



Forest Service Implementation Plan For the Interagency Fire Program Management (IFPM) Standard and Guide



I. Background

Studies of wildland fire incidents for a number of years highlighted the fact that more stringent and 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 qualification 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 Standard and Guide* (IFPM Standard) was approved by the Federal Fire and Aviation Leadership Council (FFALC) in January 2000. 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 implementation of *IFPM Standard*.

October 1, 2010 marked the date when all incumbents in an IFPM position were expected to be at or above the minimum qualification levels and possess the required training for their position. In addition, all new hires into an IFPM position are expected to meet the IFPM Standard.

II. Implementation Plan Update

This implementation plan has been updated to reflect recent interagency changes to the *IFPM Standard* and Forest Service implementation procedures that differ from DOI implementation. Unless noted, the overall intent of IFPM has not changed.

Key Updates:

- In 2010 the wildland agencies were informed that OPM policy prohibits the use of "currency" as a selective placement factor. As a result, this implementation plan has been updated to reflect that an applicant who was previously qualified in the primary and secondary core NWCG Incident Management Qualifications is still eligible to apply for an IFPM position. If offered an IFPM position that has a currency requirement, the applicant's acceptance must include an agreement to obtain and maintain currency (as defined by PMS 310-1) for as long as they occupy that position (see VIII., Section B).
- On July 8, 2011 Forest Service Chief Tidwell issued a memo rescinding former-Chief Kimbell's May 29, 2009 memo that temporarily suspended the use of the GS-0401 Fire Management Specialist series for GS-12 and below IFPM positions. This new memo provides current direction for the re-instatement of the GS-0401 series

for the IFPM Prescribed Fire and Fuels Specialist (PFFS) position, and clarifies the agency's job series guidelines for classification of FAM positions in the future to include managerial IFPM positions in the GS-0301 job series¹ (see VIII., Section A).

III. Scope

The purpose of the *IFPM Standard* is to establish minimum qualification standards for key FAM positions within the Forest Service. Full implementation of this plan will require the cooperation of fire program managers, supervisors, affected employees, and human resource (HR) specialists at all levels in the Forest Service.

IV. Communications

The *IFPM Standard* and related documentation on the implementation process can be found on the internet in two distinct locations:

- Forest Service specific: <http://www.fs.fed.us/fire/management/ifpm/index>
- Interagency: <http://www.ifpm.nifc.gov>

V. Labor-Management Relations

NFFE Bargaining Units: This implementation plan contains procedures and appropriate arrangements which have been negotiated between Forest Service and NFFE-FSC [reference 5 USC 7106(b) (2) and (3)]. It is not to be altered or supplemented below the National level by units covered by NFFE. As appropriate, National level changes will not be made without notice to NFFE-FSC, and bargaining between the parties, pursuant to Master Agreement Article 11.

Other Bargaining Units: Management may be required to meet additional labor management obligations as appropriate with other unions representing bargaining unit employees who are impacted by the implementation of this plan, in accordance with provisions of their respective collective bargaining agreements.

VI. Tracking Minimum Qualification Standards

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

¹Use of the GS-0301 series is subject to position review and approval from USDA and OPM for enhanced retirement coverage.

VII. 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 12 key fire management positions common to the Forest Service. On July 8, 2011, the Forest Service re-instated the GS-0401-series² for two IFPM fuels specialist positions and restructured the occupational series previously used for managerial IFPM positions.

Firefighting positions³

- Engine Module Supervisor (0462)
- Supervisory Engine Operator (0462)
- Senior Firefighter (0462)
- Initial Attack Dispatcher (0462)
- Interagency Hotshot Crew Superintendent (0462)
- Helitack Manager (0462)

Managerial positions⁴

- National Fire Program Manager (0301)
- Geographic Fire Program Manager (0301)
- Unit Fire Program Manager (0301)
- Dispatch Center Manager (0301)
- Assistant Dispatch Center Manager (0301)

Fire Management Specialists²

- Prescribed Fire and Fuels Specialists (0401)

²Per Chief Tidwell's July 8, 2011 memo, the GS-0401 Fire Management Specialists series is to be reinstated for the IFPM Prescribed Fire and Fuels Specialist (PFFS) positions at the High and Moderate complexity levels, and the GS-0401 NSPD and OCR will be made available for filling these positions. See Sections VIII and IX below.

