



THE ASSOCIATE DEPUTY SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR
WASHINGTON

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Memorandum

To: Director, Bureau of Indian Affairs
Director, National Park Service
Director, Bureau of Land Management
Director, Fish and Wildlife Service

From: James E. Cason *James E Cason*
Associate Deputy Secretary

Subject: Interagency Fire Program Management Qualification Standards and Guide –
Implementation Responsibilities and Consequences

The implementation of the Interagency Fire Program Management Qualification Standards and Guide on October 1, 2004, required many of your employees who occupy key fire management positions to obtain specific qualifications prior to October 1, 2009. It is management's intent to ensure that every employee currently occupying an IFPM position has the opportunity to meet the minimum qualification standards by that date. It is critical that agency administrators, supervisors, and employees fulfill their responsibilities under IFPM.

To date, the four fire Bureaus have made excellent progress.

1. Employees have submitted their necessary Incumbent Declarations to their Human Resources Offices. Based on the IFPM Implementation Plan, this was accomplished by February 15, 2005.
2. The HR Staff has made qualifications determinations based on these submissions and has sent letters to employees notifying them of their status. Once again, based on the IFPM Implementation Plan, HR determined qualifications by March 15, 2005.
3. Employees who do not meet IFPM requirements were then required to sign agreements, cosigned by their supervisors, which outline their respective roles in the attainment of qualifications. In this agreement, employees were informed of the consequences if they did not meet the IFPM requirements by the deadline. According to the IFPM Implementation Plan, this was completed no later than June 30, 2005.

Less than 2 years are left in the implementation phase, and employees and their supervisors must be diligent in the execution of their roles in meeting the minimum qualification standards prior to the deadline. Maintaining the level of success we have already experienced has required support from many levels in our organization.

With the development of the IFPM Implementation Plan, responsibilities were enumerated for key individuals. The following is a list of those duties that employees and management are accountable for.

1. **Bureau Fire Directors:** Bureau Fire Directors must ensure fire management personnel develop and maintain fire management job qualifications in accordance with the current policy. The Bureau Fire Directors and Fire Management Officers must positively know which employees in their organization are affected by IFPM. Note which employees in your organization currently meet the IFPM requirements, and which do not.
2. **Supervisors:** The supervisor is responsible for creating an Individual Development Plan with input from the employee; assisting the employee in locating opportunities for education, training, and specialized experiences as identified in the IDP; monitoring the employee's progress; providing opportunities for completion of the National Wildfire Coordinating Group Incident Management Qualifications, as applicable; providing the employee a flexible work schedule for education and training as mission needs dictate; and providing funds, when available, to pay for education and training. The supervisor meets with the employee regularly; at a minimum, every 6 months. He communicates his intent to the employee effectively by clearly outlining your expectations of the employee towards meeting IFPM requirements.
3. **Employees:** The employee is responsible for providing the supervisor with input for the IDP; assisting the supervisor in locating opportunities for education, specialized experience, and training as identified in the IDP; completing the education, specialized experience, and training as identified in the IDP by October 1, 2009; participating in opportunities for completion of NWCG Incident Management Qualifications, as applicable; and keeping the supervisor informed of progress and any problems encountered in completing IFPM requirements.

Employees may be reassigned to another position, reduced in grade or removed from Federal service if they do not meet IFPM minimum qualification standards by October 1, 2009. As stated earlier, it is the manager's responsibility to provide opportunities for each incumbent employee to meet the standards by the deadline. Despite these efforts, it is possible that some employees may not obtain the necessary IFPM requirements by the implementation deadline. Managers must be prepared to handle these difficult situations when they occur.

Noncompetitive reassignment is not a guarantee. It is contingent upon the availability of a vacant position in a comparable job series for which the employee's qualifications are a good fit. The reassignment may require a permanent relocation of the duty station of the employee and may also result in the loss of special firefighter retirement benefits.

As we get closer to the IFPM Implementation deadline of October 1, 2009, managers should be very careful selecting applicants who do not meet the IFPM requirements at the time of hire. Prior to October 1, 2009, applicants need only meet OPM requirements for the IFPM vacancy. They are not required to meet NWCG qualifications or any additional required training prior to

appointment. Selectees who do not meet the NWCG or additional required training requirements must sign a condition of employment letter prior to assuming their position. This letter will state that the individual understands the importance of meeting all of the IFPM requirements in order to remain in their covered position after October 1, 2009. Temporary or seasonal employees are not required to sign a condition of employment letter through September 30, 2008. Beginning on October 1, 2008, all temporary and seasonal employees must sign a condition of employment letter documenting the consequences of not meeting the IFPM requirements by October 1, 2009.

Selecting officials should consult with their HR office, Regional Fire Management Staff, or IFPM implementation leaders for advice when considering the selection of an applicant who does not currently meet the IFPM requirements. For additional questions related to IFPM implementation, please contact your Bureau IFPM Implementation Lead or Michael Ballew in the Department of the Interior's Office of Human Resources. Mr. Ballew can be contacted on 202-513-0755 or by email at <Michael_Ballew@ios.doi.gov>.

cc:

Deputy Secretary

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Chief, Branch of Fire Management, U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service

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