

**Forest Service Handbook
National Headquarters - Washington Office
Washington, DC**

**Forest Service Handbook 5109.17 – Fire And Aviation Management Qualifications Handbook
Chapter - Zero Code**

Amendment: 5109.17-2014-1

Effective date: April 10, 2014

Duration: This amendment is effective until superseded or removed.

Approved by: James E. Hubbard, Deputy Chief

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Responsible Staff:

Last Change: 5109.17-2008-1 to chapter 10

Superseded Document(s): 5109.17_zero_code, Amendment 5109.17-2007-2, August 6, 2007

Digest: Following is an explanation of the changes throughout the directive by section.

03: Removes redundant portions of policy clarification. Clarifies direction on acceptable qualifications when a person transfers into the Agency from another Agency or State that is affiliated with the National Wildfire Coordinating Group (NWCG).

04: Revises and clarifies the responsibilities for the National Incident Management Organization, Regional Directors, Unit Fire Program Manager, Forest Qualification Review Committees, District Rangers, and Employees.

04.41: Adds direction at paragraph 14 that Administratively Determined personnel when hired by the Forest Service are considered “employees” and are required to adhere to the training requirements in the Forest Service Fire and Aviation Qualifications Guide.

06: Revises references and removes obsolete library requirements. Adds reference to the Forest Service Fire and Aviation Qualifications Guide (FSFAQG).

07: Updates Review and Revision procedures.

08: Updates references to the National Interagency Incident Management System and the National Response Framework.

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02 - Objective

To establish positions, qualifications, and certification requirements in fire and aviation management and ensure Forest Service personnel have the organization, training, and qualifications to carry out fire and aviation management policies and safe, cost-efficient programs consistent with land and resource management objectives.

The application of Fire Suppression Foundational Doctrine (see FSM 5103) to all aspects of our business requires that we take less prescriptive approaches to managing our work force. All employees must be prepared to function safely and effectively in the wildland fire environment. This can be accomplished through training, education, experience, and physical fitness programs tailored to the specific fireline assignments for which employees are being prepared.

03 - Policy

1. Forest Service employees must comply with the qualifications requirements for the skills and knowledge unique to fire and aviation management and the Incident Command System (ICS), as established by the National Wildfire Coordinating Group (NWCG) in the Wildland Fire Qualification System Guide, Publication Management System (PMS) 310-1 (referenced in FSM 5108).
2. Forest Service employees must comply with any additional training and qualifications requirements as set forth in The Forest Service Fire and Aviation Qualifications Guide (FSFAQG) which determine all fire and aviation management position qualifications. The Guide is hosted on the Fire and Aviation Management Publications/Resources website: <http://www.fs.fed.us/fire/publications/index.html>
3. Forest Service Course Coordinators and Instructors must comply with the training and instructor standards, as established by the National Wildfire Coordinating Group (NWCG) in the Field Manager's Course Guide, (PMS 901-1).
4. Forest Service employees must accept qualifications for personnel currently employed and certified by State agencies or other non-Federal cooperators (such as, city and rural fire departments) when participating in cooperative fire management efforts, provided they meet the minimum position requirements as specified in the NWCG Wildland Fire Qualifications Systems Guide, PMS 310-1 (referenced in FSM 5108).
5. Employees transferring to the Forest Service from another National Wildfire Coordinating Group (NWCG) affiliated agency must be re-evaluated by the Certifying Official to determine certification. The Forest Service recognizes full qualifications established by other NWCG affiliated agencies, but these qualifications must be adequately documented and currency maintained. Any refreshers, physical fitness tests, or required assessments must also be satisfactorily completed, if applicable. If the individual enters service as a trainee, any additional Agency training requirements for these positions must be completed prior to certification.

