



NATIONAL WILDFIRE COORDINATING GROUP

National Interagency Fire Center
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MEMORANDUM

Reference: NWCG#041-2010

To: NWCG Committee Chairs
Geographic Area Coordinating Group (GACG) Chairs
National IC/AC Council Chair

From: NWCG Chair *William Raage*

Date: September 24, 2010

Subject: Strategic Operational Planner (SOPL): Description and Use

This Memorandum replaces NWCG#039-2010 Memorandum, dated August 18, 2010.

The 2009 *Guidance for the Implementation of Federal Wildland Fire Management Policy* allowing agencies to manage wildfires concurrently for multiple objectives, made the term Wildland Fire Use (WFU) obsolete. As a result, WFU position designators and resource names are also being changed.

To reflect the wildland fire management terminology update, the National Wildfire Coordinating Group (NWCG) merged the Fire Use Manager positions, FUM1 and FUM2, into one position now called Strategic Operational Planner (SOPL). The transition has created some confusion about the use of this position and its future role in incident management. The SOPL position develops long-term risk assessments and management actions, which enables achievement of established objectives associated with the wildfire under a range of potential fire spread locations and fire behavior conditions. The skill set of a SOPL should be considered for any wildfire where it is expected that it will take more than three days to achieve the established objectives.

As a skill position in the Incident Command System, the SOPL provides information to fire managers that can be used to determine appropriate actions that will accomplish the desired objectives. The range of actions is developed from analyses of current and probable situations using the Wildfire Decision Support System (WFDSS), which decision makers will find useful to understand situational limits when making their decisions.

Incident Management Teams (IMT) and Agency Administrators have the discretion to determine on an incident-by-incident basis how the SOPL will most effectively fit into the incident organization and supervisory structure. For example, a SOPL may be assigned to Decision Support Centers established to provide long-term assessments for multiple wildfires instead of being assigned to a single IMT. In situations where the skills are unavailable locally, a SOPL may be ordered and assigned to complex long-term fire incidents. In all cases, SOPLs work in close contact and in conjunction with Long Term Fire Behavior Analyst(s) (LTAN) and other specialists supporting long term fire behavior analyses. Agencies may choose to add clarification for the use of SOPL's in their agency.

The Wildland Fire Lessons Learned Center contains interviews that were conducted with a wide range of wildland fire managers with current experience in applying the skills of the SOPL position to recent wildfire incidents. These video interviews will answer frequently asked questions about the position, and clarify the SOPL's critical role in modern wildfire management. <http://www.wildfirelessons.net/Additional.aspx?Page=329>

Additional information about the SOPL position can be found at the MyFireCommunity neighborhood site: "SOPL (Strategic Operational Planner)"
<http://myfirecommunity.net/Neighborhood.aspx?ID=786>

If you have any questions, please contact the following agency representatives from the NWCG Fire Use Subcommittee:

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