

Implementation Plan for the Forest Service Fire Program Management Qualifications Standard and Guide (FS-FPM)

I. Background

In March 2007 the Washington Office announced an agency-specific addendum to IFPM called the *Forest Service-Fire Program Management Standard* (FS-FPM) to address Forest Service Fire and Aviation Management (FAM) positions that were excluded from IFPM in 2005. *FS-FPM Standard* is similar in nature to *IFPM Standard*, but is intended to have an implementation period from Oct 1, 2008 thru October 1, 2013.

The *Forest Service Standard Position Description Crosswalk* was updated in 2008 to display all the Forest Service FAM positions that were included in IFPM and FS-FPM. The Crosswalk is available on the Forest Service website at:

<http://www.fs.fed.us/fire/management/ifpm/>

The following table shows all the Forest Service positions that are in IFPM or FS-FPM:

| IFPM Category | Forest Service Positions in IFPM | Forest Service Positions in FS-FPM |
|---|---|---|
| Unit Fire Program Manager | Forest FMO | Forest AFMO District or Zone FMO |
| Wildland Fire Operations Specialist | As of March 2009, the FS has not identified any positions as being within the IFPM WFOS category | District or Zone AFMO T2 Handcrew Supervisors IA Module Leaders Station Managers |
| Prescribed Fire and Fuels Specialists | Forest Fuels Specialist | District or Zone Fuels Specialists |
| Supervisory Engine Operator | Engine Captains Asst Engine Captains (FEO) | |
| Engine Module Supervisor | Engine Captains | |
| IHC Superintendent | IHC Superintendent | IHC Asst Superintendents IHC Squad Leaders |
| Helicopter Manager | Helitack Crew Supervisor | Helitack Asst Crew Supervisors Helitack Squad Leaders |
| Senior Firefighter | IHC/Handcrew Senior Firefighter Helitack Senior Firefighter Engine Senior Firefighter AFEO | |
| Center Manager | Dispatch Center Manager | |
| Lead IA Dispatcher/Assistant Center Manager | Forest Dispatcher Asst Center Manager | |
| Initial Attack Dispatcher | Initial Attack Dispatcher | |
| Geographic Area Fire Program Manager | Regional Fire Director | |
| National Fire Program Manager | National Fire Director | |

As a general rule, the implementation procedures developed for IFPM are mirrored in FS-FPM implementation however FS-FPM takes into account some of the unique differences associated with Forest Service organization. Forest Service organizational structure is comprised of four tiers (National, Regional, Forest, Ranger Districts) compared to the Department of Interior bureaus that typically have three tiers (National, Regional/State, Unit). This difference had significant impact on the Forest Services' ability to apply the *IFPM Standard* to sub-unit and subordinate positions, and ultimately led to the development of FS-FPM.

II. Implementation Plan Update

In 2010 the Forest Service IFPM Implementation Plan was updated to address agency-specific implementation procedures, and this FS-FPM Implementation Plan has been revised to be consistent with IFPM implementation procedures.

In August 2010 the Forest Service was informed of OIG's acceptance of our agency's decision to use the GS-401 series for certain key IFPM positions. As a result, FAM and HRM are in the process of determining how the 401 series will affect FS-FPM positions and the procedures that will be in place for re-instating the 401 series. Until then, Chief Kimbell's May 29, 2009 interim direction will be in effect, and all vacant FS-FPM positions GS-12 and below will be filled in the 462 series. The current *Forest Service Standard Position Description Crosswalk* reflects this.

III. Scope

The purpose of the *FS-FPM Standard* is to establish minimum qualification standards for the Forest Service's fourth tier FAM positions that are typically located on a ranger district or are subordinate to an IFPM position. Full implementation of FS-FPM will require the cooperation of fire program managers, supervisors, affected employees, and human resource (HR) specialists at all levels in the Forest Service.

IV. Communications

The Forest Service guidance and direction for FS-FPM and the implementation process can be found at:

- Forest Service website: <http://www.fs.fed.us/fire/management/ifpm/index>
- FS-FPM will be included in the next issuance of the Forest Service Handbook 5109.17, Chapter 40.

V. Funding

It is the responsibility of the agency to assist every incumbent affected by FS-FPM Standard to ensure they meet the minimum qualification standards before the FS-FPM implementation deadline of October 1, 2013.

VI. Labor-Management Relations

NFFE Bargaining Units: This implementation plan contains procedures and appropriate arrangements which have been negotiated between Forest Service and NFFE-FSC [reference 5 USC 7106(b) (2) and (3)]. It is not to be altered or supplemented below the National level by units covered by NFFE. As appropriate, National level changes will not be made without notice to NFFE-FSC, and bargaining between the parties, pursuant to Master Agreement Article 11.

Other Bargaining Units: Management may be required to meet additional labor management obligations as appropriate with other unions representing bargaining unit employees who are impacted by the implementation of this plan, in accordance with provisions of their respective collective bargaining agreements.

VII. Tracking Minimum Qualification Standards

The FS-FPM positions and their minimum qualifications standards have been incorporated into IQCS and all employees encumbering a FS-FPM position are required to be statused in IQCS. IQCS is the Forest Service's system of record for the management of NWCG Incident Management Qualifications and training, and is intended to be the system of record for FS-FPM implementation as it has been for IFPM.

IQCS will assist supervisors to track their employee's progress towards attaining FS-FPM requirements, develop Individual Development Plans (IDP), and to identify and prioritize needed NWCG position experience and/or training. Refer to the IQCS website (<http://iqcs.nwcg.gov>) for more information.

It is recommended that fire managers regularly communicate personnel changes with their unit's IQCS account manager. Updates to an employee's FS-FPM status should be done promptly whenever positions are filled or vacated.

VIII. The FS-FPM Standard

FS-FPM minimum qualification standards (MQS) are tiered from IFPM; however the MQS were adjusted to be appropriate for the Forest Service's fourth tier organization. The FS-FPM minimum qualification standards are displayed in the *Forest Service SPD Crosswalk*

The *FS-FPM Standard* consists of:

- A. Key fire management positions that are either subordinate to an IFPM position or located on a sub-unit
- B. Sub-Unit Complexity Rating
- C. Minimum Qualification Standards (MQS) for each FS-FPM position

A. Key Fire Management Positions

The FS-FPM Standard is comprised of five categories of fire management positions commonly found on Forest Service units. These positions are typically located on a sub-unit or are subordinate to one of the 13 Key IFPM positions.