³Firefighting positions are those that are typically at the GS-02 through GS-08 grade levels and perform the majority of the operational wildland and dispatching duties. These positions will be classified and filled using the GS-0462-series NSPD and OCR.

⁴Managerial positions are those that are typically at the GS-09 through GS-15 grade levels and manage fire programs at the Unit, Center, Regional, or National level. FAM managerial positions are in the process of being reclassified in the GS-0301 Administrative/Managerial occupational series, and the NSPD/OCR for these positions will be made available once they have been approved by the Department for firefighter retirement coverage. GS-0462 NSPDs are to continue to be used until the new Admin/Managerial NSPDs become available.

FAM Positions That Are Not in IFPM Standard

The Forest Service has identified a number of FAM positions which are not affected by IFPM or FS-FPM Standards. Those include, but are not limited to:

- Fire Ecologists
- Fire Planners
- Certain Fuels Management positions (See note below)
- SCEPs (until they are converted into an IFPM position)
- Wildland Firefighter Apprentices
- GACC-level Dispatchers
- Logistics Dispatchers
- Training Officers
- Forest Aviation Officers
- Prevention and Mitigation positions
- Non-Helitack Exclusive-Use Helicopter Managers

Note: Categorizing a Forest Fuels Planner/Specialist as the unit's IFPM Prescribed Fire and Fuels Specialist (PFFS) is dependent on the duties the employee performs and the position description they occupy. Duties that require the incumbent to be subject to the PFFS minimum qualification standards are typically operational in nature which may include development, oversight, and implementation of prescribed fire projects. If the majority of the employee's duties involve vegetation management planning and environmental analysis (NEPA, NFMA, and LRMP development), or are restricted to administrative tasks in managing the unit's fuels program (budget, accomplishment reporting, and out-year planning); and oversight of prescribed fire implementation is managed by another employee, then the unit has the option to not require their Fuels Planner to be subject to the IFPM requirements of a PFFS. However, use of the National Standard Position Description (NSPD) for Fuels Specialists must be carefully reviewed to ensure that the employee meets at least 80% of the duties and responsibilities described.

Unit

For the purpose of this implementation plan, at the program management level a unit is considered to be a Forest or multiple Forests that have been combined into one unit.

Forest Service employees of "Service First" organizations should implement IFPM as per the Forest Service implementation procedures contained in this plan.

Geographic Area

Geographic Area is considered to be a Forest Service 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 grade level of the key fire management positions is influenced by the complexity rating and is described in the *Forest Service SPD Crosswalk*.

C. Minimum Qualification Standard

The IFPM Standard contains the required minimum qualifications for each of the 12 key fire management positions. These include:

1. Basic OPM Requirements for GS-0462, GS-0301, or GS-0401 positions,
2. Specialized experience per OPM Qualification Standards⁵,
3. NWCG Incident Management Qualifications, and
4. Additional Required Training

On October 1, 2010, the NWCG Incident Management Qualifications and Additional Required Training identified for each IFPM position became selective placement factors (SPF) for positions covered under IFPM. All incumbents of IFPM positions are required to possess the Primary and Secondary Core NWCG Incident Management Qualifications and Additional Required Training as conditions of their employment in the position.

The Forest Service has developed an extension request process to address employees who did not meet the October 1, 2010 deadline (see Section X., Step 9).

Exception for Requiring 90-days of Previous Wildland Firefighting Experience for Incumbent IFPM Dispatchers

For those individuals who encumbered a secondary firefighter position when this requirement was imposed on December 20, 2006, the IFPM 90-day requirement of previous wildland firefighting experience will not apply so long as the employee remains in his/her current position. However, if these individuals seek reassignment, promotion, detail, or change-to-lower grade to other secondary positions, they will have to obtain the 90-days of wildland firefighting experience in order to qualify and be considered. As a reminder, all secondary covered positions (including IFPM dispatch positions) are required to meet the 90-days previous wildland firefighting experience requirement. For additional information, refer to the April 5, 2011 memo: [Memo](#)

This exception does not apply to new employees hired into IFPM Dispatch positions after December 20, 2006.

⁵The *IFPM Standard* does not address the substitution of education for specialized experience. Refer to the Group Coverage Qualification Standard for Professional and Scientific Positions, Group Coverage Qualification Standard for Technical and Medical Support Positions and Group Coverage Qualification Standards for Administrative and Management 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 are to be used as guidance for the employee and supervisor when developing an Individual Development Plan (IDP) and assessing employee performance. Competency Checklists and Planning Tools for each of the 12 IFPM positions can be found on the IFPM Standard website at: <http://www.ifpm.nifc.gov/>.

