



**File Code:** 6150-3-1  
**Route To:** (5100)

**Date:** August 20, 2004

**Subject:** Definition of Fire Crew for Entitlement to Hazard Pay on a Wildland Fire Assignment

**To:** Regional Foresters, Station Directors, Area Director, IITF Director, and WO Staff

Over the past several years, there has been much confusion over the entitlement to hazard pay while on a wildland fire assignment. We have addressed this issue in an attempt to be fair and equitable, while staying within the guidelines issued by the Office of Personnel Management.

We have found that it is unclear to employees, managers, and fire line supervisors how to interpret 5 CFR 550, Subpart I, Appendix A as it pertains to their entitlement to a 25 percent hazardous pay differential when fighting forest and rangeland fires. The first hazardous firefighting duty listed in the CFR addresses "*Forest and range fires*" and states entitlement to the differential when the employee is "participating as a member of a firefighting crew in fighting forest and range fires on the fireline".

Who is a "member of a firefighting crew?" Should this be simply interpreted to mean the firefighter crew assigned to the fireline, or does it apply to anyone assigned to the fireline such as the Safety Officer, Emergency Medical Technician (EMT), etc.? Since this hazard pay definition only applies to the wildland fire agencies, the Forest Service may have some discretion in its interpretation. As a result, we have made the following determination for Forest Service employees assigned to fire incidents: "A member of a firefighting crew shall be defined as anyone assigned to a fireline for the shift."

Incidental or occasional assignments, that make it necessary for an employee to be sent to the fireline area, are not to be considered as included in this definition. Some examples of employees not meeting the definition are as follows. A truck driver, delivering supplies to the fireline area, would not meet this definition. A Fire Information Officer, taking media representatives near the fire area, would not meet this definition.

An EMT, Safety Officer, Strike Team Leader, Division Supervisor, or other technical specialist advising on line location, would all be covered provided that they were assigned to the fireline as their primary work area for the shift. If the employee's primary work area is other than the fireline for the shift and he/she is only called to the fireline area for other than fireline assignments, he/she would not be entitled to hazard pay.

This clarification, as to who is a "member of a firefighting crew" for determining hazardous pay entitlement, should be retroactively applied beginning in Pay Period 1, 2004 and thereafter. Affected employees, who meet the above definition and were denied hazard pay, should prepare and submit corrected time and attendance reports for the applicable period in which they would have been covered.



The Forest Service Partnership Council has approved this definition of firefighter crewmember assigned to the fireline.

Line officers need to distribute this clarification letter to all fire incident teams as soon as possible. Questions should be addressed to Gary Wilson at [gwilson@fs.fed.us](mailto:gwilson@fs.fed.us) or Debbie Rigden at [drigden@fs.fed.us](mailto:drigden@fs.fed.us).

/s/ Irving W. Thomas (for)  
CHRISTOPHER L. PYRON  
Deputy Chief for Business Operations

cc: Janice Bradley, Mary E Lawson, Emmy Ibison, Virginia Heerwagen