



# United States Department of the Interior

BUREAU OF INDIAN AFFAIRS  
Washington, D.C. 20240

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IN REPLY REFER TO:


Division of Forestry

## Memorandum

To: All Regional Directors  
Attention: Fire Management  
Human Resources Management

From: Director, Bureau of Indian Affairs

Subject: Implementation of the Interagency Fire Program Management Qualifications Standards and Guide



Studies of wildland fire incidents for a number of years highlighted the fact that more stringent, uniform qualification standards were needed for certain fire management positions to assure firefighter safety. The lengthy collaborative effort between the Department of the Interior and the Department of Agriculture to establish uniform fire management qualifications standards to improve firefighter safety and increase professionalism in the fire management program has been completed.

In the attached memorandum dated June 18, 2004, Assistant Secretary – Office of Policy, Management and Budget, P. Lynn Scarlett established October 1, 2004, as the date to officially begin implementing the Interagency Fire Program Management Qualifications Standard and Guide (IFPM Standard). A subsequent memorandum was issued on July 2, 2004, by Carolyn Cohen, Director, Office of Personnel Policy to all Bureau Human Resources Directors reaffirming this implementation date.

The National Fire and Aviation Executive Board through the Federal Fire Training Task Group, chartered an interagency IFPM Implementation Team consisting of human resources, training and fire management personnel. The Implementation Team met on August 5-6, 2004 to begin their work on an interagency basis. Their first task is to develop an implementation plan which will be issued on October 1, 2004. This plan will provide guidance on the implementation process.

Since October 4, 2002, the BIA has been implementing the Supplemental Qualification Standard for the GS-401 Fire Management Position. This new guidance does not contradict the 2002 policy related to the GS-401 Supplemental Qualification Standard. There are procedural

differences in the new policy and we will wait for interagency implementation guidance prior to making any changes.

The key differences between the existing Bureau guidelines and this new policy are:

- The requirement of compliance by October 1, 2009.
- All of the positions deemed professional in IFPM guide will be converted to the GS-0401 series. This would include any GS-0460 series employees currently employed in one of the 14 Key Positions.
- Technicians (GS-0462/0455) currently occupying positions that will be converted to the professional GS-0401 series will have the opportunity to pursue the required education, skills and competencies before the deadline.
- Between October 1, 2004, and October 1, 2009, all vacant or newly-created positions determined to be professional may be classified and advertised in separate announcements as both professional (GS-0401) and technical (GS-0462, GS-0455). If a well-qualified GS-0401 candidate cannot be hired for the position, it may be filled with a GS-0462/GS-0455 who meets the IFPM Standard requirements. This is contingent upon this individual completing the positive education requirement of the Supplemental Qualification Standard for the GS-0401 Fire Management Specialist before October 1, 2009. Notwithstanding this flexibility, every effort will be made to hire qualified GS-401 applicants. After October 1, 2009, professional fire positions will only be classified and advertised as a GS-0401.

Pursuant to the Indian Affairs Manual, Part 90, Wildland Fire Management, Chapter 2, Section 2.5(a), "Adherence to the ... IFMQ Guide (IFPM Guide) is mandatory for fire program officers, fire specialists and fire project leaders." Furthermore, Section 2.5(b) states that "Self-governance compacts, contracts or mutual aid agreement standards ... will not be less than NWCG and IFMQ (IFPM Guide) standards. Consequently, IFPM is addressed in existing BIA policy, and will be observed when developing or reviewing qualification standards for new or existing positions, in order to meet or exceed IFPM requirements.

Once this office has guidance from the Interagency Implementation Team, it will be essential that Human Resource Departments be involved in this implementation process as plans to transition and convert encumbered GS-460/462 key positions to the GS-401 series by the deadline must be made. The Interagency Implementation Group will develop guidance to assist Servicing Personnel Offices in this task.

An implementation subgroup has also been developed to define a consistent interagency procedure for determining Program Complexity, a key element in defining appropriate staffing and grade levels. The Bureau already has complexity ratings but some adjustment to the match Interagency Standards may be necessary. People in the key positions at a unit that changes Program Complexity will have until the 2009 deadline to meet any new standards.

The above mentioned memorandums, the IFPM Standard and related information may be found on the internet at [http://www.nifc.gov/training\\_quals/IFPM/ifpm.htm](http://www.nifc.gov/training_quals/IFPM/ifpm.htm).

If you have further questions, you may contact Dave Koch, National Training Officer at (208) 387-5577 or via email at [dave\\_koch@nifc.gov](mailto:dave_koch@nifc.gov).

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