



Fire Effects Monitor (FEMO)/Field Observer (FOBS) Merger

Transition Plan

Background

Recent modifications to Federal fire policy have eliminated the distinction between a fire managed for resource benefit and a suppression fire, allowing for the implementation of multiple objectives on a single incident. As new implementation guidance is approved, the suppression and prescribed fire (fuels) organizations must be able to embrace, plan, and implement an appropriate response to all wildland fire incidents in a seamless fashion. As suppression and fuels program personnel integrate competencies to implement similar tasks to meet similar objectives, similar positions should integrate or merge. Training and qualifications should be differentiated based upon function and competencies rather than wildland fire cause or management strategy.

The NWCG Fire Use Working Team has been moving forward in examining positions previously used primarily on prescribed fires and fires managed for resource benefit to determine opportunities to merge these positions with those traditionally used on suppression fires. In addition, as resource management objectives are incorporated in the management strategy in an increasing number of wildfires, fire effects observation and documentation skills will be increasingly important in decision making on more wildland fire incidents. The current project to merge the positions of Fire Effects Monitor and Field Observer is intended to 1) eliminate redundancy between similar positions, 2) support the management of incidents with multiple objectives by creating positions trained to support the full spectrum of fire management responses, and 3) enhance skills in the observation and documentation of fire behavior, fire effects and smoke production to support wildland fire management decision making.

Action

The Fire Use Working Team has proposed and the Incident Operations Standards Working Team has accepted the proposal to combine the position taskbooks (PTB) for the Fire Effects Monitor (FEMO) and the Field Observer (FOBS). The resulting PTB is substantially composed of the tasks from the FEMO taskbook, supplemented by two tasks unique to the FOBS position. Trainees for both positions will complete the FEMO section of the PTB; those seeking FOBS qualification will complete the additional two tasks specific to the FOBS position. Prerequisites for each position remain unchanged.

Existing Qualified FEMO's and FOBS's are not affected by this transition to a single taskbook; existing standards for maintenance of currency and fitness standards remain unchanged.

Outstanding Taskbooks (FEMO & FOBS Trainees) are valid until completed or expired. Individuals with an open PTB that have not completed any tasks may have a new PTB issued. Individuals with tasks completed should finish the current PTB rather than initiating a new PTB.

Prerequisites for the Positions remain the same—FEMO's are required to be qualified as FFT2 and have S-290; FOBS are required to be Single Resource Boss (SRB) qualified.

Transition to Single Position Taskbook

All FEMO and FOBS trainees will complete the FEMO section of the PTB. Those seeking FOBS qualification will complete the two additional tasks in the FOBS section (requires existing qualification as a SRB). A currently qualified FEMO who is qualified as an SRB can attain qualification as a FOBS by completing the two FOBS tasks. FEMO is not a prerequisite to the FOBS qualification: Qualified SRB's can complete the entire PTB without being certified as a FEMO prior to completing the FOBS tasks. Assignments for either position maintain currency for both positions (no change from current policy).

Training

As part of this action, the Fire Use Working Team will take on the advisory role for the S-244 course (currently titled "Field Observer"). Supplemental modules to address fire effects, management objectives, and fuel moisture sampling will be developed by a task group under the FUWT for those tasks not currently covered in the existing S-244.

The Task Group will develop modules capable of being used both as distance learning units to supplement the classroom S-244 course and as stand-alone updates for existing FOBS to reinforce these additional skills. The modules will be available by March 2010 and will be incorporated into S-244 in the next revision cycle.