



United States Department of the Interior

BUREAU OF INDIAN AFFAIRS

Washington, DC 20240

November 10, 2020

Memorandum

To: All Regional Directors
Attention: Regional Fire Management Officers
Agency Superintendents

From: Director, Bureau of Indian Affairs

Subject: Support for Critical Wildland Fire Training and Travel for 2020/2021

Purpose:

As we move forward into the next year's training cycle, the Branch of Wildland Fire Management (BWFM) is asking for support of our priority students and cadre members to commit time and travel to help conduct or attend critical training for the safety of our wildland fire community.

Training our wildland firefighters has been greatly impacted over the last two years. Several critical courses have been cancelled nationally due to COVID-19. This impact has compounded missed training opportunities when coupled with the 2019 government shut down. Moving into the 2020/2021 training season, many national, regional, and local training specialists are challenged with how to deliver required training in the new COVID-19 environment. On August 31, 2020, the National Wildfire Coordinating Group (NWCG) issued a tasking to determine a national prioritization for delivering courses and determining what courses can be converted to an online or virtual format.

The BWFM and other interagency training experts recognized certain training or sections of training will need to be conducted in-person with COVID mitigations. For example, a course that will be conducted multiple times, each with small class sizes. These trainings provide education, practical technical skills, and are foundational to firefighter safety. Critical training may include *required* NWCG courses focusing on skills, leadership, prescribed fire, aviation, or support functions.

It is important to recognize fire personnel is required to complete specific fire qualifications and required trainings to qualify for future jobs. Without the ability to complete required training and obtain qualifications there will be an impact to fill future positions and influence a safe working environment. For example, M-581-Fire Program Management is essential for Fire Management Officers and Agency Administrators to perform their duties.

Guidance:

Supervisors of fire personnel utilize the Individual Development Plan (IDP) as documentation for subordinate training in Fiscal Year 2021. For trainings that require travel, it is deemed *mission-critical travel*.

Critical training, including training that was deferred in 2019 and 2020, should be resumed and attended whenever possible. The NWCG Training Delivery Committee is currently prioritizing critical courses and developing alternative course delivery methods. Virtual or online learning is preferred however in some cases in person training is required.

General mitigation for all hands-on training may include:

- Screening participants using the Wildland Fire COVID-19 Screening Tool.
- Requiring social distancing and mask use.
- Holding training sessions outdoors and/or in areas with good air flow.
- Wearing gloves and sanitizing all shared touch items.

First Aid, Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR), Blood Borne Pathogen and other medical training:

- Follow the requirements of the certifying entity (American Red Cross, American Heart Association, etc.).

Wildland Fire Safety Training Annual Refresher (RT-130) and fire shelter deployment training:

- Use virtual delivery methods for RT-130 classroom sessions.
- Complete practice deployment individually, not in teams.
- Consider using out of service fire shelters for deployment training.
- Purchase additional practice shelters if necessary.
- If practice shelters must be reused, follow Missoula Technology Development Center's sanitization procedures.

Scope:

This guidance applies to all BIA, Tribal and Administratively Determined (AD) employees.

Questions can be directed to Garth Fisher, BIA Fire Training Program Manager, at garth.fisher@bia.gov and Adrian Grayshield, BIA Safety Program Manager, at adrian.grayshield@bia.gov.