VIII. Recruitment and Staffing for IFPM Positions

When filling a vacancy, the supervisor must first consult the *Forest Service Standard Position Description (SPD) Crosswalk* to determine the correct IFPM position that is being filled. The *Forest Service SPD Crosswalk* contains the minimum qualification standards for each of the 12 IFPM positions. The supervisor should ensure the language in the Vacancy Outreach is consistent with the requirements in the *Forest Service SPD Crosswalk (Crosswalk)*.

All additional standard statements relative to the position (e.g., area of consideration, description of duties, firefighter retirement coverage, minimum entry age, physical requirements and/or medical standards, required supporting documentation, etc.) should be included in the vacancy outreach notice and vacancy announcement.

National Standard Position Descriptions (NSPDs) have been developed for all IFPM positions, and the *Forest Service SPD Crosswalk* identifies the recommended NSPD to be used. Managers are encouraged to use the recommended NSPD listed when filling a vacant IFPM position provided that the duties described in the NSPD are at least 80% accurate and reflect all the grade controlling duties of the position. Open Continuous Rosters (OCR) for each of the NSPDs have also been developed and contain the IFPM selective placement factors to determine an applicant's eligibility for the position.

As described in Chief Tidwell's July 8, 2011 memo, the GS-0401 Natural Resource/Fire Management Specialist NSPDs will be re-instated for the following IFPM positions:

- Prescribed Fire and Fuels Specialist (PFFS-High Complexity), GS-0401-11 (FS2016)
- Prescribed Fire and Fuels Specialist (PFFS-Mod Complexity), GS-0401-09 (FS2015)

Vacant PFFS-High and Moderate complexity positions are to be filled using the GS-0401-series NSPD and OCR that have been developed for these positions. The low-complexity PFFS position will continue to be filled using the GS-0462 NSPD and OCR developed for this position.

As HRM and FAM develop managerial NSPDs in the GS-0301 series, vacant IFPM positions identified to be transitioned to the GS-0301 series are to be filled using the new NSPD. It should be noted that the GS-0301 series is an Administrative/Managerial occupational series, and requires that applicants be rated on their past experiences and abilities as program managers in addition to knowledge of managing firefighting operations.

A. IFPM Position Recruitment:

The *Forest Service SPD Crosswalk* identifies the recommended series, grade, and the NWCG Qualifications and Additional Required Training that are required for each IFPM position. Recruitment and outreach must inform potential candidates that NWCG qualification currency is NOT a selective placement factor.

GS-0462 Positions: In order to be eligible for an IFPM position in the GS-0462 series, applicants must:

- Meet the OPM requirements for the GS-0462 series, including specialized experience requirements,
-and-
- Be currently certified in the Primary and Secondary Core NWCG Incident Management Qualifications, or can show that he/she was once certified in the qualifications,
-and-
- Have successfully completed the Additional Required Training (if applicable)
- Once hired, currency must be maintained

The above requirements are required even if the applicant is applying for the lower grade level of a career ladder, such as: GS-08 of a GS-0462-08/09 DAFMO career ladder, or the GS-04 of a GS-0462-04/05 SFF career ladder.

GS-0401 Positions: In order to be eligible for an IFPM position in the GS-0401 series, applicants must:

- Possess all of the OPM positive education and specialized experience requirements for the GS-0401 Supplemental Qualification Standards for Fire Management Specialists,
-and-
- Be currently certified in the Primary and Secondary Core NWCG Incident Management Qualifications, or can show that he/she was once certified in the qualifications,
-and-
- Has successfully completed the Additional Required Training (if applicable)
- Once hired, currency must be maintained if required (see *Forest Service SPD Crosswalk*)

GS-0301 Positions: In order to be eligible for an IFPM position in the GS-0301 series, applicants must:

- Meet the OPM requirements for the GS-0301 series, including specialized experience requirements,
-and-
- Be currently certified in the Primary and Secondary Core NWCG Incident Management Qualifications, or can show that he/she was once certified in the qualifications,
-and-
- Has successfully completed the Additional Required Training (if applicable)

- Once hired, currency must be maintained if required (see *Forest Service SPD Crosswalk*)

The above requirements are required even if the applicant is applying for the lower grade level of a career ladder, such as: GS-12 of a GS-0301-12/13 FFMO career ladder.