Sub-Unit Positions

| | |
|----------|---|
| Sub-UFPM | <u>District or Zone FMO</u> (forestry technician ¹) |
| Sub-WFOS | <u>District or Zone AFMO</u> (forestry technician ¹) |
| Sub-PFFS | <u>District or Zone Fuels Specialists</u> (forestry technician ¹) |
| Sub-WFOS | <u>Type 2 Handcrew Supervisors</u> (forestry technician) |
| Sub-WFOS | <u>Smokechase Crew Supervisors</u> (forestry technician) |
| Sub-WFOS | <u>Station Managers</u> (forestry technician) |

Subordinate Positions

| | |
|----------|--|
| Sub-UFPM | <u>Forest AFMO²</u> (forestry technician ¹) |
| IHC | <u>Assistant Superintendent and Squad Leaders</u> (forestry technician) |
| Helitack | <u>Assistant Helitack Crew Supervisor and Squad Leaders</u> (forestry technician) |

Unit

For the purpose of this implementation plan, at the program management level a unit is considered to be a Forest or multiple Forests that have been combined into one unit.

Sub-Unit

For the purpose of this implementation plan, a sub-unit is considered to be a Forest Service ranger district, or a combination of districts that have been combined into a zone.

Forest Service employees of “Service First” organizations should implement FS-FPM as per the implementation procedures contained in this plan.

¹Since June 2009 the Forest Service has been under W.O. interim direction concerning use of the 401 Fire Management Specialist series for professional positions (see Chief Kimbell’s 2009 letter: <http://www.fs.fed.us/fire/management/ifpm/documents.html>). During this interim period, all fire management positions from grade GS-12 and below will be classified in the 462-series.

²The Forest AFMO position was originally classified as an IFPM Wildland Fire Operations Specialist (WFOS) category in 2004. During the FS-FPM review in 2006, SME’s determined that the FAFMO position should be in the UFPM category with modifications, and was included in *FS-FPM Standard* as a subordinate position to a UFPM.

B. Sub-Unit Complexity Rating

The FS-FPM complexity rating for sub-units (i.e., Ranger Districts) should be determined by the Forest or Grassland's UFPM and Agency Administrator based on how much the sub-unit contributed to the Forest's overall unit complexity (see *Forest Service IFPM Implementation Plan*). Unit complexity rating as defined by *IFPM Standard* should only apply to the Unit's IFPM positions and the FS-FPM Forest AFMO position. FS-FPM positions that are based on sub-unit complexity should have their complexity rating established at a level that is commensurate with the complexities of the sub-unit's annual program of work.

In most instances sub-unit complexity will be the same as or lower than the Unit's. However it is possible for the sub-unit complexity rating to be higher than that of the Unit's.

Example: Forest XYZ is a moderate complexity forest (unit) with four Ranger Districts (sub-units). District-1 has a significantly higher fire suppression workload than the other districts. But when the Forest's complexity analysis was completed for IFPM, the average of the four districts resulted in an IFPM rating of Moderate. As a result, District-1 could have a FS-FPM sub-unit complexity rating of High, whereas the other Districts are rated as Moderate.

C. Minimum Qualification Standards

FS-FPM minimum qualification standards are similar in nature to their IFPM counterparts, and are comprised of four components:

1. Basic OPM Requirements for the GS-462 series,
2. Specialized experience,
3. NWCG Incident Management Qualifications, and
4. Additional Required Training

Before October 1, 2013

Incumbents have until October 1, 2013 to meet all of the FS-FPM minimum qualification standards as outlined in the *FS-FPM Standard* for their position.

New hires have until October 1, 2013 to meet the NWCG Incident management Qualifications and Additional Required Training (as applicable) for their position as outlined in the *FS-FPM Standard*. All OPM requirements must be met at time of hire.

On or After October 1, 2013

On October 1, 2013, the FS-FPM minimum qualification standards will become selective placement factors. As such, all employees hired after this date into a FS-FPM position must meet the minimum qualification standards at time of hire.

IX. Recruitment and Staffing for FS-FPM Positions

When filling a vacancy, the supervisor should first consult the *Forest Service SPD Crosswalk* to determine the correct FS-FPM position to be advertised. The *FS-FPM Standard* contains the minimum qualification standards (as outlined above) for each of the FS-FPM positions. The supervisor should ensure the language in the Vacancy Outreach is consistent with the requirements in the *FS-FPM Standard* and the *Forest Service SPD Crosswalk*. All additional standard statements relative to position (e.g., area of consideration, description of duties, firefighter retirement coverage, minimum entry age, physical requirements and/or medical standards, etc) should be included in the vacancy outreach notice and AVUE vacancy announcement.

Before October 1, 2013

The Open Continuous Rosters (OCR) for filling FS-FPM vacancies have been established and are available for use during the FS-FPM implementation period. A listing of the OCRs is available on HRM's website at:

http://fsweb.hcm.fs.fed.us/HRM/employment/Open_Continuous_Recruitments.php

On or After October 1, 2013

Prior to the FS-FPM implementation deadline, the OCR announcements associated with FS-FPM will be modified to include the FS-FPM minimum qualification standards (MQS), and these MQS will become selective placement factors contained in the vacancy announcement's on-line questionnaire. The FS-FPM OCR's will become available for use in AVUE on October 1, 2013 when *FS-FPM Standard* is fully implemented.

A. Single Grade Recruitment:

Before October 1, 2013: Applicants must meet all the OPM series requirements to be considered eligible. However, prior to the implementation deadline, applicants are not required to meet NWCG Incident Management Qualifications and Additional Required Training at the time of hire, however the incumbent must meet them by October 1, 2013.

In cases where selected applicants do not meet the NWCG Incident Management Qualifications and Additional Required Training, the Selecting Official should require the newly selected employee to sign an Employment Agreement (Appendix D-2) prior to placement. The Employment Agreement is an acknowledgement by the employee that they are required to obtain the missing qualifications prior to October 1, 2013 or face possible removal from their position.

On or After October 1, 2013: Following the implementation deadline the FS-FPM minimum qualification standards will become selective placement factors (SPF), and all applicants must meet the SPFs described for the FS-FPM position in order to be considered an eligible applicant.