04 - Responsibility

04.1 - Washington Office

1. The Director of Fire and Aviation must:
 - a. Delegate to the George Washington-Jefferson National Forest Qualifications and Review Committee (FQRC) the authority to review all Washington Office responder's qualifications and to recommend certification, recertification, or decertification. The George Washington-Jefferson FQRC recommends certification, recertification, or decertification to the Deputy Director, Operations who takes the appropriate action for the Washington Office responders.
 - b. Delegate to the Assistant Director, Operations, National Interagency Fire Center (NIFC) the authority to establish and maintain a NIFC Qualifications and Review Committee in order to review all NIFC and associated units (such as, National Advanced Fire and Resource Institute (NAFRI), Wildland Firefighter Apprenticeship Program (WFAP), Prescribed Fire Training Center (PFTC)) responder's qualifications and to recommend certification, recertification, or decertification.
2. Director of Law Enforcement and Investigations must:
 - a. Annually provide a listing of Washington Office duty station law enforcement personnel that meet the position qualifications for the Security Specialist Type 1 (SEC1) and Security Manager (SECM) to the Virginia Interagency Coordination Center at the George Washington-Jefferson National Forest.
 - b. Ensure all Washington Office Law Enforcement and Investigations personnel meet position requirements.

04.2 - National Incident Management Organization

National Incident Management Organization (NIMO) Incident Management Teams contribute to improving incident management capability, capacity, and availability through delivery, certification of training, and experience while on incidents. NIMO Incident Management Teams must:

1. Coordinate with the Home Unit/Certifying Official to provide for the development of the employee's qualifications and skills to enable a successful level of performance.
2. Provide classroom and/or field training and a final certificate of completion (if applicable).
3. Provide the Unit Fire Program Manager with documentation of training and experience that has been offered to the employee.

04.3 - Regions and Area

1. Regional Foresters and the Area Director must:
 - a. Establish and maintain a Regional Qualification Review Committee (RQRC) (FSM 5120).
 - b. Supplement the fire and aviation management qualifications requirements only to comply with State or local law, such as requirements related to bloodborne pathogens, first responder, and hazardous materials requirements.
2. Regional Directors, Fire and Aviation Management may:
 - a. Make exceptions to the NWCG instructor training requirements as provided in The Forest Service Fire and Aviation Qualifications Guide.
 - b. Sign Type 1 Command and General Staff incident qualification cards, if delegated that signing authority by the Regional Forester
3. Special Agent in Charge in each Region must:
 - a. Annually provide a listing of law enforcement personnel assigned within the respective Region who meet the qualifications for Security Specialist Level 1 (SEC1), and Security Managers (SECM's) to the Washington Office, Director of Fire and Aviation Management.
 - b. Ensure all Law Enforcement and Investigations (LEI) personnel meet the position requirements if they fill incident positions contained within the FSFAQG.
4. Regional Training Officers must:
 - a. Approve access requests for the Incident Qualification and Certification System (IQCS) and forward them to the Branch Chief, Fire and Aviation Training for submission to the IQCS.
 - b. Serve as the subject matter expert in their respective Region for the FSH 5109.17 and the IQCS.
 - c. Assist the Regional Training Working Teams or the Operations and Workforce Development staff with workforce analysis through reports provided in the Incident Qualifications and Certification System (IQCS).
 - d. Annually validate the status and role of the IQCS users within their Region. The IQCS Security Lead or Forest Service IQCS Agency lead will update the current list of users and provide that information to the National IQCS Program Manager.
5. Regional Qualifications Review Committee (RQRC) must:

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- a. Ensure all RQRC actions are documented and distributed to all committee members and provide a copy of this documentation to the Annual Fire Preparedness Review Committee or any group tasked with auditing the program.
- b. Review all individuals possessing Area Command or Type 1 Command and General Staff position qualifications based on established review and certification criteria and employee performance in the position.
- c. Determine employee ICS qualifications in accordance with:
 - (1) The Wildland Fire Qualifications System Guide (PMS 310-1); except positions in which the Forest Service has elected to deviate from the minimums.
 - (2) The Forest Service Fire and Aviation Qualifications Guide.
- d. Develop documented employee evaluation criteria for certification, re-certification, and deferral.
- e. Provide recommendations to the appropriate Certifying Official or designee responsible for final certification signature.
- f. Develop the Regional Shortage Category list.
- g. Develop and provide input for regional and national training needs.
- h. Establish an instructor validation/certification system for 300-400 level course instructors (Field Manager's Course Guide PMS 901-1).
- i. Provide additional RQRC roles and responsibilities in accordance with FSH 5109.17 direction and the goals of the RQRC.

