Standard* to ensure they meet the minimum qualification standards before the implementation period deadline of October 1, 2010.

#### **VI. Labor/Employee Relations**

Bureaus/Agencies will meet their labor-management obligations, as appropriate, with unions representing bargaining unit employees who may be impacted by the implementation of this plan according to the provisions of their respective contracts or as otherwise appropriate.

#### **VII. Standing Boards**

Due to policy changes related to positive education requirements and the stringent prerequisite experience associated with meeting OPM's "rare occasions" clause, the GS-0401 Education/Training Assessment Board and the IFPM Resolutions Board have been abolished.

#### **VIII. Tracking Minimum Qualification Standards**

To assist fire managers and supervisors in tracking employee progress in meeting the IFPM minimum qualification standards the 13 key positions have been incorporated into the Incident Qualifications and Certification System (IQCS). This will assist supervisors in developing Individual Development Plans (IDP) for their employees and identify and schedule needed training and education. Please refer to the IQCS website (<http://iqcs.nwcg.gov>) for more information.

#### **IX. The IFPM Standard**

The *IFPM Standard* consists of:

- A. Key Fire Management Positions
- B. Rating Guide For Evaluating Fire Program Complexity
- C. Minimum Qualification Standards
- D. Competencies For Key Fire Management Positions

A. Key Fire Management Positions

The *IFPM Standard* identifies 13 key fire management positions common to the five federal wildland fire management agencies. Generic position titles are used as some agencies designate different titles for the same positions.

First Line Supervisor (Those that implement fire projects)

- Interagency Hotshot Crew (IHC) Superintendent (technical)
- Helicopter Manager (technical)
- Senior Firefighter (technical)
- Engine Module Supervisor (technical)
- Supervisory Fire Engine Operator (technical)
- Initial Attack Dispatcher (technical)

Fire Project Specialist (Those that plan fire projects)

- Wildland Fire Operations Specialist (professional or technical)
- Prescribed Fire and Fuels Specialist (professional or technical)
- Center Manager (professional or technical)
- Initial Attack Lead Dispatcher/Assistant Center Manager (technical)

Fire Program Manager (Those that manage the overall fire program)

- Unit Fire Program Manager (professional)
- Geographic Fire Program Manager (professional)
- National Fire Program Manager (professional)

Positions annotated professional or technical may be established as professional or technical at the GS-9 level and below depending upon whether professional or technical knowledge is required, the organizational structure exists, and the competency is met as established in the rating guide.

All IFPM fire positions classifiable at GS-11 and above are professional positions based on the required competencies and job complexity.

For purposes of this implementation plan, at the program management level a unit is considered to be:

- Bureau of Indian Affairs - Tribe/Agency
- Bureau of Land Management - District/Field Office
- Fish and Wildlife Service - District/Zone or Refuge
- National Park Service - Park or Area
- Forest Service - Forest or Zone (multiple forests)

and a geographic area is considered to be:

- Forest Service, Fish and Wildlife Service, National Park Service - Regional
- Bureau of Land Management - State
- Bureau of Indian Affairs - Region

B. Rating Guide for Evaluating Fire Program Complexity

The complexity analysis is used to determine the overall complexity of a fire management program at the unit level. A rating of low, moderate or high is assigned. The series and competency level of some of the key fire management positions is tied directly to the complexity rating. Grade is not tied to the complexity level. Grade is determined through the classification process.

C. Minimum Qualification Standards

The *IFPM Standard* contains the required minimum qualifications for each of the 13 key fire management positions. This includes:

1. Basic OPM Requirements for GS-0455, GS-0462 or GS-0401 positions,
2. Specialized Experience per IFPM Standard<sup>1</sup>,
3. NWCG Incident Management Qualifications, and
4. Additional Required Training

**Before October 1, 2010**

Incumbents must meet all of the minimum qualification standards as outlined in the *IFPM Standard* by October 1, 2010 to be considered fully qualified for the position.

New hires will have until October 1, 2010 to meet the NWCG Incident Management Qualifications and Additional Required Training for their position as outlined in the *IFPM Standard*. All OPM requirements must be met at the time of hire.

**On or After October 1, 2010**

All employees newly assigned to IFPM positions must meet all the minimum qualifications standards at the time of hire.

Agencies may have a specific extension request process in place to address employees who do not meet the October 1, 2010 deadline.

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<sup>1</sup> The *IFPM Standard* does not address the substitution of education for specialized experience. Refer to the Group Coverage Qualification Standard for Professional and Scientific Positions and Group Coverage Qualification Standard for Technical and Medical Support Positions in the *OPM Operating Manual for Qualification Standards for General Schedule Positions*.

