



## NWCG Meeting Notes

December 16, 2025

**Executive Board Primary Members (EB):** Aitor Bidaburu (USFA) — Chair, Erik Litzenberg (IAFC) — Vice Chair, Brian Achziger (BLM), Heath Cota (USFS), Jim Durglo (ITC), Garth Fisher (BIA), Anne Jewell (DoD), Greg Smith (NASF), Casey Teske (NPS), Eric Fransted (FWS)

**Associate Members:** Annie Benoit (OWF), Heath Hockenberry (NWS), Steve Weidner (NASA), Mike Rubenstein (IMTA)

**NWCG Staff:** Katie Wood (NWCG Program Manager), Sarah Lee (Deputy Program Manager), Erica Lamb (Coordinator), Dave Schultz (Coordinator), Steven Gaskill (Coordinator), Toni Suminski (Training Program Manager), Chelsea McKinney (Publications Manager), Michael Rodriguez (Executive Secretary—Detailed), Joe Schindel (EB Facilitator)

**Guests:** Matt Woodwick (NIAC), Beau Dobberstein (NIAC), Michael Froelich (IPSC), Nate Hesse (ETC), Mack McFarland (RMC), Zeph Cunningham (USFS)

Topic & Notes	Decision/Action Item
<p><b>(D) Pause Memo Exemption for New Helicopter Manager Limited Use/Restricted (HMLR) Position:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>The request for a Pause Memo Exemption was presented by National Interagency Aviation Committee (NIAC) in October 2025. Its intent is to alleviate a national shortage of qualified Helicopter Manager, Single Resource (HMGB) personnel.</li><li>The NWCG Impact Assessment identified potential impacts of establishing the HMLR as a NWCG position which would include:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Requiring major coordination across committees and systems.</li><li>Updating publications, courses, web content, and qualification systems.</li><li>Adding workload, which may delay other priorities.</li></ul></li><li>In addition to alleviating a national shortage of HMGB personnel, other perceived benefits include:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Improving the span of control for aviation resources.</li><li>Expanding the national surge capacity.</li><li>Supporting standardization across agencies as the HMLR position is already recognized in the 2025 Federal Wildland Fire Qualification Supplement.</li></ul></li><li>The pause memo exemption approval would allow the full position package to be submitted through the Incident and Position Standards Committee (IPSC) Request for Change (RFC) process. If approved by IPSC for incorporation into the <i>NWCG Standards for Wildland Fire Position Qualifications</i>, PMS 310-1, the earliest the HMLR position would be anticipated for incorporation is 2027.</li></ul>	<p><b>DECISION:</b> Approval of Exemption for HMLR for NIAC to work through the RFC process with IPSC.</p>



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<p><b>(I) Incident Management Team Course Steering Committee (IMTCSC) — Update:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• S-320, Introduction to Incident Management Teams is live on the Wildland Fire Learning Portal (WFLP).</li><li>• S-420, Intermediate Incident Management’s alpha test course was successful and received positive feedback from students. The IMTCSC is proceeding with adjustments for the beta test course scheduled April 13 — 17, 2026.</li><li>• IMTCSC is meeting in-person late February 2026 in preparation for the beta test course scheduled for April 2026.</li><li>• The S-520/620 Advanced Incident Management &amp; Area Command Course Steering Committee (S520620CSC) is monitoring S-420, Intermediate Incident Management course to identify potential modifications for better alignment.</li></ul>	
<p><b>(I) Training Program &amp; Incident Performance and Training Modernization (IPTM) — Update:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• StoryMap: Live and actively updated.</li><li>• Detailed steward briefings have been scheduled or conducted for Call Order 8 positions. Associated position project charters have been created and shared.</li><li>• Call Order 8: Initial SME meetings scheduled for the week of Jan 12<sup>th</sup> and the in-person analysis workshops scheduled for the following weeks in Boise:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ Single Engine Airtanker Manager (SEMG), Ramp Manager (RAMP), and HMGB: March 9, 2026.</li><li>○ Incident Commander Type 4 (ICT4) and Heavy Equipment Boss, Single Resource (HEQB): March 23, 2026.</li></ul></li><li>• Courses slated for revision under Call Order 8:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ S-200, Initial Attack Incident Commander</li><li>○ S-236, Heavy Equipment Boss</li><li>○ S-273, Single Engine Airtanker Manager</li><li>○ S-372, Helicopter Manager</li></ul></li><li>• IPTM Incident Position Standards and Next Generation Position Task Books:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ Resource Advisor, Fireline (REAF) has been approved, awaiting <i>NWCG Standards for Wildland Fire Position Qualifications</i>, PMS 310-1 publication before publishing to the NWCG website.</li><li>○ Engine Boss, Single Resource (ENGB) on track to be approved January 2026.</li></ul></li></ul>	