04.4 - Forest Supervisors

Forest Supervisors must:

1. Establish and maintain a Forest Qualification Review Committee (FQRC) (FSFAQG, Ch 2).
2. Facilitate fair, transparent, and effective fire and aviation management qualifications determinations by the FQRC. Include a Line Officer representative and provide the opportunity for a Union Official to participate on bargaining units.
3. Ensure that fire training nomination and selection processes meet the needs of both the employee and the organization.
4. De-certify an individual's ICS and prescribed fire position qualifications pursuant to administrative review (FSFAQG, Ch 2).

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5. Ensure that all required training is completed (for example: fire refresher, chainsaw, rappel, first aid, CPR, other refresher trainings, and so forth) before placement into an available status for assignment.

Forest Supervisors may delegate signing authority for the Incident Qualifications Card to the Unit Fire Program Manager for Type 2 command and general staff positions (FSFAQG, Ch. 2).

04.41 - Unit Fire Program Managers

Unit Fire Program Managers must:

1. Annually certify every employee's Incident Command System (ICS) and prescribed fire position qualifications based on Forest Qualification Review Committee (FQRC) recommendations, established review and certification criteria, and employee performance in the position if delegated as the Forest Certifying Official by the Forest Supervisor. This authority cannot be re-delegated to the District level except where identified in this Handbook or the FSFAQG.
2. Include Agency employees in virtual or detached positions, who are “hosted” by the National Forest (for example, Albuquerque Service Center personnel, staff and students at Job Corps Civilian Conservation Centers, and so forth).
3. Sign Type 2 Command and General Staff incident qualification cards if delegated as the Forest Certifying Official by the Forest Supervisor (FSFAQG, Ch. 2).
4. Sign incident qualification cards for other positions on the unit (FSFAQG, Ch. 2).
5. Ensure that Individual Development Plans (IDPs) are completed in AgLearn and filed in the Employee Master Record. The Incident Responders Development Plan (IRDP) found in IQCS may be used to document ICS specific needs.
6. Implement a system to establish priorities for training.
7. Implement a system that establishes priorities for employees to maintain currency.
8. Recommend certification or re-certification for all Area Command and Type 1 Command and General Staff positions to the Regional Director of Fire and Aviation Management. These positions include: Incident Commander, Safety Officer, Information Officer, and Operations/Planning/Logistics/Finance Section Chiefs.
9. Initiate administrative review to determine if de-certification is appropriate.
10. Authorize and grant certification by signing the “Agency Certification” on the inside front cover of the Position Task Book.

11. Delegate to the Primary and Alternate Account Manager(s) “Certifying Official” Role/Processes in the IQCS. (Reference “Delegation of Authority” Form on IQCS Homepage under documents.)
12. Ensure secure locations are provided for the hard copy responder master records.
13. Ensure the incident and prescribed fire qualifications records contain documents that are specified in the FSFAQG, Ch. 2, 2.2 Record Keeping.
14. Ensure all Administratively Determined (AD) employees “hosted” by a National Forest meet qualifications and certification standards within the FSFAQG.

04.42 - Forest Qualifications Review Committee

The Forest Qualifications Review Committee (FQRC) must:

1. Ensure that all FQRC actions are documented and distributed to all committee members and provide a copy of this documentation to the Annual Fire Preparedness Review Committee or any group tasked with auditing the program.
2. Reviews all individuals possessing Type 2 or lower position qualifications based on established review and certification criteria and employee performance in the position (FSFAQG, Ch. 2).
3. Determines employee ICS qualifications in accordance with:
 - a. The Wildland Fire Qualifications System Guide (PMS 310-1b, Fire and Aviation Management Qualifications Handbook (FSH 5109.17), and the Forest Service Fire and Aviation Qualifications Guide.
4. Develops documented employee evaluation criteria for certification, re-certification, and deferral.
5. Provides recommendations to the appropriate Certifying Official or designee responsible for final certification signature.
6. Develops the Forest ICS Position Shortage Category list.
7. Develops and provide input for local, regional, and national training needs.
8. Develops and document training prioritization criteria.
9. Establishes the Instructor Validation/Certification System (Field Manager’s Course Guide PMS 901-1).
10. Provides additional FQRC roles and responsibilities in accordance with the FSH 5109.17, FSFAQG, and the direction and the goals of the FQRC.

