

NWCG Standards for Wildland Fire Position Qualifications, PMS 310-1

The *NWCG Standards for Wildland Fire Position Qualifications* establishes minimum NWCG position qualification standards for training, experience, physical fitness, and currency for national mobilization to wildland fire incidents.

- The NWCG member agencies develop these requirements and agree to meet them when providing resources for national wildland fire mobilization.
- These requirements may be augmented to meet agency-specific needs, but augmented requirements may not be imposed upon cooperating agency personnel.
- NWCG recognizes the member agencies' authorities to jointly define and accept local position qualification requirements for local wildland fire incidents.

Position qualification standards are also located in the [NWCG Position Catalog](#). In October 2020, the format of this publication transitioned from a PDF document to a web-based format. All information is still available to print from the NWCG website. See directions and links below to print PMS 310-1 and all Position Qualification Requirements.

Prior to October 2019, these standards were known as the *NIMS: Wildland Fire Qualification System Guide*. While previous versions may contain current or useful information, previous versions are obsolete. The user of this information is responsible for confirming that they have the most up-to-date version. NWCG is the sole source for the publication.

Comments, questions, and recommendations shall be submitted to the appropriate agency program manager assigned to the IPSC. View the complete roster at <https://www.nwcg.gov/committees/incident-and-position-standards-committee/roster>.

Criteria for NWCG Position Qualifications

The following criteria must be met for a position to be considered for inclusion in the PMS 310-1, as determined by IPSC:

- The position supports the NWCG mission and is needed for mobilization;
- The position is interagency in scope;
- The proposed position has been submitted by an NWCG member agency, Geographic Area Coordinating Group, or NWCG committee;
- A demonstrated recurring need for standardized position qualification requirements has been identified;
- No other position exists that can accomplish these tasks; and,
- The position qualifications are not addressed or supported by industry standards and training.

Performance Based-System

NWCG uses a performance-based approach that focuses on verifying the capabilities of personnel to perform as required in the various incident-related positions. This approach incorporates education, training, and experience to build proficiency and establishes performance as the primary qualification criterion.

NWCG accomplishes this based on completion of required training, required experience, required physical fitness level, and certification of the applicable NWCG Position Task Books (PTB) on wildland fires, events,

incidents, job activities, and in simulated exercises or classroom activities.

The primary criteria for qualification is a Trainee's performance as observed by an Evaluator through the PTB. Certification is the responsibility of the agency's certifying official. The competencies and behaviors form the basis for position-specific training, [Position Task Books](#) (PTBs), [job aids](#), and other performance-based documents.

Competencies and Behaviors and Tasks

NWCG utilized a master list of the core competencies and behaviors for each position qualification.

The competencies and behaviors form the basis for position-specific training, PTBs, job aids, and other performance-based documents.

The following definitions have been established:

- Competency – A broad description grouping core behaviors necessary to perform a specific function.
- Behavior – A general description of an observable activity or action demonstrated by an individual in a particular context.
- Task – A specific description of a unit of work activity that is a logical and necessary action in the performance of a behavior; how the behavior is demonstrated or performed in a particular context.

Competencies and behaviors across the Incident Command System (ICS) positions are similar. This similarity may hide critical differences in proficiency level and the environment or type of incident in which the position is expected to perform. These critical differences are typically captured in the task identified for each position.

Approved competencies and behaviors by position are located at <https://www.nwcg.gov/publications/position-taskbooks>.

Position Qualifications Requirements Elements

Required Training

Required training provides a direct link between training and position performance to provide for responder health and safe operations on wildland fires. Required training cannot be challenged except for the following conditions:

Structural firefighters may utilize the Skills Crosswalk identified by the US Fire Administration to apply their existing fire suppression knowledge and skills towards qualification as three NWCG incident positions: Firefighter Type 1 ([FFT1](#)), Engine Boss, Single Resource ([ENGB](#)), and Strike Team Leader Engine ([STEN](#)). Refer to U.S. Fire Administration ([USFA](#)) for further information.