D. Competencies for Key Fire Management Positions

Competencies constitute the requisite knowledge, skills and abilities which, when acquired, allow a person to perform a task or function at a defined level of proficiency based on complexity. The *IFPM Standard* identifies both position-specific and common competencies.

The position-specific and common competencies should be used as a guide by the employee and supervisor in developing an IDP and assessing employee performance. Competency Checklists and Planning Tools for each of the 13 key positions can be found on the *IFPM Standard* website at: <http://ifpm.nifc.gov>.

X. **Recruitment And Staffing For IFPM Positions**

Upon receiving a request to fill a vacancy, the human resources specialist will consult with fire management to determine if an IFPM position is being filled and how recruitment will take place. Supervisors must first consult the agency-specific crosswalk to determine the correct IFPM position to be advertised. The *IFPM Standard* contains the minimum qualification standards (as outlined above) for each of the 13 key positions. The supervisor should ensure language in the vacancy announcement is consistent with requirements in the *IFPM Standard*.

Each agency will determine the appropriate applicant assessment tools (e.g., task statements or KSAs). These may be included in the vacancy announcement or in an on-line questionnaire.

All additional standard statements relative to posting a vacancy announcement or recruitment notice (e.g., area of consideration, description of duties, firefighter retirement coverage, minimum entry age, physical requirements and/or medical standards, etc.) should be included.

A. Single Grade Recruitment:

**Before October 1, 2010:** Applicants must meet all OPM series requirements to be considered eligible. Applicants do not need to meet NWCG Incident Management Qualifications and Additional Required Training. In cases where selected applicants do not meet NWCG Incident Management Qualifications and Additional Required Training, they are required to sign a Condition of Employment (Appendix D-6) prior to placement. The Condition of Employment is an acknowledgment by the employee prior to employment that they are required to obtain the missing qualifications prior to October 1, 2010 or face possible removal from their position.

**On or After October 1, 2010:** Applicants must meet all IFPM minimum qualification standards in order to be considered an eligible applicant.

B. Temporary Employees and Student Temporary Employment Program (STEP):

**Before October 1, 2010:** Temporary employees (GS-5 and above) do not have to meet the NWCG Incident Management Qualifications and Additional Required Training for their position at the time of hire, however all OPM requirements must be met at the time of hire.

**On or After October 1, 2010:** Temporary employees (GS-5 and above) must meet all IFPM minimum qualification standards at the time of hire.

C. Student Career Experience Program (SCEP):

SCEP's will be treated as being in a developmental position. See "Multi-Grade (developmental) Recruitment above.

D. Standard Vacancy Announcement Language (for GS-455/462/401 series)

The following language should be used when advertising IFPM positions. Make sure the correct position and qualification requirements are utilized.

"This position has been identified as one of the key 13 fire management positions in the Interagency Fire Program Management (IFPM) Standard, and will be subject to minimum qualification standards (MQS). As a condition of employment, prior to entering this position, selectees must sign a statement acknowledging their agreement to obtain all NWCG Qualifications and Additional Required Training as specified in the IFPM Standard no later than October 1, 2010. Applicants who do not successfully complete the full IFPM requirements by that date will be removed from the position.

**Key Fire Management Position:** Prescribed Fire and Fuels Specialist (PFFS)

**NWCG Incident Management Qualifications:**

- Prescribed Fire Burn Boss, Type 2 (RXB2)
- and-
- Engine Boss (ENGB) or Crew Boss (CRWB)

**Additional Required Training:** None

**Currency Requirement:** Required

A copy of the IQCS master record should be requested as supporting documentation in the vacancy announcement to validate NWCG Qualifications and Additional Required Training.

## XI. IFPM Standard Implementation Process

The following steps are to be used for the implementation of the *IFPM Standard*:

### **Step 1: Complexity Analysis**

A *Complexity Analysis Guide* is available (Appendix A) to help clarify the Complexity Descriptors in the *IFPM Standard* Complexity Analysis. All bureaus or agencies should use this guide in the application of the complexity analysis.

NOTE: Grade is not tied to the complexity level. Grade is determined through the classification process.

### **Step 2: Position Identification**

Fire management must be constantly reviewing each position within their fire organization to determine which positions are affected by the *IFPM Standard*. The positions include encumbered as well as vacant positions that are listed in the unit fire plan (e.g., table of organization/work chart). Most of the analysis has been completed in advance in the *Standard Position Description Crosswalk*. This is not an all-inclusive list. For those positions identified in the crosswalk the employee and his/her supervisor will complete and submit the appropriate documentation to their servicing human resources office. Further guidance for evaluation of positions can be found in the *Position Identification Process* in Appendix B.

