

National Wildfire Coordinating Group Incident and Position Standards Committee

JAN 16 2020

IPSC-2020-01

To: Frank Guzman, Chair, NWCG Executive Board
From: Thomas M Hayes, Chair, Incident and Position Standards Committee 
Subject: Evaluation of the Span of Control for Heavy Equipment Boss, Single Resource and Strike Team Leader Equipment

The Incident and Position Standards Committee (IPSC) convened a task group of stakeholders to evaluate the Heavy Equipment Boss, Single Resource (HEQB) and Strike Team Leader Heavy Equipment (STEQ) positions as requested by the Coordinating Group Advisory Council (CGAC) in the attached NWCG Tasking Memorandum TM-19-005. The request stated:

"In an effort to help alleviate the impacts of the national HEQB shortage, the Northern Rockies Coordinating Group, with support through CGAC, has proposed that a HEQB have the latitude to manage multiple pieces of heavy equipment (up to 3) during suppression operations. Equipment they are managing should be working in a proximate location, in order to maintain communications and operational control. Appropriate risk management needs to be employed based on the current and expected fire environment to ensure the level of supervision is appropriated for the environmental conditions."

The task group included members from the Incident Operations Subcommittee (IOSC), the Equipment Technology Committee, and the Risk Management Committee. The group researched current NWCG publications along with a thorough look at recent wildfire accidents that involved heavy equipment. Through their research and subject matter expertise the committee has concluded that three pieces of heavy equipment is too much responsibility for one single HEQB to supervise during wildfire incidents. Main emphasis points from the task group include:

- Current practices would not permit other single resource level qualifications to supervise more than one, let alone three. For example, it would not be acceptable to allow a Crew Boss (CRWB) to supervise two crews, a Helicopter Manager (HEMB) to supervise two helicopters, or and Engine Boss (ENGB) to supervise two engines; even if they are in close proximity.
- Increasing the number to three would create a slippery slope by placing subjective parameters on when a HEQB would be permitted to supervise three pieces of heavy equipment.
- The request did not stem from an issue with HEQB performance; it originated because of a resource shortage.

Ultimately, IPSC and the IOSC feel that the request from CGAC would involve too much risk. Further evaluation regarding the span of control for a HEQB should be independent of the CGAC request and be put through a more robust and thorough process that includes more stakeholders.

If you would like to discuss further, please feel free to contact myself or Ben Oakleaf, Chair, IOSC.

Attachments:

CGAC Memorandum dated July 29, 2019
NWCG Tasking Memorandum TM-19-005
IOSC Memorandum dated October 30, 2019

Distribution:

Sean Cross, NWCG Program Manager
Ben Oakleaf, Chair, IOSC
Deb Fleming, NWCG Coordinator
NWCG Executive Secretary