Member agencies may establish processes for approving and documenting course equivalencies to required NWCG training by following the NWCG Course Equivalency Guidelines in the [NWCG Standards for Course Delivery, PMS 901-1](#).

For information on interchangeable courses and course equivalency guidelines, see the [NWCG Standards for Course Delivery, PMS 901-1](#).

Required Experience

Required experience cannot be challenged; however, agencies may establish processes for approving and documenting equivalent experience that shows a direct relationship and relevance to the competencies, behaviors and tasks for a position.

Physical Fitness Level

Personnel must meet established physical fitness levels for wildland fire assignments. Agencies may determine the method of evaluating the physical fitness level of their personnel. The testing method should be a measurable evaluation process. The following levels of physical fitness have been established.

- **Arduous** – Duties involve fieldwork requiring physical performance calling for above-average endurance and superior conditioning. These duties may include an occasional demand for extraordinarily strenuous activities in emergencies under adverse environmental conditions and over extended periods of time. Requirements include running, walking, climbing, jumping, twisting, bending, and lifting more than 50 pounds; the pace of work typically is set by the emergency situation.
- **Moderate** – Duties involve fieldwork requiring complete control of all physical faculties and may include considerable walking over irregular ground, standing for long periods of time, lifting 25 to 50 pounds, climbing, bending, stooping, squatting, twisting, and reaching. Occasional demands may be required for moderately strenuous activities in emergencies over long periods. Individuals usually set their own work pace.
- **Light** – Duties mainly involve office-type work with occasional field activity characterized by light physical exertion requiring basic good health. Activities may include climbing stairs, standing, operating a vehicle, and long hours of work, as well as some bending, stooping, or light lifting. Individuals can usually govern the extent and pace of their physical activity.
- **None Required** – Positions that do not require a physical fitness level.

Currency Requirements

Currency for a position can be maintained by successful performance within the given timeframes in that position or successful performance as a Trainee or Qualified in identified positions. The maximum time allowed for maintaining currency is three years for air operations, faller, and dispatch positions. All other positions have a five-year currency requirement.

Other Training Which Supports Development

Personnel are not required to complete any training under the ‘Other Training Which Supports Development of Knowledge and Skills’ unless specifically identified by their agency. The identified training provides additional opportunities to support position development.

Certification and Recertification

Agency certification and documentation of completion of the PTB are the responsibility of the employing agency. This certification indicates the individual is qualified to perform in a specific position.

Each member agency is responsible for annually certifying qualifications of its personnel based upon NWCG position qualification standards. This responsibility includes evaluation of personnel for recertification in cases where position qualifications are no longer valid due to a lack of current experience.

Certification and recertification is a subjective determination each individual agency must make based on position task evaluations, position performance evaluations, and judgment of the quality of an individual’s experience.

Agency personnel cannot function in the role of the certifying official for contractors except where formal agreements are in place.

Casual or emergency workers must meet the hiring or certifying agency's position qualification standards.

Technical Specialists

Technical Specialists are personnel with specialized skills gained through educational degree programs or industry training of established standards. These personnel may perform the same duties during an incident that they perform in their regular job and may have supplemental training in order to use their specialized skills in the wildland fire incidents.

Although position codes have been assigned to Technical Specialist positions that can be used within the ICS, no minimum qualifications have been established by NWCG. Standards for Technical Specialist qualifications are determined by the agency.

Review and Change Process For Position Standards

Revision of the PMS 310-1

A formal revision of the [PMS 310-1](#) occurs annually. However, the Incident and Position Standards Committee ([IPSC](#)) will review proposals, address issues, and make changes at any time as needs dictate.