B. Multi-grade Recruitment:

All FS-FPM positions are considered to be operating at their full performance level (FPL) if they are filled at the recommended minimum grade level identified in the *Forest Service SPD Crosswalk*. This includes positions that are filled as a multi-graded position for purpose of recruitment and providing a career ladder to the FPL.

Examples: *GS-462-10/11 DZFM0*, *GS-462-7/8 Helitack Assistant Crew Supervisor*, or *GS-462-6/7 IHC Squad Leader*

Before October 1, 2013: During the implementation period, incumbents and new hires may occupy all grade levels of a FS-FPM position without possessing the FS-FPM minimum qualification standards for their position.

On or After October 1, 2013: Incumbents and applicants for a FS-FPM multi-graded position must meet all of the SPF's even if they only qualify for the lower graded position.

OPM has determined that the selective placement factors apply to all grade levels of a multi-graded position. As such, incumbents must meet all of the FS-FPM requirements for the position even if they are only occupying the lower grade level of a multi-graded position.

Example: *An individual applies to a GS-462-6/7 IHC Squad Leader position, but only has sufficient time-in-grade to be hired as a GS-6 (with non-competitive promotion to the GS-7 after working 52 weeks as a GS-6). To be considered eligible, applicant must possess the IHCSQL selective placement factors of FFT1 and ICT5 even at the GS-6 level.*

C. Currency

With the exception of the Forest AFMO High and Moderate complexity positions, all FS-FPM positions require that the employee maintain currency in their NWCG qualifications (see PMS 310-1 for definition of "Currency"). However, applicants who were once qualified in the primary and secondary core requirements but lost currency are eligible to apply for the position.

Before October 1, 2013: During the implementation period, incumbents and new hires may occupy the FS-FPM position without maintaining currency of the NWCG qualifications required for their position, but must attain currency by October 1, 2013.

On or After October 1, 2013: Incumbents and applicants must be able to maintain currency for the NWCG qualifications required for their position. If an applicant who lost currency is selected into a FS-FPM position after October 1, 2013 they will be granted one year from the date of hire to become re-certified.

D. Developmental Position Recruitment

Positions that are filled at lower grades or in position descriptions other than identified in the *Forest Service SPD Crosswalk* for the purpose of recruitment and development

for future workforce needs should not be considered FS-FPM positions, and will not be subject to the minimum qualification standards of the FS-FPM position.

Example: A Forest opts to recruit and develop an employee thru the Student Career Experience Program (SCEP) that is targeted to fill the duties of a District Fuels Specialist (GS-8/9) in the future. If the employee is hired using non FS-FPM position descriptions at the lower grade levels (i.e. thru use of 499 series PD's at grades GS-5 thru 7), the employee should not be required to meet the FS-FPM requirements for a GS-8/9 District Fuels Specialist position until they are converted into the FS-FPM national standard position description. However, the employee may be required to meet FS-FPM requirements for a GS-6/7 District Fuels Technician position if that particular NSPD is used at the lower grade levels of the employee's development.

When filling positions with non-standard PD's, the local unit must work with Human Resources to place the employee into a developmental position description that adequately describes the duties, responsibilities, and factors of the position.

E. Temporary and Student Temporary Employment Program (STEP) Employees in FS-FPM:

On some units, a FS-FPM position may be encumbered by a temporary employee. If a temporary employee is occupying one of the FS-FPM national standard position descriptions, then the *FS-FPM Standard* will apply to that employee. The following implementation procedures apply to Temporary employees:

Before October 1, 2013: Temporary employees (GS-5 and above) that are hired or rehired into a FS-FPM positions (e.g. Helitack squad leader, IHC squad leader, IA Module Leader, or T2 IA Handcrew Assistant) are not required to meet the NWCG Incident Management Qualifications and Additional Required Training for their position at the time of hire.

On or After October 1, 2013:

New temporary employees (GS-5 and above) that are hired into an FS-FPM position must meet all FS-FPM selective placement factors at the time of hire.

Temporary employees with re-hire eligibility into a FS-FPM position must possess the required FS-FPM selective placement factors in order to be re-hired into the same FS-FPM position after October 1, 2013. An individual with rehire eligibility who does not meet the *FS-FPM Standard* for their prior position may be rehired into another agency position on the same major sub-division for which they meet the qualifications of that position.

When re-hiring a temporary employee into a FS-FPM position after October 1, 2013, supervisors must attach documentation (e.g., IQCS Master Record, or certification page of a Position Taskbook) to the personnel action in SF-52 Tracker to support that the employee meets the FS-FPM selective placement factors (e.g. FFT1 and ICT5 for IHC Squad Leaders).

F. Temporary FS-FPM Employees who will work past Oct 1, 2013:

Unqualified Temporary Employee:

If the unqualified temporary employee's NTE date is prior to November 15, 2013 (45 days after the implementation deadline), the employee will be allowed to remain in their position until their NTE date.

If the unqualified temporary employee's NTE date is after November 15, 2013, the host unit has the option to terminate the employee on November 15, 2013 or request an extension (see Section X., Step 9: Managing Unqualified Employees on October 1, 2013).

Qualified Temporary Employee:

Qualified temporary employees should have their status established prior to termination, and a copy of the IQCS Master Record submitted in SF-52 Tracker if rehired the following season.

G. Student Career Experience Program (SCEP):

SCEPs will be treated as being in developmental position. See "Developmental Position Recruitment" above.

H. Standard Vacancy Outreach Language for FS-FPM Positions

The following language and format is recommended for use when outreaching vacant FS-FPM positions. Make sure the correct position and qualification requirements are used.

Here is an example:

This position has been identified as a District or Zone FMO (DZFMO) positions in the Forest Service Fire Program Management (FS-FPM) Standard, and will be subject to minimum qualification standards (MQS) that will become selective placement factors on October 1, 2013. Applicants hired prior to October 1, 2013 do not need to possess all of the MQS, but must attain them prior to or on that date to remain in the position.

Key Fire Management Position: District or Zone Fire Management Officer (DZFMO-High)

NWCG Incident Management Qualifications:

- Primary: Division Group Supervisor (DIVS)
- and-
- Secondary: Incident Commander Type 3 (ICT3) or Burn Boss Type 2 (RXB2)

-and-

Additional Required Training: M-581

Currency Requirement: Once hired, employee will be required to maintain currency for the above NWCG qualifications.

