



United States Department of the Interior
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
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Memorandum

To: State Fire Management Officers and State Directors

From: Grant Beebe,
Assistant Director Fire and Aviation

Subject: BLM guidance for RT-130, Wildland Fire Safety Training Annual Refresher (WFSTAR), work capacity tests (WCT), triennial aviation refresher training, and Wildland Fire Medical Standards to prevent the spread of COVID-19 for the 2020 fire season

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Bureau of Land Management (BLM) will alter some of its typical pre-season preparation and requirements. This will embrace best management practices from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the Department of the Interior (DOI) to reduce employee exposure to community spread of COVID-19. The BLM is committed to the health and wellness of its fire workforce; one that is equipped and ready for the 2020 season. Many employees with wildland fire qualifications must complete RT-130, including deployment of a practice fire shelter, a medical clearance, and a WCT; aviation employees may require triennial aviation refresher training. The following outlines BLM fire program requirements for new and returning employees.

New Employees

- Medical Clearance: Because baseline examinations provided by Comprehensive Health Services (CHS) are unavailable, difficult to schedule, and divert critical health care resources from mitigating COVID-19 impacts, the process is as follows: Client Access System (CAS) user will order the baseline examination.
- A Medical questionnaire will be made available to each new hire in the Examinee Access System (EAS); the new hire will complete the questionnaire.
- The Reviewing Medical Officer will review the information provided against the standard and make a "provisional clearance" qualification determination.
- If not qualified, the new hire will engage in the normal risk mitigation/waiver process.

This option will be available in the CAS and EAS system by March 30, 2020. This time delay will allow Comprehensive Health Services, the medical standards program contractor, time to make the necessary adjustments to the current computer-based systems.

In summary, the new hire is exempt in completing the baseline examination through December 31, 2020 at which time one must be completed as directed by the supervisor.

- Work Capacity Test: Complete the light, moderate, or arduous WCT.
 - Do not reuse or share pack test vests within a 48-hour period.
 - Encourage use of weight appropriate bladder bags or individually issued fireline packs.
- Basic Firefighter Training: Firefighters are required to complete S-130, S-190, L-180, IS-700, ICS-100, and fire shelter proficiency training. For fire shelter training, use a practice fire shelter or a standard fire shelter that no longer meets service parameters. The standard fire shelter that no longer meets service parameters should be discarded after use. Practice fire shelters should not be reused or shared within a 48-hour period.

Current, Returning, or Transferred Employees

- Medical Clearance: The 3-year (36-month) periodicity requirement for all DOI exams expiring in 2020 is extended until December 31, 2020. Firefighters (and tower climbers) who were previously *Qualified* or *Qualified with Risk Mitigation* or *Waiver* that are due for a periodic exam may choose to complete a self-certification in EAS in lieu of completing a periodic exam. Upon expiration of the interim policy, firefighters will comply with exam periodicity.
 - All non-qualified determinations will be required to follow the standard risk mitigation/waiver/review process.
- Work capacity tests are suspended for 2020. Employees will provide the local Incident Qualifications and Certification System (IQCS) account manager proof of medical clearance. Upon receipt of proof of medical clearance, the IQCS account manager will input a WCT competency based on the previously attained 2019 level (light, moderate or arduous). The IQCS account managers will include appropriate documentation in the employee's training record.
- RT-130: For employees who have not completed RT-130 to date, a one-year extension will be added to the current expiration date identified in IQCS and will be implemented nationally through the agency's National Training Officer. The following actions are strongly recommended in lieu of the formal training:
 - Complete a self-study refresher utilizing WFSTAR videos and support materials. Employees should include the core components of entrapment avoidance (and related case studies), current issues, and other hazards and safety issues.
(<https://www.nwcg.gov/publications/training-courses/rt-130/wfstar-catalog>)

- Watch the “New Generation Fire Shelter” video.
(<https://www.nwccg.gov/committees/fire-shelter-and-personal-protective-equipment-subcommittee>)
 - Review Predictive Services information.
(<https://www.predictiveservices.nifc.gov/predictive.htm>)
 - Utilize content from the Wildland Fire Lessons Learned Center.
(<https://www.wildfirelessons.net/home>)
- RT-273, RT-372, RT-373, RT-378 and N-9057: For employees who have not yet completed triennial aviation refresher training requirements to maintain currency, a one-year extension will be added to the current expiration date. Currency will be identified in IQCS and implemented nationally through the agency’s National Training Officer. Interagency efforts are underway to develop recommended pertinent information, which can be used in lieu of the traditional formal training.

These exceptions apply to all Administratively Determined (AD) employees as well as applicable crew, water handling (engines and water tenders), and equipment contracts and agreements.

The BLM believes these steps will help mitigate the risk of spread of COVID-19, promote employee health, and ensure fire readiness for the 2020 season. Fire management is encouraged to utilize technology and other tools to promote employee preparation for the season in line with prevailing public health direction.

Contact: For questions regarding Medical Standards and the WCT, contact Ted Mason, BLM Fire Program Safety Officer, tmason@blm.gov, 208-921-3245. For training and IQCS questions, contact Marlene Eno-Hendren, meno@blm.gov, 208-387-5265.