Revision Process

1. Proposed changes and requests for new positions, changes to position qualification standards (including PTB) will be submitted on the IPSC [Request for Change form](#) and will include:
 - a. Justification of the need for position change,
 - b. National mobilization statistics demonstrating position need and use,
 - c. Establishment or changes to Incident Position Description and Position Task Book,
 - d. Draft transition plan for implementation, and
 - e. Impacts to training development and maintenance plan, if applicable.
2. The package will be reviewed by IPSC and appropriately vetted through NWCG committees and subject matter experts to assess impacts and gain agency approval.
3. The requesting party will be notified through official correspondence of the outcome of the request and, if accepted, the timeframe for implementation.
4. Implementation occurs annually in October except when critical health and safety issues need to be addressed immediately.

About Position Task Books

When a new or revised PTB is published, current Trainees with an initiated PTB (including those individuals re-initiating or re-certifying) and at least one documented experience should continue to use their current PTB. Individuals with no tasks completed will use the new or revised PTB. Currently qualified individuals will not be affected by the transition to new or revised PTBs.

Some PTBs have been combined to include common tasks, with additional tasks specified by position. The positions, however, have not been combined. The common tasks only need to be completed once. When the PTB is initiated, the applicable position should be identified by crossing out the non-applicable position(s) on the front cover. For each subsequent position, a new front cover and a new verification/certification page must be

initiated. Required experience is still effective when prerequisite positions are combined in a PTB with higher organizational positions. Specific criteria for individual positions are identified on the individual position qualification page.

Initiation

A Trainee must meet required position experience for PTB initiation. PTB can be initiated without the Trainee first completing all required training. However, all required training must be successfully completed prior to position certification.

PTB initiation is the responsibility of the home unit. PTB may be initiated on an incident by an Incident Training Specialist ([TNSP](#)) with concurrence from the home unit.

Completion Timeframes

A PTB is valid for three years from the date of initiation. Upon documentation of the first evaluation record, the three-year time limit is reset from that new date.

The PTB will expire if is not completed in three years from the date of the PTB initiation (or date of first evaluation record). If the PTB expires, a new PTB will need to be initiated. Prior experience documented in the expired PTB may be taken into account in completion of the new PTB at the discretion of the certifying official. All current position qualification standards identified in this document must be met at the time of the new PTB initiation.

Any individual who has begun the evaluation process need not take any newly required course(s) for that position. Additionally, personnel who are qualified in a position before the implementation of this revision may retain certification at the discretion of their agency.

Position Task Book Process

Accurate completion of PTBs is important to the position qualification process.

Front Cover

The front cover documents the Trainee name, home unit/agency, and home unit phone number. It also contains the information of the individual initiating the PTB. The front cover will indicate whether a wildland fire or prescribed fire assignment is required before certification.

Verification/Certification

The Verification/Certification page located on the inside front cover provides a record of the Final Evaluator's recommendation and agency certification. The Final Evaluator will complete the Final Evaluator's Verification section along with recommending the Trainee for certification on the evaluation record. The certifying official at the home agency, when appropriate, will complete the agency certification.

Qualification Record

The left column contains a list of tasks that must be performed. If a specific standard (quality or quantity) is required, it will be specified in the task. The sequential numbering does not indicate the order in which the tasks need to be performed or evaluated.

The bullets under each numbered task are examples or indicators of items or actions related to the task that assist the Evaluator in evaluating the Trainee. They are not all inclusive. Evaluate and initial only the tasks, not each individual bullet.

Each task has a code associated with the type of training assignment where the task may be completed. While tasks can be performed in any situation, they must be evaluated on the specific type of incident/event for which they are coded. For example, tasks coded W must be evaluated on a wildland fire. Performance of any task other than the designated assignment is not valid for qualification. The codes are defined as:

- O = Other: In any situation (classroom, simulation, daily job, incident, prescribed fire, etc.).
- I = Incident: Task must be performed on an incident managed under the ICS. Examples include wildland fire, structural fire, oil spill, search and rescue, hazardous material, and an emergency or non-emergency (planned or unplanned) event.
- W = Wildland fire: Task must be performed on a wildland fire incident.
- RX = Prescribed fire: Task must be performed on a prescribed fire incident.
- W/RX = Wildland fire OR prescribed fire: Task must be performed on a wildland fire OR prescribed fire incident.
- R = Rare event: Rare events such as accidents, injuries, vehicle or aircraft crashes occur infrequently and opportunities to evaluate performance in a real setting are limited. The Evaluator should determine, through interview, if the Trainee would be able to perform the task in a real situation.