A copy of the IQCS master record (or agency equivalent) should be submitted along with the application as supporting documentation to validate NWCG Qualifications and Additional Required Training.

X. FS-FPM Standard Implementation Process

The following steps are to be used in the implementation of FS-FPM Standards:

Step 1: Determine Sub-Unit Complexity

Complexity for sub-units (i.e., Ranger Districts) should be determined by the Forest or Grassland's Unit Fire Program Manager and Agency Administrator. The measure of a sub-unit's complexity should be based on how much that sub-unit's fire and aviation management program contributed to the overall Forest or Grassland's complexity rating.

- Forest AFMO positions are to be based on the Unit's overall complexity rating.
- District or Zone FMO, District or Zone AFMO, and District or Zone Fuel Specialists positions are dependent on the sub-unit's complexity rating.
- Type 2 Handcrew Supervisors, Initial Attack Module Leaders, Station Managers, and subordinate positions on Interagency Hotshot Crews (IHC) or Helitack Crews are independent of the sub-unit's complexity rating.

Step 2: Position Identification and Incumbent Declarations

Fire Managers should be constantly reviewing the positions within their fire organization that were not previously identified as one of the 13 key IFPM positions, and determine if those positions are affected by the *FS-FPM Standard*. The *Forest Service SPD Crosswalk* displays all the IFPM and FS-FPM positions, along with the common working titles and identifies the recommended series, grade, and the national standard position description (NSPD) for each position.

Each employee who is encumbering a FS-FPM position shown on the *Forest Service SPD Crosswalk* must be identified on the *FS-FPM Unit Identification Worksheet* (Appendix A-3) and submit an *Incumbent Declaration* (Appendix A-4) to the Forest FMO. Further guidance for evaluation of positions can be found in the Position Identification Process in Appendix A.

IQCS has been configured to FS-FPM Standard, and all Units are required to enter their FS-FPM incumbent data into IQCS. IQCS will be the Forest Service's database of record and will constitute the documentation necessary for the Incumbent Declaration and Qualification Determination.

FS-FPM Appendix A includes:

- Position Identification Process
- Unit Position Identification Worksheet
- Incumbent Declaration

Step 3: Determination of Qualifications

The Forest FMO will be the responsible official to conduct qualification determinations for all FS-FPM incumbents and new hires identified on their unit's *Unit Position Identification Worksheet*. The Forest FMO will review and certify all *Incumbent Declarations* submitted by the district or zone fire managers against the requirements in the *FS-FPM Standard*. These requirements can be found in the *Forest Service SPD Crosswalk*, and the process for making the *Determination of Qualifications* can be found in Appendix B of this plan. For guidance on advertising and filling vacant positions, refer to the Section IX. Recruitment and Staffing for FS-FPM Positions.

FS-FPM Appendix B includes:

- Qualification Determination Process

Step 4: Notification of Qualification Status

The Forest FMO will document the results of Step 3: Determination of Qualifications and will be responsible for notifying the employee in writing with regard to his/her qualification status. Guidance for this process can be found in Appendix C: *Notification of Qualification Status Process*.

FS-FPM Appendix C includes:

- Notification of Qualification Status Process
- Notification of Qualification Memo(s) Template

Step 5: Assess Employee Development Needs

The Forest FMO must assess the employee's training and development needs to meet the FS-FPM minimum qualification standards by October 1, 2013.

Prioritization for NWCG training and position trainee assignments should be balanced between FS-FPM position needs and unit staffing needs. Local, Regional, and Agency needs should be evaluated along with historical availability and quality of the individual's performance.

Step 6: Initiate Individual Development Plans

Once an employee's training and development needs have been assessed in Step 5, the employee and supervisor must develop and initiate an Individual Development Plan (IDP) based on that assessment.

Step 7: Employee Monitoring

Unqualified FS-FPM employees should be evaluated by their supervisor at least once per quarter, and have their IDP updated when warranted. Supervisors should document results of the quarterly assessments.

If it appears that the employee will not meet the minimum qualification standard for his/her position by October 1, 2013, the first level supervisor is responsible for notifying the employee's second level supervisor and the Forest FMO well in advance of the implementation deadline. Refer to Step 9 (below) for further guidance.

Supervisors should document attainment of minimum qualification standards that had were previously lacking, as well as document instances when employees failed to meet certain attainment goals as specified in the IDP. Examples of these include:

- *Employee unable to partake in fire assignments due to injuries or unique personal reasons that preclude normal participation in fire assignments that are deemed reasonable (i.e., injury or medical condition that prevents employee from performing arduous level assignments).*
- *Employee unable to partake in fire assignment or NWCG training due to other work priorities as directed by supervisor.*
- *Employee elects not to participate in a required training session*
- *Employee fails to successfully complete a NWCG class*
- *Employee elects not to take a training assignment for an NWCG qualification they are lacking*

Step 8: Reevaluation of Incumbents Previously Determined to Not Meet Qualifications

Once an employee has obtained the minimum qualification standard for his/her position, it is the responsibility of the employee and his/her supervisor to re-submit the appropriate qualifying documentation to the Forest FMO prior to October 1, 2013. Refer to *Step 3: Determination of Qualifications*, for further guidance.

Incident Qualification and Certification System (IQCS) must be updated on a regular basis to reflect current accomplishments.

Step 9: Managing Employees Who Do Not Meet the FS-FPM Standard on October 1, 2013

Incumbents who do not meet the FS-FPM minimum qualification standards (MQS) for their position on October 1, 2013 may be eligible for a 12 month extension, provided they comply with the following requirements:

- Employee must initiate the request for an extension within 45 days (by Nov 15, 2013) following the implementation deadline of October 1, 2013, describing the

circumstances that prevented the employee from meeting his/her FS-FPM minimum qualification standards prior to the implementation deadline.