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<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ Public Information Officer Type 3 (PIO3) on track to be approved spring 2026.</li><li>● IPTM Course Development:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ M-280, Resource Advisor, Fireline: Certified and available on the WFLP.</li><li>○ S-131, Firefighter Type 1: On track for certification February 2026.</li><li>○ S-231, Engine Boss, Single Resource: On track for certification February 2026.</li><li>○ S-203, Introduction to Incident Information: Alpha test course tentatively rescheduled January 12, 2026; delayed from original date due to furloughed cadre and students.</li><li>○ S-229, Single Resource Boss: In development with a target completion date of March 2026.</li><li>○ S-212, Intermediate Faller: Test course completed with feedback being incorporated by the contractor and on track for January 2026.</li><li>○ S-312, Advanced Faller: Project scoping is underway.</li></ul></li><li>● Planning:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ Call Order 9: A reevaluation of the performance start date is ongoing due to staffing. Planning phase begins late spring. Work is focused on lower-effort updates for positions lacking formal training and with deliverables including updated Incident Position Descriptions (IPDs), Incident Positions Standards (IPSs), and Position Task Books (PTBs). The positions are tentative.</li></ul></li><li>● Non-IPTM Course Progress:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ S-290, Intermediate Wildland Fire Behavior (Blended): Certified and live on WFLP.</li><li>○ S-390, Introduction to Wildland Fire Behavior Calculations: Certified and live on WFLP.</li><li>○ S-320, Introduction to Incident Management Teams: Certified and live on WFLP.</li><li>○ S-420, Intermediate Incident Management: Alpha test course has been completed. Beta test course is planned for April 2026 and is on track for certification in late summer 2026.</li><li>○ S-490, Advanced Fire Behavior Calculations: The test course was held in October 2025 at National Advanced Fire &amp; Resource Institute (NAFRI); The certification is on track for January 2026 to allow for final acceptance review by NWCG and certification process.</li></ul></li><li>● Media:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ Staff are currently working on the pyro vortex from the Deer Creek fire for RT-130, Wildland Fire Safety Training Annual Refresher (WFSTAR).</li></ul></li></ul>	



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<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ Fall 2025 WFSTAR on Ransom Road, launched on the NWCG website on December 16, 2025.</li><li>○ The 2026 WFSTAR modules will be ready by mid-March 2026.</li><li>● Key Takeaways:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ There are multiple courses on track for certification by year-end and early spring 2026.</li><li>○ There are multiple positions on track for approval by year-end and early spring 2026.</li><li>○ IPTM implementation, Evaluation and Maintenance Plans, and Training Program SOP development are top priorities for completion in fiscal year 2026.</li></ul></li></ul>	
<p><b>(I) Fire Management Board (FMB) Utility Task Vehicle/ Off-Highway Vehicle (UTV/OHV) Modifications Practices Tasking:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● USFS wildland fire contracting staff have seen a rise in requests for “tactical” UTVs/OHVs equipped with external additions, for example, water tanks, pumps, Starlink units, etc.</li><li>● There are currently no NWCG or industry standards for these modified vehicles. Individuals requesting “tactical” OHVs often source them independently, leading to wide variation in vehicle modifications beyond manufacturer specifications.</li><li>● Lack of standards makes inspections difficult and raises concerns about operational safety in wildfire environments.</li><li>● Many modified UTVs/OHVs exceed manufacturer limits for weight and height, creating unknown risks to equipment and operators, and likely could contribute to rollover incidents and other safety hazards.</li><li>● Due to these risks, FMB is pausing all tactical UTV/OHV incident ordering until further notice.</li><li>● NTDP has been asked to explore governing documents pertaining to UTVs/OHVs.</li><li>● The Executive Board (EB) discussed issues relating to the tasking request which included:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ Equipment Technology Subcommittee (ETC) recently developed and published standards in the <i>NWCG Standards for Wildland Fire Resource Typing</i>, PMS 200 for OHVs.</li><li>○ Liability/feasibility related to creating specifications for “tactical” modifications.</li><li>○ The proper channel for tasking NWCG committees should be through the EB.</li><li>○ Potential options for education on UTV/OHV modifications and risks.</li><li>○ Potential for referencing existing standards created by other bodies, such as the DOT guidelines that apply to engines.</li></ul></li><li>● NWCG will draft a formal response to FMB to include that this is more of a safety-related issue vs. a standards issue, and the feasibility of testing every potential modification is outside of NWCG’s scope/mission. ETC will further discuss with the Mobile Fire Subcommittee.</li></ul>	<p><b>ACTION ITEM:</b> NWCG will draft a formal response to FMB.</p>