Each Evaluator will complete an evaluation record sheet and enter the corresponding number to reference completed tasks in the Evaluator Record # column.

The final column is for the Evaluator to initial and date when the task is completed. All tasks must be completed, initialed, and dated before the Trainee can be recommended for certification in the position.

Evaluation Record

The evaluation record is for each Trainee evaluation. The evaluation record documents specific Trainee performance for those specific tasks being evaluated and provides a recommendation for further Trainee assignments or recommendation for certification. Additional copies of the Evaluation Record can be downloaded at <https://www.nwcg.gov/publications/position-taskbooks>.

Position Task Book Responsibilities

Home Unit/Agency

The home unit/agency is the designated agency that employs the individual. This could be at the local, state, regional, or national level. Documentation of training, experience, and the qualification process is the responsibility of the home unit/agency. Documentation of training, experience, and the qualification process for contractors is the responsibility of the contractor, except where formal agreements are in place.

Trainee

The Trainee is the individual seeking qualification for a position. A Trainee cannot be assigned to an incident unless they are designated as a Trainee on their Incident Qualification Card or other agency proof of certification.

The Trainee will:

- Ensure readiness to perform the tasks of the position before undertaking a Trainee assignment.

- Meet with the Evaluator and discuss past experience and training, current qualifications, goals, and objectives of the assignment.
- Ensure Evaluators complete the evaluation record, initial completed tasks, and enter a number in the Evaluation Record # column.
- Provide a copy of the completed PTB to the home agency and retain the original. A lost or destroyed PTB may require additional position performance assignments.

Evaluator

The Evaluator is the person who observes the Trainee and associated the task(s) being performed and documents successful performance in the PTB. The Evaluator must either be qualified in the position being evaluated or supervise the Trainee. If not qualified in the position, the Evaluator can sign off tasks but cannot serve as the Final Evaluator.

The Evaluator will:

- Meet with the Trainee and discuss past experience and training, current qualifications, goals, and objectives of the assignment.
- Ensure the Trainee has an initiated PTB from their home agency.
- Review the tasks in the PTB with the Trainee and explain the procedures that will be used in the evaluation and the objectives that should be met during the assignment.
- Discuss with the Trainee on the specific tasks that can be performed and evaluated during the assignment.
- Accurately evaluate and record the completion of performed tasks.
- Complete the appropriate Evaluation Record in the back of the PTB for each Trainee evaluation.

Final Evaluator

A Final Evaluator must be qualified in the position they are evaluating. The Final Evaluator will complete the Final Evaluator's Verification/Certification section inside the front cover of the PTB to recommend certification once all tasks have been evaluated.

Certifying Official

The certifying official from the home unit/agency has administrative authorization to manage the qualification system for that home unit/agency. The certifying official must review and confirm the completion of the PTB and make a determination of agency certification. This determination should be based on the Trainee's demonstration of position competencies and behaviors, as well as the completed PTB—which includes a Final Evaluator's verification. Only the certifying official from the home unit/agency has the authority to certify any qualifications.

To retrieve the entirety of the content, including this page and the position qualifications requirements:

1. Click the "Print PMS 310-1" button for the general information. This will open a new window and allow you to print to a printer or a pdf.
2. Click the "Print Position Qualification Requirements" button. This will open a new window for the position catalog. Select any or all positions and follow the directions to print this content also to a printer or a pdf.

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[PRINT POSITION QUALIFICATION REQUIREMENTS](#)

The National Wildfire Coordinating Group (NWCG) provides national leadership to enable interoperable wildland fire operations among federal, state, tribal, territorial, and local partners. NWCG operations standards are interagency by design; they are developed with the intent of universal adoption by the member agencies. However, the decision to adopt and utilize them is made independently by the individual member agencies and communicated through their respective directives systems.