

Incident Training Specialist, S-445

Pre-Course Assignment

This pre-course assignment is designed as a study guide for the S-445 Incident Training Specialist course. The information in this document provides a historical overview of the National Wildfire Coordinating Group (NWCG) and the Wildland Fire Qualification System. It will increase your understanding of how the current qualification system evolved.

Use the Wildland Fire Qualification System Guide, PMS 310-1 (online at <http://www.nwcg.gov/pms/docs/PMS310-1.pdf>) and the information in this document to answer the questions on pages 11 – 14.

I. INTRODUCTION

Prior to 1973, there were no common standards among agencies for wildland fire qualification and training—each agency established independent standards and only a few national courses existed. This resulted in an inability to exchange resources above the crew level.

In 1972, the BLM conducted a study that showed an extensive duplication of effort and lack of standardization even within a single agency. Every year partner agencies faced common problems such as widely dispersed field areas, limited staff, and wildland fire activity.

An umbrella organization was needed to facilitate development of practices, standards, and training to bond the wildland fire community. In 1976, the first of three major efforts would occur to help unite the wildland fire community in their effort to respond to increasing fire activity nationwide.

II. ESTABLISHMENT OF THE NWCG

On March 18, 1976, an interagency memorandum of understanding between the Secretary of the Interior and the Secretary of Agriculture officially formed the NWCG.

The NWCG fills the interagency need by contributing towards the cost-effective execution of each partner agency's programs to benefit agency mandates, resources, and the taxpayer.

A. NWCG Representatives

The NWCG includes representatives from the following agencies:

- Forest Service
- Bureau of Land Management
- Fish and Wildlife Service
- National Park Service
- Bureau of Indian Affairs
- National Association of State Foresters

In June 1994, the original agreement was modified to include the Federal Emergency Management Agency's U.S. Fire Administration.

B. NWCG Working Teams

Detailed products are produced by Working Teams and Advisory Groups working under direct coordination of the NWCG.

The products are approved by a consensus of the NWCG. Agreed policies, standards, and procedures are then implemented by each agency through regular channels.

The NWCG Working Teams are grouped to reflect concerns of the interagency wildland fire community.

Currently, the NWCG Working Teams include:

- Training Working Team (TWT)
- Incident Operations Standards Working Team (IOSWT)
- Wildland Fire Education Working Team (WFEWT)
- Fire Use Working Team (FUWT)
- Fire Equipment Working Team (FEWT)
- Safety and Health Working Team (SHWT)
- Incident Business Practices Working Team (IBPWT)
- Information Resource Management Working Team National Wildland/Urban Interface Fire Protection Advisory Group (IRMWT)

The IOSWT and the TWT are key to the development and maintenance of the Wildland Fire Qualification System and appropriate training curriculum.

The IOSWT is responsible for all qualification and standards, while the TWT is responsible for training issues and curriculum.

The FUWT and the former Prescribed Fire and Fire Effects Working Team (PFFEWT) have provided subject matter expertise and oversight in the development of the prescribed fire system's qualification and training curriculum. Their work has been coordinated with that of the IOSWT and the TWT, and incorporated into the Wildland and Prescribed Fire Qualification System Guide, PMS 310-1.

III. NATIONAL INTERAGENCY FIRE QUALIFICATION SYSTEM AND THE INCIDENT COMMAND SYSTEM

Between 1973 and 1982, two additional major efforts were conducted that allowed agencies to cooperate and share personnel and resources.

A. National Interagency Fire Qualification System (NIFQS)

NIFQS was developed between 1974 and 1977 and implemented in 1978.

1. NIFQS established minimum standards based on:

- Experience
- Training
- Physical fitness

NIFQS later became known as a training based system due to its reliance on completion of required courses to enable an individual to qualify for a position.

2. NIFQS training courses were developed between 1974 and 1982.

These courses were developed through an interagency effort led by the former BLM division of training at Boise Interagency Fire Center (BIFC).

BIFC used:

- New instructional system development technology,
- Interactive instructional methods, and
- A concept of centralized development and decentralized instruction.

3. The resulting suppression courses (S-courses):
 - Provided a common training standard acceptable to all NWCG agencies.
 - Were developed by wildfire agencies for wildfire.
 - Were based on the large fire organization (LFO).
 - Were performance based and contained wildfire suppression skills.
 - Were certified by the NWCG and published through the National Audiovisual Center.