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04.5 - Primary Forest Incident Qualification and Certification System (IQCS) Account Managers

Primary Forest Incident Qualification and Certification System (IQCS) Account Managers must:

1. Administer the IQCS for the Forest.
2. Designate an alternate Account Manager.
3. Receive, validate, and enter data into the IQCS. (This may be delegated to additional Account Managers on the Forest.)
4. Provide workforce analysis/reports from the IQCS for the FQRC meetings as requested.
5. Prepare the Incident Qualification Cards for Certifying Official signature.
6. Review the training and experience of each employee to ensure that the qualifications generated by the IQCS for employees are valid (see Standards for Fire and Aviation Operations, chapter 13).
7. Attend the FQRC meetings.

04.6 - District Rangers

District Rangers must:

1. If delegated by the Forest Supervisor, sign incident qualifications cards for employees with qualifications no higher than Firefighter, Type 1 (FFT1) and Firefighter, Type 2 (FFT2).
2. Authorize and grant certification for employees for FFT1 and FFT2 by signing the “Agency Certification” on the inside front cover of the Position Task Book.

04.7 - First Line Supervisors

First line Supervisors must:

1. Prepare employees to function safely and effectively in the wildland fire environment. This preparation can be accomplished through training, education, experience, and physical fitness training. It must be tailored to the specific aviation and fireline assignments for which the employees are being prepared.
2. Identify training that reflects the needs of the Forest and Region with the aid of the Forest Fire Management Program Staff Officer.
3. Identify present and future organizational training needs and include those needs in the annual Individual Development Plan (FS-6100-2). Employees may work with the

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Unit Fire Training Officer to complete the Incident Responders Development Plan (IRDP) in IQCS.

4. Approve individual training requests.

04.8 - Employees

Employees must:

1. Prepare themselves to function safely and effectively in the wildland fire environment. This preparation can be accomplished through training, education, experience, and physical fitness training.
2. Develop and review their IDP (FS-6100-2) and the IRDP with the Supervisor.
3. Complete and submit IQCS Responder Update Form annually. (Reference found on the IQCS Homepage under documents.)
4. Provide the Training Official or other designated official responsible for maintaining the master file records, copies of all appropriate training certificates, incident performance ratings, position task books, and verification page of the task book.
5. Maintain their personal file of qualification documentation so it is readily available upon request.

05 - Definitions

For additional definitions of terms related to the Forest Service Fire and Aviation Qualifications Guide, refer to FSM 5105 and the "Glossary of Wildland Fire Terminology" located at: <http://www.nwcg.gov/pms/pubs/glossary/index.htm>. Also see definitions included in the Wildland Fire Qualifications Guide (PMS 310-1) for Evaluator, Trainer/Coach, Training Specialist. The following definitions supplement the Glossary:

Certification. The process in which a Manager confirms that an individual has met all the minimum qualifications and is qualified to perform in a specified position based on past performance. The certification is documented with the issuance of Form PMS 310-3, Qualification Card Incident Command System, to the qualified individual and in a data management system program.

Certifying Official. The Agency Official at the home unit who authorizes and grants certification by signing the "Agency Certification" on the inside front cover of the Position Task Book and the Incident Qualifications Card; usually this is the Unit Fire Program Manager.

Decertification. The process of removing or reducing an individual's qualification for incident management, fire suppression, fire use, and/or prescribed fire management position(s).

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Experience. Documented satisfactory performance in specified ICS positions that is required to qualify for another (usually higher level) position; in the case of a trainee, satisfactory performance in the position for which the trainee is attempting to qualify.

Qualified Individual. An individual that has successfully completed all training, experience, and physical fitness requirements for a specific ICS position.

Re-certification. Re-issuance of Form PMS 310-3, Incident Qualifications Card, certifying that an individual has regained qualification for an ICS position.