It should be noted that the GS-0301 series is an Administrative/Managerial occupational series, and requires that applicants be rated on their past experiences and abilities as program managers and knowledge to manage fire fighting operations. Final approval for use of the GS-0301 series is pending USDA and OPM approval.

B. Requiring Currency for Applicants:

OPM policy does not allow the use of "currency" as a selective placement factor. Therefore:

- Applicants who were once qualified in the Primary and Secondary Core NWCG Incident Management Qualifications but lost currency in one or more of the required NWCG qualifications are still eligible to apply for IFPM positions, provided they are able to provide supporting documentation that they were once certified in the required NWCG qualifications
- If an applicant who lost currency in one or more of the required NWCG qualifications is selected into an IFPM position, they will be granted a not-to-exceed (NTE) 12-month period from the date of hire to become re-certified, and thereafter must maintain currency for that position
- All applicants must have successfully completed the Additional Required Training (if required) in order to be considered eligible for the position

C. Maintaining Currency

With the exception of the NFPM, GFPM, and UFPM positions, all IFPM positions require that incumbents maintain currency in their Primary and Secondary Core NWCG qualifications for as long as they occupy that position (see PMS 310-1 for definition of "Currency" and how to maintain).

If an employee who is encumbering an IFPM position which requires currency loses their currency for one or more of the required NWCG qualifications (i.e., does not perform in that NWCG position or in another position that maintains currency within the stipulated time frames) the supervisor shall:

- Inform the employee that they do not meet the IFPM requirements for their position and take steps to assist the employee to regain the required certification
- Update the employee's IDP to provide the necessary training or trainee assignments needed to regain certification
- Work with HR/ER officials to identify an appropriate time frame, NTE 12 months, in which the employee will be required to regain certification

- If the reason for lost currency is related to the employee's inability to complete the Arduous WCT due to injury or medical reason, the supervisor should establish a reasonable time frame for recovery and recertification based on the nature of the injury
- The employee should be given preferential consideration for assignments necessary to regain currency. Employees that refuse such assignments should be counseled.

D. Applicant Supporting Documentation for Required NWCG Qualifications and Required Training

In order to be considered for an IFPM position, applicants must submit a recent copy of their Incident Qualification and Certification System (IQCS) Master Record or equivalent documentation that contains documented 3rd party proof of the NWCG Qualification or Additional Required Training requirement. This supporting documentation must be submitted with the application. Failure to provide this documentation will result in not being considered for the position.

If the IQCS or IQS Master Record cannot be obtained (or not used in the case of private sector), the applicant must submit documentation that shows the applicant has attained the required NWCG Qualifications and Training. Submitted documentation must include 3rd party certification (e.g., signature of the certifying official's name, title, contact information, and date of certification).

Proof of NWCG qualification, such as:

- Copy of Position Task Book certification page (page 2 of the PTB) that has been signed and dated by the applicant's certifying official, –or-
- Screen capture from IQCS (or IQS) database showing certification of the required NWCG qualification (i.e., "Incident Qualification Card" tab, "Competency Evaluation" tab, "Qual Card Summary" tab, or "Current Competencies" tab, etc.)

-AND-

Proof of required NWCG training (if applicable), such as:

- Copy of the required training certificate that is signed and dated by the Lead Instructor or Course Coordinator –or-
- Copy of the course completion letter that is signed and dated by the course coordinator that shows successful completion of the NWCG course –or-
- Screen capture from IQCS database (or IQS for state employees) showing attainment of the required training (i.e., "Student Training Summary" tab, "Competency Evaluation" tab, "Responder Training" tab, "Current Competencies" tab...etc.)

Applicants with expired NWCG qualifications are still eligible to apply, however they must attach the above documentation that proves that at one time they were certified in the required NWCG qualifications (i.e., expired qualification due to expiration of WCT or refresher, or expired due to lack of position performance currency).

E. Developmental Position Recruitment

Positions that are filled at lower grades or in a different position description than identified in the *Forest Service SPD Crosswalk* for the purpose of recruitment and development for future workforce needs are not considered IFPM positions, and are not subject to the minimum qualification standards of the full performance level (FPL) IFPM target position. Although, if a particular non-competitive career ladder position includes two IFPM positions in its progression, the employee must meet the IFPM qualifications required at each grade level.

