



## United States Department of the Interior

BUREAU OF INDIAN AFFAIRS  
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### Memorandum

To: All Regional Directors, All Regions  
Attn: Regional Fire Management Officer

From: Acting Director, Branch of Wildland Fire Management *Scott Bradshaw*

Subject: Timekeeping protocol for "Base 8" hours during wildfire assignments

Our office has become aware that Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) fire programs are inconsistent with timekeeping business processes in recording "base 8" hours, relative to our partner Department of Interior (DOI) agencies. The other agencies accurately attribute all hours their employees work on wildfire incidents by identifying the FireCode in the QuickTime "job" field for any hours performed on a wildfire incident, including the "base 8" hours for preparedness-funded employees. This memorandum describes the proper timekeeping process to bring us in line with our DOI partners, while also explaining the importance of this issue.

To prevent the inappropriate lapsing of budgeted funding, the DOI agencies, including BIA, have disallowed "base 8" hours from being charged to the suppression budget account (i.e. BIA's 92310 program allocation code, which is entered in the QuickTime "program" field) for those employees whose regular time is already funded via a preparedness budget account (i.e. 92120, 92130, or 92140). This DOI standard business practice remains unchanged. Unfortunately, this business practice may have led to a misunderstanding where most BIA fire programs do not associate any "base 8" hours to a FireCode in QuickTime.

It is important to understand the "program" field in QuickTime – not the "job" field – determines the account to which the reported hours are charged. Accordingly, an employee's "base 8" hours can be (correctly) charged in QuickTime to a preparedness account (92120, 92130, or 92140) in the "program" field while also being associated with a FireCode in the "job" field.

Proper timekeeping and accounting for wildfire-related costs is important because the FireCode is used for planning and tracking purposes, as in these examples:

- 1) Interagency fire planning tools, such as the Fire Program Analysis (FPA), typically use historic fire suppression costs provided by each agency to develop average suppression costs per acre by fire size class for each geographic area. The BIA generally reports the lowest suppression costs per acre, which may be due – in part – to our misunderstanding of the use of FireCode in QuickTime to attribute the cost of "base 8" hours when assigned to wildfires. When analysis outputs are interpreted with the goal of minimizing overall suppression costs, there is more value gained by suppressing fires that would otherwise burn non-BIA acres (that is, BIA acres burned incur lower suppression costs

than non-BIA acres, so the favored outputs are those that minimize the burning of non-BIA acres, even if at the expense of burning more BIA acres).

- 2) While this issue applies to all preparedness-funded BIA employees who work on wildfires, the potential magnitude can be illustrated using a scenario involving a BIA-sponsored Interagency Hotshot Crew (IHC), where over \$150,000 per IHC annually may be improperly excluded from our wildfire suppression costs due to our incorrect timekeeping practices. This estimate is based on the following assumptions;
  - o The IHC’s base personnel costs are funded via the 92140 preparedness account for 6 months a year,
  - o In a typical year, the IHC crewmembers spend 50% of their time assigned to wildfire incidents (3 months, ~520 “base 8” hours/person),
  - o Average crewmember pay rate is GS-4/4 (~\$14.50 per hour x 520 hours = \$7,540/person)
  - o \$7,540/person x 20 individuals = \$150,800 in “base 8” time not attributed to wildfire incidents for every IHC.

These examples show that our failure to associate “base 8” funding to a FireCode for wildfire assignments can significantly underestimate our total suppression costs, resulting in inaccurate planning data (such as historic average suppression cost per acre), and ultimately penalize the BIA when this data is analyzed.

Consistent and accurate timekeeping and proper use of FireCode in QuickTime will help BIA track actual costs. To clarify the process, a QuickTime example is provided below. Assume that a preparedness-funded (92120) BIA employee was on a wildfire assignment (ABC code 8T41, used for fire suppression activities) to the Willow Fire (assigned FireCode F0ZG) for an entire week. His regular tour-of-duty is Monday through Friday (8 regular hours per day, hours code 010), but the employee worked 12 hours per day while on the fire assignment (with hours outside the “base 8” considered overtime, hours code 110). Note that the “base 8” hours are correctly associated with the FireCode F0ZG in the “job” field, even though those “base 8” hours are charged to the preparedness account 92120 in the “program” field.

**QuickTime Example**

Hrs	Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	ABC	Prog	Job	OrgCde
010		8.0	8.0	8.0	8.0	8.0		8T41	92120	F0ZG	M52441
110	12.0	4.0	4.0	4.0	4.0	4.0	12.0	8T41	92310	F0ZG	M52441

As the 2012 fire season begins, it is important to implement this timekeeping process, if your fire program is not already recording “base 8” time in this manner. For further information, contact Bob Roberts at 208-387-5620.