- The Forest FMO and Line Officer of the employee's home unit must agree that there were mitigating circumstances outside of the employee's control, and agree that an additional 12 months is a sufficient time for the employee to obtain the required training and experience.
- If the home unit determines that there is justification for recommending the extension, the written request must be submitted to the Regional Forester by December 15, 2013. The request for extension must include the Forest FMO and Line Officer endorsement of the employee's request, a copy of the employee's Individual Development Plan (IDP), and identification of an individual on the same unit (i.e., a supervisor) that will mentor and monitor the employee's progress in meeting the FS-FPM MQS in the following 12 months.
- Regional Forester review of the extension and subsequent approval or denial of the extension request must be communicated to the employee by Jan 31, 2014.
- If the extension is granted, the employee's home unit must work with the servicing Human Resource Specialist to complete an employment agreement which the employee will be required to sign, agreeing to work towards meeting the FS-FPM minimum qualification standards for his/her position in the agreed upon time. Appendix D-4 contains a template for an Employment Agreement that can be used for this purpose. The base language of the Employment Agreement contained in Appendix D-4 of this plan has been negotiated with NFFE-FSC, and is not to be modified without union representation if the employee is in the NFFE bargaining unit.
- The 12 month extension will commence from the date that the request was approved by the Regional Forester.

Failure of the employee to submit a request in compliance with the above requirements, or disapproval of the request, will result in the employee being removed immediately from their FS-FPM duties and offered placement into another position for which they are qualified, if available. Managers should work with HR Staffing Operations, WRAPs List coordinator, and/or Employee and Labor Relations to resolve this situation.

In the rare event that additional or continuing mitigating circumstances occur that preclude the employee from being able to obtain their missing FS-FPM minimum qualification standards in the initial 12 month extension period, the employee may be eligible to submit a request for an additional 12 month extension. Requests for additional extensions will be on a case-by-case basis, subject to home unit and Regional Forester concurrence. However it should be noted that these are expected to be rare instances.

Bargaining Unit Employees will be notified of their right to union representation in the Step 9 process with the supervisor and FMO, and their right to grieve qualification determinations.

Mitigating circumstances for not meeting the FS-FPM MQS include, but are not limited to:

- Medical condition or injury that prevented the employee from completing an NWCG position taskbook prior to October 1, 2013.
- Employee was nominated for an NWCG class that is required for their position, but was not accepted into the course, or was accepted but employee had to withdraw for reasons outside of their control (e.g., illness).
- Insufficient training opportunities due to low fire activity prevented the employee from completing the remaining tasks in the employee's position taskbook.
- Employee was hired in 2012 before the FS-FPM Standards became effective, and thru no fault of the employee there was insufficient opportunity to attain the minimum qualifications required for their position.
- A local unit has been unable to implement prescribed fire projects during the implementation period due to adverse conditions (i.e. long term drought) that were prevalent in that geographic area.
- Employee has initiated formal action to retire or to move into a non-IFPM position with an effective date prior to the end of January 3, 2015.

Circumstances that would not qualify for an extension include but are not limited to:

- Employee was informed of their unqualified FS-FPM status, but did not take sufficient steps to work towards meeting the FS-FPM MQS.
- Opportunities to work on position taskbook or attend NWCG training were made available to the employee but the employee voluntarily opted not to take advantage of them.
- Employee was unable or unwilling to take/pass the Work Capacity Test (WCT) at the level required to maintain currency for the NWCG positions their FS-FPM MQS require.
- Employee has not demonstrated the ability to successfully complete a NWCG position taskbook required for their position, and efforts to develop the employee's lack of skill or abilities have proven unsuccessful.
- Employee has not demonstrated the ability to successfully complete a NWCG course required for their position, and efforts to develop the employee's lack of skill or abilities to successfully complete the curriculum have proven unsuccessful.

In all the above cases, or others as applicable, supervisors should be documenting instances of employee refusal or inability to comply with training opportunities.

FS-FPM Appendix D includes:

- Employment Agreement Template (for unqualified employees hired prior to Oct 1, 2013)

- Employment Agreement Template (for unqualified employees granted an extension after Oct 1, 2013)

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FS-FPM APPENDICES

Appendix A: Position Identification

- Position Identification Process
- Unit Position Identification Worksheet
- Incumbent Declaration

Appendix B: Determination of Qualifications

- Qualification Review Process

Appendix C: Notification of Qualification Status

- Notification of Qualification Status Process
- Notification of Qualification Memo(s)

Appendix D: FS-FPM Employment Agreements

- Employment Agreement Template for unqualified employees hired prior to Oct 1, 2013
- Employment Agreement Template for unqualified employees granted an extension after Oct 1, 2013

Appendix A

Position Identification

Responsibility - Fire Management

Introduction

The purpose of this process is to identify all positions on a Forest Service unit or sub-unit that are one of the key fire management positions affected by *FS-FPM Standard*. Fire Management must review each position within the unit's fire organization that have not been previously identified to be in *IFPM Standard*, and determine if those positions are in FS-FPM.

Encumbered as well as vacant positions that are in the unit fire management plan (e.g., table of organization/work chart) should be reviewed.

The sub-unit complexity rating will need to be determined before proceeding with the Position Identification process (refer to Section X. FS-FPM Implementation Process, Step 1).

Unit Position Identification Worksheet

1. Download the *Unit Position Identification Worksheet* from this appendix.
2. Enter the name, current series/grade, and organizational title for each of the FAM positions on your unit in the worksheet.
3. Establish the sub-unit complexity level for the ranger districts on your unit.
4. Go to the *Forest Service Standard Position Description Crosswalk* located at: <http://www.fs.fed.us/fire/management/ifpm/crosswalk.pdf> and refer to the specific page in the *Crosswalk* for more information on each position.
5. Document those positions that are on your unit in the *Unit Position Identification Worksheet*, and indicate the complexity level.
6. Record the National Standard Position Description (SPD) referenced on the *Crosswalk* for each position.
7. Once the IFPM position category and complexity (if needed) for each position has been identified, review the Minimum Qualification Standards (MQS) required for each position, and note if the employee meets the MQS with a YES or NO.

Some IFPM employees may be in non-standard position descriptions. Supervisors should review the non-standard PD and consider if it is still 80% accurate.

- If their current PD accurately describes at least 80% of their duties, it is recommended that the employee remain in that PD until the position becomes vacant.
- If their current PD is not 80% accurate, it is recommended that they be transferred into the agency SPD as identified for their position on the Crosswalk.
- The agency SPD's identified on the Crosswalk should be used to fill vacancies unless the employee is engaged in non-standard collateral duties for more than 20% of the time.