Example 1: New employees who are hired into the Wildland Fire Apprenticeship Program (WFAP) using PDs specifically for apprentice positions (e.g., in the GS-0462 or GS-0499 series) should not be considered to be occupying an IFPM Senior Firefighter position until they complete the requirements of the Wildland Fire Apprenticeship Program and are converted into the NSPDs for an IFPM Senior Firefighter.

Example 2: A Forest opts to recruit and develop an employee through the Student Career Experience Program (SCEP) that is targeted to fill the duties of the Forest's Prescribed Fire and Fuels Specialist –Moderate Complexity (GS-0401-09). During the employee's development at the lower grade levels (i.e. GS-05 thru 07) the employee should not be considered to be occupying the IFPM PFFS-Moderate complexity position until they are at the GS-09 FPL, and will not be subject to the IFPM Standard for the PFFS position. However, the employee may be subject to FS-FPM Standard for sub-unit or subordinate fuels positions depending if Agency Standard Position Descriptions (SPD) are used.

In cases such as this, the local unit must work with Human Resources to place the employee into a developmental position description that adequately describes the duties, responsibilities, and factors of the position.

F. Temporary (1039) and Student Temporary Employment Program (STEP) Employees in IFPM:

The IFPM requirements also apply to temporary employees that are occupying SFF or Dispatch positions at the GS-05 or higher grade levels (see *Forest Service SPD Crosswalk*). The following implementation procedures apply to temporary employees:

New Temporary Employees: In order to be eligible for a temporary IFPM position (i.e., SFF or IA Dispatcher), applicants for a new temporary position (GS-05 and above) must:

- Be currently certified in the Primary and Secondary Core NWCG Qualifications, or can show that they were once certified, -and-
- Possess the Additional Required Training (if applicable)

Temporary Employees with Rehire Eligibility: Prior to being rehired, temporary employees in an IFPM position with re-hire eligibility must:

- Be currently certified in the Primary and Secondary Core NWCG Qualifications, or can show that they were once certified,

-and-

- Possess the Additional Required Training (if applicable)

An individual with rehire eligibility who does not meet the IFPM Standard for their prior position may be rehired into another agency position on the same major sub-division for which they meet the qualifications, to include the selective placement factors that may be required for that other position.

When re-hiring a temporary employee into an IFPM position after October 1, 2010, supervisors must attach supporting documentation (see D above) to the personnel action in SF-52 Tracker to show that the employee meets the IFPM selective placement factors (e.g., FFT1 and S-290 for Senior Firefighters or EDRC for Initial Attack Dispatchers).

G. Student Career Experience Program:

SCEPs will be treated as being in a developmental position. See "Developmental Position Recruitment" above.

H. Standard Vacancy Outreach Language for IFPM Positions

The following language and format is recommended for use when outreaching vacant IFPM positions. Make sure the correct position and NWCG qualification requirements are used.

Here is an example:

This position has been identified as one of the key fire management positions in the Interagency Fire Program Management (IFPM) Standard, and is subject to selective placement factors that are conditions of hire which went into effect on October 1, 2010.

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

NWCG Incident Management Qualifications:

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

Additional Required Training: None

Currency Requirement: Required to maintain currency once hired into the position.

Currency of NWCG qualifications is not required for selection. If not currently qualified, the applicant must provide documented evidence that they have been fully qualified in the past, and are able to regain currency within one year of being hired.

A copy of the IQCS master record must be submitted along with the application as supporting documentation to validate NWCG Qualifications and Additional Required Training.

I. Filling Temporary Promotions or Detail Assignments

Basic OPM requirements for occupational series (i.e., positive education and specialized experience if GS-0401 series) must be met for all temporary promotions or lateral detail assignments.

In addition, the IFPM required NWCG Qualifications and Additional Required Training must be met prior to placement into a temporary promotion assignment.

For development purposes, lateral detail assignments (temporary re-assignments in the same grade) do not require prior attainment of the NWCG Qualifications or Additional Required Training, however, managers should take necessary steps to avoid assigning the detailed employee duties that require possession of one of the NWCG qualifications, and ensure that those duties are assigned to a qualified individual.