Satisfactory Performance. Performance by an individual that meets or exceeds the written standards for a specific ICS position as evaluated by the individual's incident or Agency Supervisor.

Technical Specialist (THSP). A person who has a thorough technical knowledge and recent field experience in performing and/or supervising the task. A person generally recognized among working associates as being very competent at performing the task(s).

Unit Fire Program Manager. The individual identified as the Unit Fire Program Manager under Interagency Fire Program Management and who has been delegated Fire Program Management responsibility for a National Forest(s) fire program by the Forest Supervisor. This individual is usually the Forest Fire Management Staff Officer, or Forest Fire Management Officer. This individual usually serves as the Certifying Official for Incident Qualifications Cards. This authority cannot be re-delegated to the District level, except where identified in this Handbook.

06 - References

1. Forest Service Fire and Aviation Qualifications Guide (FSFAQG). The Forest Service qualifications are governed by the Forest Service Fire and Aviation Qualifications Guide (FSFAQG) available at:

<http://www.fs.fed.us/fire/publications/index.html>

2. DOI policy documents. Unit Fire Program Managers who also serve as Fire Managers and Certifying Officials for the Department of Interior (DOI) Units must follow appropriate DOI policy documents.

07 - Review and Revision

The Washington Office, Director Fire and Aviation Management (FAM) requires an annual review by the Branch Chief, Fire and Aviation Training to determine whether there are sufficient updates to require an amendment to the FSH 5109.17 and the Forest Service Fire and Aviation Qualifications Guide (FSFAQG). This directive contains items which have been negotiated between the Forest Service and the National Federation of Federal Employees (NFFE) Forest Service Council (FSC). It is not to be altered or supplemented below the National level by Units

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covered by NFFE. National level changes will not be made without notice and bargaining between the parties, as appropriate.

If an amendment is necessary, the following procedures are recommended:

1. The Director of FAM, issues a call letter to the Field Units and the Washington Office staffs requesting review of this Handbook, the FSFAQG, and submission of responses to their review. Comments and proposed revisions are due within 45 days.
2. Field Unit Managers will submit proposed revisions to their respective Regional Fire Directors and Regional Training Officers.
3. The Regional Fire Training Officers will consolidate and validate responses for their Regions and forward valid responses to the Washington Office, Branch Chief, Fire and Aviation Training or the representative designated in the call letter.
4. The Branch Chief, Fire and Aviation Training may assemble a working team to review the consolidated comments submitted by Field Units and Washington Office staff units; consult with subject matter experts, a Union Representative, and Regional Fire Training Officers as appropriate; review the changes pending for the next issuance of the PMS 310-1, and determine the need for revision.
5. The FSFAQG working team may be composed of the following:
 - a. A National Federation of Federal Employee's (NFFE) representative (Master Agreement, p. 22, 4).
 - b. A Forest Service Incident Qualifications and Certification System (IQCS) Account Manager.
 - c. Selected Regional Fire Training Officers.
 - d. Selected subject matter experts such as: Fuels Specialists, Washington Office Law Enforcement and Investigations, and Helicopter Operations Specialists.

The working team members will serve as:

- (a) Support for the Branch Chief, Fire and Aviation Training.
- (b) Subject matter experts in the Incident Command System sections, including support, technical specialists, and prescribed fire.

08 - All-Hazard Response

The National Interagency Incident Management System (NIIMS) consists of subsystems which include training, credentialing, Incident Command System (ICS), support (dispatch centers/supply and equipment caches) and a publications system. The Forest Service has

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significant roles and responsibilities in the National Response Framework as part of the Federal fire suppression agencies.

The Forest Service contributes to All-Hazard emergency response and management. Guideline support for the Forest Service's ability to fulfill All-Hazard emergency response and management obligations can be found in the FSH 5109.17, FSFAQG, and PMS 310-1 Qualification Handbook and Guide.

08.1 - Hazardous Waste Operations Emergency Response (HAZWOPER)

Forest Service HAZWOPER training needs and requirements can be found in the FSH 6709.11, Health & Safety Code Handbook, chapter 60.

OSHA Requirements can be found at Title 29, Code of Federal Regulations, Part 1910, section 120.