

BLM NATIONAL WILDLAND FIRE TRAINING COMMITTEE
Conference Call
June 27, 2007

Members on the Call

Aitor Bidaburu, NIFC; NIFC; Richard Lang, MT; Angie Lara, NV; Tony Doty, AK; Lynn Cook, UT; Carol McElroy, ID; Kim Bang, CO/WY

Guests

Eva Brown, NIFC; Pam McDonald, NIFC; Cindy Pogue, NIFC-HR; Ted Mason, NIFC-GBTU; Glen Claypool, NIFC-Aviation;

BLM Fire Training Staffing Changes (Aitor Bidaburu)

Due to recent staffing cuts, the BLM Fire Training Unit has been reduced by two FTEs. Ted Mason was reassigned as Unit Leader for the Great Basin Training Unit (GBTU). Ted will continue to coordinate Technical Fire Management (TFM) and will remain as the BLM Leadership Committee Representative.

Training Outsourcing Initiative (Aitor Bidaburu)

Aitor Bidaburu briefed the committee on efforts underway regarding the President's outsourcing initiative to assess our business model and determine more efficient methods of support and services. Training and dispatch functions are being reviewed to determine what, if any, functions can be eliminated or outsourced to the private sector.

A group of SMEs, led by Don Washco – NTC, have been tasked with conducting an interagency feasibility study of federal fire training. The feasibility study is scheduled for completion in October 2007. Included in the study is a data request requiring responses from those who have had any involvement in training between June 1, 2006, and May 31, 2007. The GATRs have been tasked with administering the data call within the GACCs.

Most members from the BLM Training Committee were unaware of the initiative. More frequent conference calls will be held to promote information transfer to the field. The BLM Training Unit website (specifically the BLM Wildland Fire Training Committee and BLM Training Information Job Aid pages) will also be utilized as a conduit of information. Committee members are encouraged to refer to the following URLs for specific information and pass the links to those responsible for training in the field:

- BLM Fire Training Unit:
http://www.blm.gov/nifc/st/en/prog/fire/training/fire_training.html
- BLM Wildland Fire Training Committee:
http://www.blm.gov/nifc/st/en/prog/fire/training/fire_training/general/committee.html
- BLM Training Information Job Aid:
http://www.blm.gov/nifc/st/en/prog/fire/training/fire_training/publications/job_aid.html

OPM Policy Interpretation Regarding 401 Credits (Cindy Pogue)

Cindy Pogue, NIFC – Human Resources, briefed the committee on the recent developments regarding GS-401 requirements. The department developed a directive that has been signed and resides with HR leads but has not distributed to the field.

The directive affects those employees who were placed into GS-401 positions after 02/15/05. Employees placed in GS-401 positions prior to 02/15/05 are not affected by the forthcoming directive. Employees impacted by the directive will be required to meet the requirements or will be removed from their positions. The department is attempting to minimize the impact on employees and has authorized pay retention for those individuals “illegally” placed in positions.

The directive also states that NWCG courses, unless endorsed and credited on a transcript by a higher-education institution, cannot be applied towards the GS-401 requirements. Solutions are being researched for a means to credit NWCG courses (e.g., American Council on Education [ACE]).

Questions were asked as to whether TFM meets the GS-401 requirements. TFM courses, if credited on college/university transcripts, are allowed. There may be limited opportunities to buy credits for completion of previous TFM classes. Ted Mason will review previous TFM participant records to determine the number of individuals needing to buy back credits.

ACTION: Ted Mason will review BLM TFM participants regarding buying previous credits.

The committee voiced concern about HR review consistency and expressed the need for written clarification from the HR community regarding policy interpretation.

BLM-Specific Helicopter Training Requirements (Glen Claypool)

Glen Claypool briefed the committee on course revisions made to Helicopter Transport of External Cargo, A-219. The revised A-219 course has been endorsed by IAOPS and IAT. Once NIAC endorses, the National Aviation Office will propose that NWCG incorporate A-219 into Helicopter Crew Member, S-271.

Until A-219 is incorporated into S-271, the National BLM Aviation Office will issue an Instruction Memorandum (IM) this fall requiring that all individuals pursuing HECM, HELR, and non-fire (air crew, resource, etc.) personnel working to transport external cargo complete the revised A-219 course.

A-219 is an instructor-led course and is intended to augment existing S-271 course materials. A-219 can be presented during the S-271 field exercise without adding additional hours to the course.

Instructor qualifications for A-219 include meeting NWCG requirements and prior experience; no specific line position is attached.

In addition to the A-219 requirement, the IM will abolish the HEHH and HEXT positions from the system. Once the IM has been distributed, the BLM Training Information Job Aid will be updated to reflect the new requirements.

The National BLM Aviation personnel will review other positions within the system and determine if other positions can be removed.

At the present time, little information is available regarding the various BLM aviation technical specialist positions. Eva Brown will meet with Glen Claypool to discuss information that should be included in the BLM Training Information Job Aid.

ACTION: Eva Brown will meet with Glen Claypool to obtain aviation position information for the BLM Training Information Job Aid.

BLM Leadership Training Sponsorship (Ted Mason/Aitor Bidaburu)

Aitor Bidaburu will work with Tom Boatner for national sponsorship of three leadership courses (L-380/381/480). If funding is available, Montana, California, and Utah will receive financial assistance in FY '08. Committee members are encouraged to submit leadership training needs to Ted Mason or Aitor Bidaburu for future consideration. The national office will review and prioritize proposals.

ACTION: Submit leadership training needs to Ted Mason and Aitor Bidaburu.

IS-700/800 Status

At the present time, no written direction has been issued by the department requiring the completion of the IS-700/800 courses. Although a formal directive has not been issued, one is expected; therefore, fire personnel are encouraged to complete the courses.

Links for these online courses can be found at:

<http://www.training.fema.gov/emiWeb/IS/is700.asp>

<http://www.training.fema.gov/emiweb/IS/is800a.asp>

BLM Training Information Job Aid

The BLM Training Information Job Aid is available online in final form and can be accessed at http://www.blm.gov/nifc/st/en/prog/fire/training/fire_training/publications/job_aid.html.

The website which is made up of two parts—the job aid itself and support information (e.g., links, training sources, interactive 310-1)—is intended to be used by all individuals responsible for training (training officers). Committee members are encouraged to promote the document to other training officers within their states.

All training officers within the BLM fire training community are encouraged to review and contribute to the document. Since the job aid is a “living” document and not on a revision schedule, suggestions and corrections to the job aid should be submitted to Al Olson or Pam McDonald on an as-needed basis.

Higher Education Announcements

The National Wildland Fire website (TICS site) was recently modified to include a link called “Higher Education Opportunities for Fire Professionals.” This link contains a list of universities/colleges offering higher education for fire professionals.

The page can be found at <http://www.nationalfiretraining.net/fireprograms.htm>.

Next Meeting/Conference Call

The next National BLM Fire Training Committee is tentatively set for September.