IX. **Conversion of GS-0462 series PFFS Incumbents into the GS-0401 series**

As described in the attachment to Chief Tidwell's July 8, 2011 memo, employees that were hired into a PFFS position using a GS-0462 NSPD following issuance of former-Deputy Chief Kashdan's November 5, 2008 memo may be non-competitively re-assigned into a GS-0401 Fuels Management NSPD, provided:

- The current GS-0462 incumbent possesses the positive education and specialized experience requirements contained in the GS-0401 Supplemental Qualification Standard
- If the current GS-0462 incumbent does not possess the positive education and specialized experience requirements contained in the GS-0401 Supplemental Qualification Standard, they may remain in their position using the GS-0462 position description in which they were originally hired. However, managers must ensure that the professional duties requiring knowledge that uniquely come from positive education in natural resource, biological, or agricultural sciences are assigned to the appropriate professional position in the GS-0400 series within their organization.

If/when the position is vacated, the position should be filled using the appropriate GS-0401 NSPD (see *Forest Service SPD Crosswalk*)

The IFPM implementation deadline of October 1, 2010 only applied to the attainment of the required Primary and Secondary Core NWCG Incident Management Qualifications and Additional Required Training

No deadlines are imposed for conversion to the GS-0401 series

X. **IFPM Standard Implementation Process**

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

Step 1: Complexity Analysis

IFPM Standard requires that each Unit complete the IFPM Complexity Analysis to determine their complexity level. The resulting complexity levels (High, Moderate, or Low) correspond to the different level of minimum qualification standards required for key positions such as the Unit Fire Program Manager, Prescribed Fire and Fuels Specialist, and Dispatch Center Manager.

Note: The complexity level for Engine Module Leader Supervisor (EMLS) and Supervisory Engine Operator (SEOP) is based on the FS Complexity Analysis Rating for Engine Captains (see Sept 17, 2008 WO/HRM [memo](#)). This complexity rating is independent of the Unit's IFPM Complexity Analysis.

A *Complexity Analysis Guide* is available (Appendix A) to help clarify the Complexity Descriptors in the *IFPM Standard* Complexity Analysis at the Unit (Forest) level.

Periodically a Unit's IFPM Complexity Analysis may need to be re-analyzed. Changes to a Unit's complexity rating can be made at any time. The need for re-analysis may be generated at the local Unit level, or from Regional or National direction. Possible reasons for a re-analysis include, but are not limited to:

- Changes in protection area that increases or decreases a Unit's responsibility for providing fire protection
- The combining of multiple Units into an interagency zone or organization
- Addition or subtraction of key components to a Unit's fire management program

Changes to key elements of a fire management program should be "programmatic" and long term, and not adjustments to respond to a temporary arrangement.

Step 2: Position Identification

Fire Managers should periodically review each position within their Unit's fire organization to determine which positions are affected by the *IFPM Standard*. The *Forest Service SPD Crosswalk* displays the 12 key fire management positions affected by IFPM and identifies the recommended series, minimum grade, and NSPD for each position.

Appendix B contains a *Unit Position Identification Worksheet* (B-3) that is intended as an optional tracking tool to assist managers with identifying which of their positions are affected by IFPM Standard.

At a minimum, Units are required to continually update IQCS as new employees are hired or current employees are re-assigned or promoted into IFPM positions so the agency can monitor and track IFPM workforce accomplishments.

On October 1, 2010, the IFPM selective placement factors (SPF) were incorporated into the hiring process as a condition of hire. As such, further use of Incumbent Declarations is no longer necessary for incumbents or new hires unless:

- A. An applicant who lost currency in one or more of the Primary or Secondary Core requirements is selected for an IFPM position.
 - If an applicant who lost currency in one or more of their required NWCG qualifications is selected into a position that requires that he/she be able to maintain currency, then the supervisor must place the employee into a NTE 12-month Employment Agreement (see Appendix D)

- Upon recertification, the employee's status should be forwarded to the Forest FMO for final determination of their qualification status (see Step 3)
 - The new employee's IFPM status should be updated in IQCS and any supporting documentation used should be filed in their Master Record
- B. To be used as a Check Sheet for documenting that an employee who was granted an extension has met their IFPM requirements.

Further guidance for evaluation of positions can be found in the *Position Identification Process* in Appendix B.

Appendix B includes:

- *Position Identification Process*
- *Unit Position Identification Worksheet*
- *Incumbent Declaration*

Step 3: Determination of Qualifications

The Forest FMO is the responsible official for ensuring that all IFPM positions on their Unit are occupied with employees who meet the IFPM requirements for their positions.

The IFPM requirements can be found in the *Forest Service SPD Crosswalk*, and the process for making the *Determination of Qualifications* can be found in Appendix C of this plan.

