Indian Affairs - Office of Public Affairs

Media Contact: fire.management@bia.gov
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Author: Robyn Broyles

In December, 2018, the Department of the Interior (DOI) Medical Director, Office of Occupational Safety and Health, Kate Flanigan Sawyer, M.D. endorsed the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) Wildland Fire First Aid Program. In so doing, the Office of Wildland Fire is now looking at BIA's First Aid Program as a template other wildland fire land management agencies can adopt and expand on for all field-going DOI programs.

The eight-hour Medical Incident Leadership (MIL) training course is the first-ever wildland fire-specific Occupational Safety and Health Administration's (OSHA) compliant class taught by any land management agency. It fulfills the two-year CPR and three-year first aid requirements for all field going firefighters. In 2017, BIA began training Medical Incident Technicians (MIT) how to instruct the MIL course. This training furthers the Wildland Fire First Aid Program and provides a critical service to the Bureau.

During a March 8 training the trainer session in San Diego, CA, Dr. Flanigan Sawyer, Rod Bloms, Fire Operations Program Lead with the Office of Wildland Fire, and Tim Radtke, Director of Office of Occupational Safety for the DOI made an appearance at a Training the Trainer session to learn more about the MIL training.



Tim Radtke Director of Office of Occupational Safety for DOI serves as a model during the 2019 MIL Train-the-Trainer Training in San Diego, CA. March 8, 2019. Photo: BIA.

Through their participation, these safety and health experts experienced the same hands-on training as all BIA MIL certified wildland firefighters. They also watched eight students certify as future MIL

instructors.

This year, BIA is close to achieving its goal of producing a minimum of fifteen local-unit MIL instructors. The Bureau's long-term goal is to have every firefighter participate in the MIL course by 2023.

With the assistance of Dr. Flanigan Sawyer, the Bureau was able to update the First Aid Minimum Guidelines Scope of Practice a year early and is now looking forward to finalizing the MIL curriculum by October.

In total, over 740 students from more than 50 Indian Country fire crews, including BIA, Office of Justice Services, have completed certified classes hosted by the Wildland First Aid Program. This represents about 60 percent of Indian Country's permanent fire management workforce, more than double BIA's initial goal!

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