B. Incident Command System (ICS)

During this same period of time, ICS was being developed in southern California through FIRESCOPE (Firefighting Resources of California Organized for Potential Emergencies).

ICS was developed for much the same reasons as NIFQS; however, its focus was on:

- Cooperation of wildland fire
- Structural fire
- Law enforcement
- Other emergency response agencies in an all-hazard environment

While ICS provided many common elements acceptable to both wildland fire and emergency response agencies, it did not include training and qualification components.

IV. NATIONAL INTERAGENCY INCIDENT MANAGEMENT SYSTEM (NIIMS)

In 1982, the NWCG adopted ICS for national implementation and combined the best of both ICS and NIFQS. The result was the NIIMS, which includes the ICS, plus the training and qualification of NIFQS, and a publications management component.

The adoption of ICS meant that most of the NIFQS S-courses could no longer be used, since they were based on LFO and procedures.

The FIRESCOPE agencies, led by California Department of Forestry (CDF), were tasked with developing the ICS training curriculum, using the S-courses as a model, and adapting to the new courses as much as possible. Unfortunately, the resulting courses (I-courses) did not meet all user needs.

In August 1987, the TWT, assisted by the former BIFC division of training, conducted an analysis to determine why the I-courses were not working. This analysis revealed differences between FIRESCOPE agencies and NWCG agencies that were contributing to problems with the I-courses.

As a result of the analysis, the TWT and current IOSWT submitted a joint proposal to the NWCG calling for major modifications to the training and qualification system.

NWCG approved this proposal in January 1988 and tasked the former BIFC division of training to develop a specific proposal for a new suppression qualification and training system.

This proposal was developed with extensive input and review, and recommended a performance-based qualification system and new curriculum composed of:

- All-Hazard courses (I-courses)
- Suppression skill courses (S-courses)
- Job Aids

The NWCG approved this proposal in September 1991, and funded it for implementation over a ten-year period. The former BIFC division of training was assigned the lead in development of training courses, position task books, and other components that make up the system in use today.

Funding and resources for development of the training curriculum and job aids was established through an interagency agreement.

V. NATIONAL INCIDENT MANAGEMENT SYSTEM (NIMS)

On February 28, 2003, the President issued Homeland Security Presidential Directive (HSPD)-5, which directs the Secretary of Homeland Security to develop and administer NIMS.

According to HSPD-5, this system will provide a consistent nationwide approach for Federal, State, and local governments to work effectively and efficiently together to prepare for, respond to, and recover from domestic incidents, regardless of cause, size, or complexity.

To provide for interoperability and compatibility among Federal, State, and local capabilities, the NIMS will include a core set of concepts, principles, terminology, and technologies covering the ICS; multi-agency coordination systems; unified command; training; identification and management of resources (including systems for classifying types of resources); qualifications and certification; and the collection, tracking, and reporting of incident information and incident resources.

VI. DESCRIPTION OF THE PERFORMANCE BASED SYSTEM

The Wildland Fire Qualification System is a “performance based” qualification system. In this system, the primary criteria for qualification is individual performance as observed by an evaluator using approved standards.

This system differs from previous wildland fire qualification systems that have been “training based.” Training based systems use the completion of training courses or a passing score on an examination as the primary criteria for qualification.

A. Advantages of a Performance Based System vs. a Training Based System

- Qualification is based on real performance, as measured on the job, versus perceived performance, as measured by an examination or classroom activities.
- Personnel who have learned skills from sources outside wildland fire suppression and prescribed fires, such as agency specific training programs or training and work in structural fire, law enforcement, search and rescue, etc., may not be required to complete specific courses in order to qualify in a NWCG position.

B. Components of the Wildland Fire Qualification System

1. Position task books contain all critical tasks required to perform the job. PTBs are designed in a format that allows documentation of a trainee's ability to perform each task. Successful completion of all tasks required of the position, as determined by an evaluator(s), is the basis for recommending certification.

Important Note: Training requirements include completion of all required training courses and prerequisite experience prior to obtaining a PTB. Use of other courses or job aids providing additional training that supports development of knowledge and skills is recommended to prepare the employee to perform in the position.

2. Training courses and job aids provide the specific skills and knowledge required to perform tasks as prescribed in the PTB.
3. Agency certification is issued in the form of an incident qualification card that certifies an individual is qualified to perform in a specified position.

C. Responsibilities

The local office is responsible for selecting trainees, proper use of task books, and certification of trainees (see Position Task Book Design and Use in the PMS 310-1).