The Incident Qualification and Certification System (IQCS) is the Forest Service's database of record for IFPM Standard, and the IFPM position category and qualification status should be promptly entered for all affected employees into IQCS by the Unit's IQCS Account Manager. All supporting documentation should be retained in the Employee's Redcard Master Record folder. Appendix D notices and agreements establishing conditions of employment should be routed through HRM for inclusion in the employee's Official Personnel Folder (eOPF).

A. Incumbents who were granted an extension to the IFPM Implementation Deadline:

- The Forest FMO is the responsible official to ensure that all encumbered employees on their Unit who were granted an extension following the October 1, 2010 implementation deadline meet the IFPM requirements within the agreed upon time
- Upon attainment of the IFPM requirements, the Forest FMO should review the employee's qualifications and/or required training, and certify that all requirements have been met
- In the event the incumbent is unable to attain the missing requirements prior to the end of the extension period, the Forest FMO is responsible to determine if an additional extension period would be sufficient (see Step 9), or if placement into another position is warranted

B. Newly-hired employee who lacks the currency requirement for their IFPM position:

- In the instances where an individual is hired into a position that requires currency, the Forest FMO is the responsible official for ensuring that the

employee is granted an appropriate extension sufficient to regain currency, but NTE 12 months (see Step 9 and Appendix D)

- Upon re-certification of the employee's NWCG qualification (i.e. employee regains currency), the Forest FMO should review the employee's qualifications and certify that all requirements have been met
- In the event the new employee was unable to be re-certified prior to the end of the extension period, the Forest FMO is responsible to determine if an additional extension period would be sufficient (see Step 9), or if placement into another position is warranted

Appendix C includes:

- *Qualification Review Process*

Step 4: Notification of Qualification Status

Upon completion of Step 3, the Forest FMO will be responsible for notifying the employee in writing with regard to his/her qualification status.

Guidance for this process can be found in Appendix D: *Notification of Qualification Status Process*.

Appendix D includes:

- *Notification of Qualification Status Process*
- *Notification of Qualification Memo(s) Template*
- *Employment Agreement Template for employees granted an extension*

Step 5: Assess Employee Development Needs

All supervisors must periodically assess their employee's training and development needs to meet and/or maintain the IFPM minimum qualification standards for the current position. The employee and their supervisor should consider the employee's next target position when assessing developmental needs.

It is important to realize that the IFPM requirements are now required to be attained prior to non-competitive entry into the next level position.

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) that will assist the employee to obtain the minimum requirements for their next target position within the appropriate timeframes (i.e., NWCG qualifications, NWCG training, or even positive education depending on the position).

Step 7: Employee Monitoring

It is expected that an employee in an IFPM position is evaluated by their supervisor at least twice per year and have their IDP updated when warranted. Supervisors should document results of the periodic assessments as well as any progress made by the employee.

For employees that have been granted an extension to the IFPM deadline, if it appears that the employee will not meet the requirements for his/her position by the agreed-upon deadline, the first-level supervisor is responsible for notifying the employee's second-level supervisor and the Forest FMO at least 75 days prior to expiration of that deadline. Refer to Step 9 for further guidance.

Step 8: Re-evaluation of Incumbents Previously Determined to Not Meet Qualifications

Once an employee has obtained the minimum qualification standard (NWCG Incident Management Qualifications or Additional Required Training) required for his/her position, it is the responsibility of the employee and his/her supervisor to submit supporting documentation (e.g., Incumbent Declaration, PTB, and/or training certificates) to the Forest FMO for review. Refer to *Step 3: Determination of Qualifications*, for further guidance.

In instances where the Forest FMO's qualifications need to be reviewed, the Forest Supervisor (or appropriate Regional Office staff) should conduct the review and document their findings.

The Incident Qualification and Certification System (IQCS) must be updated on a regular basis to reflect the employee's current status.

Step 9: Managing Employees Who Do Not Meet the IFPM Standard after October 1, 2010

Prior to Oct 1, 2010, the Forest Service implemented a NTE 12-month extension process for incumbents that did not meet the IFPM requirements on the implementation deadline, and all requests for extensions were to have been approved by the Regional Foresters.

Following the implementation deadline, the NTE 12-month extension process has been expanded to also be used in the event an employee was hired into an IFPM position but does not possess currency in one or more of the required Primary and Secondary Core NWCG Qualifications. Employee was eligible to be hired because they were once certified in the required NWCG qualifications.