Standard Position Descriptions are available:

DOI - [http://flert.nifc.gov/DOI\\_std\\_pds.htm](http://flert.nifc.gov/DOI_std_pds.htm)

FS - [http://fsweb.hcm.fs.fed.us/employment/Open\\_Continuous\\_Recruitments.php](http://fsweb.hcm.fs.fed.us/employment/Open_Continuous_Recruitments.php) (Click on Permanent OCRs near the bottom.)

### **Identification of National Fire Program Manager (NFPM) and Geographic Area Fire Program Manager (GFPM) Positions**

There may be rare instances in national and geographic organizations where the senior fire program manager assigns the IFPM requirements to a qualified senior officer. For example, at the National Level, an agency's National Fire Director may assign the National Fire Program Manager (NFPM) responsibilities (or duties) to the National Operations Lead (i.e., Assistant Director of Operations or equivalent).

Appendix B includes:

- *Position Identification Process*
- *Unit Position Identification Worksheet*
- *Standard Position Description Crosswalk*

### **Step 3: Determination of Qualifications**

The human resources office will review qualifications for new hires and incumbents identified in the *Unit Position Identification Worksheet* (Appendix B) submitted by fire managers against the requirements in the *IFPM Standard*. These processes can be found in *Determination of Qualifications Process* in Appendix C.

For guidance on advertising and filling vacant positions refer to the *Recruitment and Staffing for IFPM Positions* section of this plan.

Appendix C includes:

- *Qualification Review Process*
- *Qualifications Review Checklists (Technical or Professional)*

### **Step 4: Notification of Qualification Status**

The human resources specialist will notify the employee in writing with regard to his/her qualifications. Guidance on this process can be found in Appendix D: *Notification of Qualification Status Process*.

Appendix D includes:

- *Notification of Qualification Status Process*
- *Incumbent Memo: GS-0455/GS-0462 and GS-0401*
- *IFPM Employee Agreement*
- *IFPM Conditions of Employment*
- *Conditions of Employment Agreement Template (New Hires)*

### **Step 5: Assess Employee Development Needs**

The fire program manager must assess the employee's training and development needs to meet the IFPM minimum qualification standards. The appropriate Qualification Review Checklist completed by the human resources office should be used in this process.

### **Step 6: Initiate Individual Development Plans**

Once an employee's training and development needs have been assessed in Step 5, the employee and supervisor must develop and initiate an Individual Development Plan (IDP) based on that assessment. An IDP template is provided in Appendix E.

Refer to the *Competency Assessment* section below for further guidance.

Appendix E includes:

- *Individual Development Plan (IDP) Template*

**Step 7: Employee Monitoring**

Each employee (new hires and incumbents) in an IFPM position should now be evaluated by their supervisor on a quarterly basis (at least every three months) and update their IDP when warranted.

**Step 8: Reevaluation of Incumbents Previously Determined to Not Meet Qualifications**

Once an employee has obtained the minimum qualification standards for his/her position it is the responsibility of the employee and his/her supervisor to submit appropriate qualifying documentation to the servicing human resources office. Refer to Step 3, Determination of Qualifications, for further guidance.

The Incident Qualification and Certification System (IQCS) must be updated on a regular basis to reflect current accomplishments.

Note: If it appears the employee will not meet the minimum qualification standards for his/her position by October 1, 2010, the first level supervisor is responsible for notifying the employee's second level supervisor and the human resources specialist prior to October 1, 2010. Refer to Step 9.

**Step 9: Removal from Current Position**

The employee will be removed from his/her position if they fail to complete requirement(s) outlined in the *IFPM Standard* by October 1, 2010.

The agency will consider all possible options for continuation of employment if the employee fails to meet the requirement(s) for his/her current position. Refer to your agency human resources office for policy and guidance.

## **APPENDICES**

### **Appendix A: Complexity Analysis**

- Complexity Analysis Guide

### **Appendix B: Position Identification**

- Position Identification Process
- Unit Position Identification Worksheet
- Standard Position Description Crosswalks

### **Appendix C: Determination of Qualifications**

- Qualification Review Process
- Qualifications Review Checklists

### **Appendix D: Notification of Qualification Status**

- Notification of Qualification Status Process
- Incumbent Memo: GS-0455/GS-0462 and GS-0401
- IFPM Employee Agreement
- IFPM Conditions of Employment
- Condition of Employment Agreement Template (New Hires)

### **Appendix E: Individual Development Plan (IDP)**

- Individual Development Plan (IDP) Template