The Unit Position Identification Worksheet should be maintained at the Unit level, and updated periodically when there are changes in the organization or vacant positions that are filled.

Incumbent Declaration

The Incumbent Declaration is only needed for Fire and Aviation Management employees that are encumbering their position prior to October 1, 2013, and whose qualification determination has not been established.

Supervisors and the FS-FPM affected employee should initiate the Incumbent Declaration and submit the form along with any supporting documentation (e.g., IQCS master record and copies of NWCG course certificates) to the Forest FMO.

1. Download the *Incumbent Declaration* from this appendix.
2. Fill out the information on the *Incumbent Declaration* for each position identified on the *Unit Position Identification Worksheet*.
3. Reference the *Forest Service SPD Crosswalk* to identify the Primary and Secondary NWCG Qualification requirements and Addition Required Training (if any) for the position.
4. If those requirements have been met, note the date the competency was attained.
5. Check YES or NO if the employee meets the Minimum Qualification Standard, and attach the supporting documentation from IQCS.
6. Employee and Supervisor should sign the *Incumbent Declaration*, attesting that the information contained on the form is accurate and correct.
7. Submit the Incumbent Declaration along with supporting documentation to the Forest FMO.

UNIT POSITION IDENTIFICATION WORKSHEET

Position Identification Worksheet for _____
Name of Unit (Forest)

Unit Complexity _____
Low/Moderate/High

Prepared by _____
Unit Fire Program Manager

Date Prepared _____

Instructions for Use:

This worksheet is intended to assist fire managers to identify which of their employees are affected by FS-FPM. The responsible Unit Fire Program manager (UFPM) should reference the Forest Service SPD Crosswalk posted on the Forest Service website (<http://www.fs.fed.us/fire/management/ifpm/>) to identify the appropriate IFPM category that applies to their employees. This information should be entered into the Incident Qualification and Certification System (IQCS) and updated periodically as needed.

| Current Organizational Title | Current Series & Grade | Current PD # | Employee's Name | IFPM Position Category | Complexity Level | National Standard PD# | Meet MQS (Y/N) | Comments |
|---|------------------------|--------------|-----------------|------------------------|------------------|-----------------------|----------------|----------|
| Forest AFMO | | | | FAFMO | H/M/L | | | |
| District or Zone FMO | | | | DZFMO | H/M/L | | | |
| District or Zone AFMO | | | | DZAFM | H/M/L | | | |
| District or Zone Fuels Specialist or Fuels Technician | | | | DFPFM, DFAFM, or DFTEC | N/A | | | |
| IHC Asst Superintendent | | | | IHCAS | N/A | | | |
| IHC Squad Leader | | | | IHCSQL | N/A | | | |
| Helitack Asst Crew Supervisor | | | | FHACS | N/A | | | |
| Helitack Squad Leader | | | | FHSQL | N/A | | | |
| T2 Handcrew Supervisor | | | | FT2CS | N/A | | | |
| T2 Handcrew Asst Supervisor | | | | FT2CA | N/A | | | |
| IA Module Leader | | | | FIAML | N/A | | | |
| Station Manager | | | | FSMGR | N/A | | | |
| | | | | | | | | |

**INCUMBENT DECLARATION
For FS-FPM Positions**

Employee Name: _____ **Unit:** _____

IFPM Position: _____

Minimum NWCG Qualifications and Training Required for Position:

Refer to the Forest Service Standard Position Description Crosswalk for the Minimum NWCG Qualifications and Training required for the FS-FPM position. Also see Appendix B of the FS-FPM Implementation Plan.

Required NWCG Qualifications

Core: _____ Date Attained: _____

-and-

Secondary: _____ Date Attained: _____

Additional Required Training (if applicable)

_____ Date Completed: _____

Meets Minimum Qualification Standards: Yes _____ No _____

****Attach supporting documentation from IQCS****

Employee: _____ Date: _____

Supervisor: _____ Date: _____

I have reviewed and verified the information above, and certify that the employee has met the Minimum Qualification Standards for their FS-FPM position.

Yes _____ No _____

Certifying Official: _____ Date: _____
Unit Fire Program Manager

Appendix B

Determination of Qualifications

Responsibility –Local Forest Fire Management Officer and Human Resources

Qualification Review Process

Prior to October 1, 2013, each employee that is encumbering a FS-FPM position identified in the *Unit Position Identification Worksheet* (Appendix A) needs to be evaluated to determine if they meet the minimum qualification standards as defined for their position in the *FS-FPM Standard*.

As of May 29, 2009 the Forest Service has been under interim direction concerning the use and classification of position in the 401 professional series. As a result, IFPM and FS-FPM implementation for the Forest Service has been limited to attainment of the NWCG incident command system qualifications and NWCG required training (if any) required for each position.

Accordingly, the Forest FMO is delegated the responsibility to evaluate and determine if FS-FPM incumbents on their unit meet the FS-FPM minimum qualification standards (MQS) required for their position.

If it is necessary to determine whether or not the incumbent meets the education and specialized experience requirements of the professional series that they are encumbering, the series determination may only be made by the Human Resources Staffing Branch at the Albuquerque Service Center (ASC). The NWCG Qualifications and Additional Required Training determination may be conducted by a Fire Manager or Regional FAM staff.

Auditing Incumbents

Step 1: The encumbered employee and supervisor will submit to the Forest FMO all required documentation (see Appendix A, Position Identification) for determination of qualification.

Step 2: The Forest FMO will review the submitted documentation (i.e. Unit Position Identification Worksheet, Incumbent Declaration, ICQS Master Record, and/or copies of certificates or letters of training completion).

Step 3: Notification of Employee's Status, refer to Appendix C: Notification of Qualification Status. If employee meets MQS, the process ends here.

Step 4: If the incumbent does not meet MQS, the Forest FMO will notify the employee of their status (per Appendix C), and inform the supervisor that an IDP must be developed to assist the employee in meeting the NWCG Incident Qualifications and Additional Required Training. An Employment Agreement for Unqualified Incumbents should be initiated with assistance from the unit's servicing human resource office (Appendix D-2).

For incumbents that do not meet FS-FPM MQS on October 1, 2013, the employee has the option to request an extension, per Section X, Step 9 of the FS-FPM Implementation Plan. If an extension is granted (per Step 9), an Employment Agreement must be completed (see Appendix D-4).