To Request an Extension:

If a newly-hired employee lacks currency in one or more of their required NWCG qualifications, they may request a NTE 12-month extension, provided they comply with the following requirements:

- Employee must initiate the request for an extension within 45 days of the date of hire.
- The Forest FMO and Line Officer of the employee's home Unit must agree that there were mitigating circumstances outside of the employee's control, and agree

that an additional 12 months is a sufficient time for the employee to obtain the required training and experience, or regain certification if currency was lost.

- If the home unit determines that there is justification for recommending the extension, the written request must be submitted to the Regional Forester within 30 days of receiving the request. The request for extension must include the Forest FMO and Line Officer endorsement of the employee's request, a copy of the employee's Individual Development Plan (IDP), and identification of an individual on the same Unit (i.e., a supervisor) that will mentor and monitor the employee's progress in becoming certified in the missing NWCG Qualification and/or Training requirements, or regain currency re-certification in the following 12 months.
- Regional Forester review of the extension and subsequent approval or denial of the extension request must be communicated to the employee within 30 days of receiving the endorsement from the Forest.
- If the extension is granted, the employee will be required to sign an Employment Agreement contained Appendix D, agreeing to work towards meeting the NWCG Qualifications or Training, or currency recertification requirements in the agreed upon time. The base language of the Employment Agreement contained in Appendix D of this plan has been negotiated with NFFE-FSC, and is not to be modified without union representation if the employee is in the NFFE bargaining unit.
- The NTE 12-month extension will commence from the date that the request was approved by the Regional Forester.

Failure of the employee to submit a request in compliance with the above requirements, or disapproval of the request, will result in the employee being removed immediately from their IFPM duties, and offered placement into another position for which they are qualified, if available. Managers should work with HR Staffing Operations, WRAPs List coordinator, and/or Employee and Labor Relations to resolve this situation.

In the rare event that additional or continuing mitigating circumstances occur that preclude the employee from being able to obtain their missing NWCG Qualifications or Training, or currency re-certification requirements in the initial 12-month extension period, the employee may be eligible to submit a request for an additional 12-month extension on a case-by-case basis, subject to home Unit and Regional Forester concurrence. However it should be noted that these are expected to be rare instances.

Bargaining unit employees will be notified of their right to union representation in the Step 9 process with the supervisor and FMO, and their right to grieve qualification determinations.

Mitigating circumstances for not meeting the IFPM NWCG Qualifications or Training, or currency recertification requirements include, but are not limited to:

- Short-term medical condition or injury
- Employee was nominated for an NWCG class that is required for their position, but was not accepted into the course, or was accepted but employee was unable to

attend training for reasons outside of their control (e.g., illness, cancellation of the class, or travel cap)

- Insufficient training opportunities due to low fire activity prevented the employee from completing their Position Task Book
- A local Unit has been unable to implement prescribed fire projects in the last two or more seasons due to adverse conditions (i.e., long term drought) that were prevalent in that geographic area that prevented the employee from completing their Position Task Book for initial RX certification or currency re-certification
- Employee has initiated formal action to retire or to move into a non-IFPM position with an effective date prior to the end of January 3, 2012

Circumstances that would not qualify for an extension include but are not limited to:

- Employee was informed of their unqualified-IFPM status, but did not take sufficient steps to work towards meeting the IFPM requirements
- Opportunities to work on position taskbook or attend NWCG training were made available to the employee but the employee voluntarily opted not to take advantage of them
- Employee was unable or unwilling to take/pass the Work Capacity Test (WCT) at the level required for the NWCG qualifications their IFPM position requires
- Employee has not demonstrated the ability to successfully complete a NWCG position taskbook required for their position, and efforts to develop the employee's lack of skill or abilities have proven unsuccessful
- Employee has not demonstrated the ability to successfully complete a NWCG course required for their position, and efforts to develop the employee's lack of skill or abilities to successfully complete the curriculum have proven unsuccessful

In all the above cases, or others as applicable, supervisors should be documenting instances of employee refusal or inability to comply with training opportunities.

APPENDICES

Appendix A: Complexity Analysis

- Complexity Analysis Guide

Appendix B: Position Identification

- Position Identification Process
- Unit Position Identification Worksheet
- Incumbent Declaration

Appendix C: Determination of Qualifications

- Qualification Review Process

Appendix D: Notification of Qualification Status

- Notification of Qualification Status Process
- Notification of Qualification Memo(s)
- Employment Agreement Template for employees granted an extension