IV. PRESCRIBED FIRE TRAINING AND QUALIFICATION

A. Approval of the Prescribed Fire Training and Qualification System

In 1993, at the request of the currently named Fire Use Working Team, the National Interagency Fire Center (NIFC) National Fire and Aviation Training Support Group (NFATSG) were tasked with development of the prescribed fire training and qualification system. A proposal was completed and approved by the NWCG in 1995.

In March 1999, prescribed fire and fire use training and qualifications were added to the Wildland and Prescribed Fire Qualification System Guide, PMS 310-1. The 1999 guide was revised and published as an NWCG certified version in 2000.

In April 2006, the Wildland and Prescribed Fire Qualification System Guide was revised and updated. To maintain definition consistency and clarity among NWCG documents, the term “wildland fire” is used when “wildfire,” “wildland fire use,” and “prescribed fire” are referred to collectively. The title of the Wildland Fire Qualification System Guide, PMS 310-1 was changed to reflect this usage.

When referring separately to wildfire, wildland fire use, or prescribed fire, use that specific term. Specific terms are used in position task book qualification record code columns.

B. Conversion to a Competency-Based System

In February 2005, the NIMS Integration Center hosted a meeting in Emmitsburg, Maryland for all emergency management organizations to begin collaboration on the implementation of the NIMS. From that meeting, it became obvious that development of core competencies for ICS positions was necessary.

In 2005, the TWT, IOSWT and USFA began working together to develop these competencies for all ICS positions (does not include wildland fire, support, or associated positions). In the fall of 2005, the wildland fire, support, and associated positions were added to the development to maintain consistency throughout all positions used in wildland fire. The competencies for the ICS positions were given to Department of Homeland Security and have become the national standard for all emergency responders.

Competencies and behaviors for all positions in the Wildland Fire Qualification System Guide, PMS 310-1 were finalized in early 2006. In February 2006, the NWCG approved the next step of revising all PTBs to support the recently developed competencies and behaviors.

Revision of the PTBs required the language in the PMS 310-1 to be updated. New PTBs and a new version of the PMS 310-1 were published in May 2008.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE WILDLAND FIRE QUALIFICATION SYSTEM

1976	National Wildfire Coordinating Group (NWCG) established.
1974-1978	National Interagency Fire Qualification System (NIFQS) developed and implemented.
1974-1982	NIFQS training courses (S-courses) developed.
1974-1982	Incident Command System (ICS) developed through FIRESCOPE.
1982	National Interagency Incident Management System (NIIMS) developed and adopted by the NWCG. Combined ICS and NIFQS.
1991	NWCG approved a proposal for a performance based qualification system; a new curriculum composed of all risk courses (I-courses), suppression skill courses (S-courses), and job aids; and funded it for implementation over a ten-year period.
1993	Proposal for the prescribed fire training and qualification system approved for implementation by the NWCG.
2000	Wildland and Prescribed Fire Qualification System Guide published.
2001	Wildland and Prescribed Fire Qualification System National Training Curriculum completed.
2006	Wildland Fire Qualification System National Training Curriculum revised.
2008	National Competency Project was completed moving NWCG to a competency based system that is in line with national standards for emergency responders.

Name: _____ Agency/Unit: _____

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Pre-Course Questions**

1. What interagency group was established to facilitate the development of practices, standards, and training in the wildland fire community?

2. Name the three NWCG working teams most responsible for the development and maintenance of the Wildland Fire Qualification System.

3. Who, at your home unit, is an administrator of your qualification system?
Or, who is your system administrator?

4. The Wildland Fire Qualification System Guide, PMS 310-1 is designed to:

5. List the four categories of physical fitness established by the PMS 310-1.

6. Explain the difference between “required training” and “other training which supports development of knowledge and skills.”

Required Training:

Other Training Which Supports Development of Knowledge and Skills:

7. Using the Position Qualifications Section of the PMS 310-1, list the required experience for Strike Team Leader Dozer (STDZ).
8. True or False: Each bullet statement listed in the PTB must be demonstrated before the task can be signed off.
9. What is the time allowed for completion of a PTB and when does the time start?
10. For the position of Dispatch Recorder, identify the time limitation and position assignments to maintain currency.

Time Limitation:

Position Assignments:

16. Define the terms competency, behavior, and task.

17. An experienced structural fire captain meeting NFPA standard 1021 may qualify for what NWCG position?