Auditing New Hires

The OPM requirements for the employee's occupational series must be met at time of hire. This will be accomplished by Human Resources Staffing Specialists at the time of hire.

Before October 1, 2010: Incumbents hired prior to October 1, 2010 are not required to meet the NWCG Incident Qualifications and Additional Required Training (if applicable) for the FS-FPM position they are hired into.

The Forest FMO is responsible to ensure that a review of the new employee's IQCS records was completed, and determine (as in Steps 1 and 2 above) if the new employee meets the MQS required for their FS-FPM position. Once the determination is made, the employee will be notified of their status as per the steps outlined in Appendix C: Notification of Qualification Status.

On or After October 1, 2013: On October 1, 2013 the FS-FPM minimum qualification standards (MQS) will become selective placement factors (SPF). Applicants selected for a FS-FPM position on or after this date must meet the NWCG Incident Qualifications and Additional Required Training as outlined in the *FS-FPM Standard* as part of the SPF for their position.

After October 1, 2013, determining if the employee meets the FS-FPM selective placement factors will be performed at the time of hire by Human Resources (HRM) or Fire SMEs, and no further need for qualification determination will be required on the part of the local Forest.

Appendix C

Notification of Qualification Status

Responsibility – Fire Management

Introduction

Once the FS-FPM employee's supporting documentation has been reviewed, the Forest FMO will notify the employee of their status.

Incumbent Meets MQS

If the employee has been determined to have met the minimum qualification standards (MQS) required for their FS-FPM position, the employee and supervisor must be provided with a signed copy of the certified *Incumbent Declaration and Notification of Qualification* letter (Appendix C-2).

Incumbent Does Not Meet MQS

If it is determined that the employee has not met all of the minimum qualification standards (MQS) required for their FS-FPM position, the Forest FMO must provide the employee and supervisor with signed copy of the *Incumbent Declaration* letter indicating which MQS have not been met, and a *Notification of Non-Qualified* letter (Appendix C-3) which will direct the employee and supervisor to initiate an *Individual Development Plan* (IDP) outlining the steps to be taken for the employee to meet their FS-FPM requirements.

In addition, the employee's supervisor should work with the unit's servicing human resource office to prepare an Employment Agreement for the employee to sign (Appendix D-2), acknowledging that they are required to obtain the missing qualifications prior to October 1, 2013, or face possible removal from their position if they do not meet the conditions described in Step 9 of the FS-FPM Implementation Plan.

On or After October 1, 2013

Step 9 of the Forest Service IFPM Implementation Plan outlines the steps to be taken if the incumbent does not meet the IFPM competencies for their position.

If a 12 month extension is granted, the employee will be required to sign an Employment Agreement (Appendix D-4).

Notification of Qualification Letter (template)**File Code:****Date:****Route To:** IQCS Master Record**Subject:** Notification of IFPM Qualification**To:** *Incumbent*

Congratulations! Based on our review of your NWCG Incident Management Qualifications and training records in *IQCS*, I have determined that you meet the Minimum Qualification Standards (MQS) for the _____ FS-FPM position.

If you intend to pursue a career within Fire and Aviation Management, I refer you to the *Forest Service Standard Position Description Crosswalk* located at: <http://www.fs.fed.us/fire/management/ifpm/> for the *IFPM* or *FS-FPM Standards* for key fire positions within FAM. Please take note of the NWCG Incident Management Qualifications and required training for those positions, and work with your supervisor to develop an Individual Development Plan (IDP) that will help you attain those requirements.

A copy of this letter will be filed in your IQCS Master Record.

/s/

Unit Fire Program Manager

cc: *Employee's Supervisor*

Notification of Non-Qualification Letter (template)**File Code:****Date:****Route To:** IQCS Master Record**Subject:** Notification of IFPM Qualification**To:** *Incumbent*

I have determined that you are currently encumbered (or newly hired) in the _____ in the FS-FPM position.

After completing a review of your NWCG Incident Management Qualifications and training records in *IQCS*, I have determined that you do not meet the Minimum Qualification Standards (MQS) for your FS-FPM position.

The records indicate you need the following to meet the MQS for your position:

NWCG Incident Management Qualification(s): _____

Required Training (if applicable): _____

For additional information on FS-FPM, refer to the *Forest Service Standard Position Description Crosswalk* and the *FS-FPM Implementation Plan* located at:
<http://www.fs.fed.us/fire/management/ifpm/>.

Once you have obtained the above qualifications or required training, you and your supervisor should re-submit a new Incumbent Declaration form for final certification. Please refer to Appendix A of the FS-FPM Implementation Plan for further clarification.

If you are included in the NFFE bargaining unit, you are entitled to Union representation in this matter. If you disagree with my determination, you may elect to file a grievance in accordance with Article 9 of the Master Agreement.

If you believe there are mitigating circumstances which have prevented you from fully meeting the MQS for your position, you may request an extension. See the procedures for requesting an extension described in Step 9 of the *FS-FPM Implementation Plan*. The deadline for requesting the extension is November 15, 2013.

You and your supervisor are required to develop an Individual Development Plan (IDP) that will identify the appropriate training or position performance training experience, and describe the steps you will take to achieve those requirements. In addition, you will also be required to sign an Employment Agreement (see attached).

/s/

Unit Fire Program Manager

cc: *Employee's Supervisor*

Appendix D

Employment Agreement

Responsibility – Supervisor and Human Resource Specialist

Introduction

There are two situations in the implementation of FS-FPM where an Employment Agreement between the employee and management may be needed.

Prior to October 1, 2013

FS-FPM allows positions to be filled during the implementation period without meeting all of the MQS.

Once the determination has been made that a FS-FPM incumbent or person newly hired into a FS-FPM position does not meet the minimum qualification standards (MQS), the employee's supervisor or selecting official should work with the unit's servicing human resource office to prepare an employment agreement between Management and the employee.

Pages D-2 and D-3 of this appendix contain an Employment Agreement that is intended for unqualified employees that were encumbered or hired during the FS-FPM implementation period, prior to October 1, 2013.

On October 1, 2013:

If on October 1, 2013 a FS-FPM incumbent is still unqualified, the employee may request a 12-month extension (per Step 9 of the *FS-FPM Implementation Plan*). If the extension is granted, the employee's home unit must work with the servicing Human Resource Specialist to develop an employment agreement which the employee will be required to sign, agreeing to work towards meeting the FS-FPM minimum qualification standards for his/her position in the agreed upon time.

Pages D-4 and D-5 of this appendix contain an Employment Agreement that is intended for unqualified employees who have been granted a 12-month extension.

In both cases, the base language of the Employment Agreements contained in this appendix have been negotiated with NFFE-FSC, and are not to be modified without union representation if the employee is in the NFFE bargaining unit.

IFPM Employment Agreement (Template for Unqualified Incumbents or New Hires prior to October 1, 2013)

This agreement is not to be modified without union representation if the employee is in the NFFE bargaining unit

This is an agreement between USDA Forest Service Unit: _____

AND

Employee Name: _____

Current Position Title, Series, Grade: _____

1. PURPOSE OF AGREEMENT

This agreement is intended to assist in the employee's successful completion of the *FS-FPM Standard* requirements prior to October 1, 2013. It is intended that each party will assist the other in the accomplishment of the objectives of this agreement.

2. AGENCY RESPONSIBILITIES

- a. Create an Individual Development Plan (IDP) with input from the employee.
- b. Assist the employee in locating opportunities for training as identified in the IDP.
- c. Monitor employee's progress.
- d. Provide opportunities for completion of NWCG Incident Management Qualifications, as applicable.
- e. As mission needs dictate and with supervisory approval, allow the employee a flexible work schedule for training.
- f. Provide funds when available to pay for training.

3. EMPLOYEE RESPONSIBILITIES

- a. Provide supervisor with input for your IDP.
- b. Assist the supervisor in locating opportunities for training as identified in your IDP.
- c. Complete training as identified in your IDP.
- d. Participate in opportunities for completion of NWCG Incident Management Qualifications, as applicable.
- e. Keep supervisor informed of progress and any problems encountered in completing training.

STATEMENT OF UNDERSTANDING BY EMPLOYEE

I understand the following:

- a. The position I currently occupy has been identified as a key fire management position under the Forest Service Fire Program Management Qualifications Standards and Guide (*FS-FPM Standard*).
- b. At this time I do not fully meet the *FS-FPM Standard* requirements for my position. In order to remain in my FS-FPM position, I must compete these requirement(s), as identified in my Individual Development Plan:

NWCG Incident Management Qualifications _____

Additional Required Training _____

- c. If I decline the opportunity to meet these requirement(s) or fail to actively pursue these requirement(s), I will be removed from my FS-FPM position.
- d. If I fail to complete these requirement(s) by October 1, 2013, I will be removed from my FS-FPM position.

I certify that I have read and fully understand and accept the conditions of employment cited above.

Signature _____
 Employee Date _____

STATEMENT OF UNDERSTANDING BY AGENCY

- a. The agency will make every effort to assist the employee in successfully completing these requirement(s) needed to remain in this position.
- b. The agency will consider all possible options for continuation of employment of the employee if he/she fails to meet the requirement(s) of this position.
- c. The agency will consider a request for a 12 month extension after October 1, 2013 if the employee is unable to meet the requirements contained in this agreement for reasons outside of the employee's control (see Mitigating Circumstances in Step 9 of the FS-FPM Implementation Plan).

Signature _____
 Agency Representative Date _____

IFPM Employment Agreement (Template for Employees That Have Been Granted a 12 Month Extension, On or After October 1, 2013)

This agreement is not to be modified without union representation if the employee is in the NFFE bargaining unit

This is an agreement between USDA Forest Service Unit: _____

AND

Employee Name: _____

Current Position Title, Series, Grade: _____

4. PURPOSE OF AGREEMENT

This agreement is intended to assist in the employee's successful completion of the *FS-FPM Standard* requirements. As a result of an approved extension request, you have been afforded the opportunity to have an additional 12 months after the FS-FPM implementation period to complete the requirements that you are lacking. The date for completion of these requirements is _____ (*12 months from date of approved extension*). It is intended that each party will assist the other in the accomplishment of the objectives of this agreement.

5. AGENCY RESPONSIBILITIES

- g. Create an Individual Development Plan (IDP) with input from the employee.
- h. Assist the employee in locating opportunities for training as identified in the IDP.
- i. Monitor employee's progress.
- j. Provide opportunities for completion of NWCG Incident Management Qualifications, as applicable.
- k. As mission needs dictate and with supervisory approval, allow the employee a flexible work schedule for training.
- l. Provide funds when available to pay for training.

6. EMPLOYEE RESPONSIBILITIES

- f. Provide supervisor with input for your IDP.
- g. Assist the supervisor in locating opportunities for training as identified in your IDP.
- h. Complete training as identified in your IDP.
- i. Participate in opportunities for completion of NWCG Incident Management Qualifications, as applicable.
- j. Keep supervisor informed of progress and any problems encountered in completing training.

STATEMENT OF UNDERSTANDING BY EMPLOYEE

I understand the following:

- e. The position I currently occupy has been identified as a key fire management position under the Forest Service Fire Program Management Qualifications Standards and Guide (*FS-FPM Standard*).
- f. At this time I do not fully meet the *FS-FPM Standard* requirements for my position. In order to remain in my FS-FPM position, I must compete these requirement(s), as identified in my Individual Development Plan:

NWCG Incident Management Qualifications _____

Additional Required Training _____

- g. If I decline the opportunity to meet these requirement(s) or fail to actively pursue these requirement(s), I will be removed from my FS-FPM position.
- h. If I fail to complete these requirement(s) by this date ____/____/_____, I will be removed from my FS-FPM position.

I certify that I have read and fully understand and accept the conditions of employment cited above.

Signature _____
 Employee Date _____

STATEMENT OF UNDERSTANDING BY AGENCY

- d. The agency will make every effort to assist the employee in successfully completing these requirement(s) needed to remain in this position.
- e. The agency will consider all possible options for continuation of employment of the employee if he/she fails to meet the requirement(s) of this position.
- f. The agency will also consider a request for an additional 12 month extension if the employee is unable to meet the requirements contained in this agreement for reasons outside of the employee's control (see Mitigating Circumstances in Step 9 of the FS-FPM Implementation Plan). The same procedures for requesting an additional extension as described in Step 9 will apply.

Signature _____
 Agency Representative Date _____