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<p><b>(D) NWCG Awards (Decision Will Be Made at the Executive Session):</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The EB annually recognizes and awards NWCG members, committees, and/or staff to be recognized based on one of the three award categories:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ Creativity and Innovation</li><li>○ Achieving Results</li><li>○ Outstanding Support of the NWCG Mission</li></ul></li><li>• The process and timeline for nominating an NWCG member/committee/staff include:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ During the December 2025 NWCG EB Meeting, the NWCG Staff and the EB will come prepared to verbally discuss potential nominees.</li><li>○ Based on those discussions, the EB will vote and select a nominee for recognition.</li><li>○ The EB Chair will present the awards at the NWCG Annual Meeting in February 2026.</li></ul></li></ul>	<p><b>DECISION:</b> Decision was made during the Executive Session.</p>
<p><b>(I) NWCG Committee Reorganization — Update:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Committee rosters have been received from the National Association of State Foresters (NASF), Department of the Interior (DOI), and the United States Forest Service (USFS).</li><li>• Meetings will be scheduled to identify new chairs and vice chairs and discuss committee checklists, starting with the management committees.</li><li>• Current committee operations will continue as usual until full implementation.</li></ul>	<p><b>ACTION ITEM:</b> The final draft Annual Meeting agenda and reminders regarding the NWCG Committee Reorganization will be sent to current chairs and vice chairs.</p> <p><b>ACTION ITEM:</b> DOI EB will communicate with their representatives as to new committee re-assignments.</p> <p><b>ACTION ITEM:</b> DOI will come to conclusion to OWF assignments for committee re-org.</p>
<p><b>(I) Annual Meeting EB Listening Session Topics:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Clarification should be made that discussions are specific to the NWCG reorganization and not to be confused with the DOI unification for the new U.S. Wildland Fire Service. Beginning the annual meeting with a discussion on DOI unification would facilitate a clearer delineation between DOI unification and NWCG reorganization.</li><li>• Discussions will focus on the change in structure and terminology.</li></ul>	<p><b>ACTION ITEM:</b> NWCG Program Manager and EB Chair will create talking points and questions that will drive conversation around the NWCG reorganization.</p>



**(I) Fatigue Research — Update:**

- The Risk Management Committee (RMC) began firefighter fatigue reduction efforts in the Fall of 2021.
- The project transitioned to the Medical and Public Health Advisory Team (MPHAT) under the FMB.
- FMB issued a memo on February 21, 2025, that requested tasks from the Incident Business Committee (IBC), the National Multi-agency Coordinating Group (NMAC), and the Joint Fire Science Program (JFSP).
- RMC:
  - Exposure assessment at Garnet Fire found measurable PAHs (carcinogens) on firefighters' skin post-shift.
- IBC:
  - Researching compensable “decontamination” time for firefighters to shower and clean PPE during shifts.
  - Issues identified include long shower lines, availability of showers, and hygiene vs. sleep trade-off.
  - IBC is working to identify who may qualify, whether decontamination will be required, and whether enough services will be available.
  - Legal opinion and policy reference may be needed; priority ranking requested.
  - Discussed clarifying the *Interagency Standards for Fire and Fire Aviation Operations* and policy to address shower times, shift length, and decontamination time.
- NMAC:
  - NMAC tasked the Incident Commander Advisory Council (ICAC) with collecting best practices and barriers for improving responder sleep quality, identifying triggers for when to use hotels vs. camps, and recommendations for policy changes and funding prior to the 2026 fire year.
  - ICAC presented at the CIMT AAR in October and provided a white paper, sleep hygiene checklist, hotel/camp cost comparison checklists, and analysis documents. NMAC intends to pick the project back up in 2026.
- JFSP:
  - Coordinating with MPHAT fatigue group.
  - Proposed fatigue-focused addition to existing *Wildland Firefighter Scientific Needs Assessment* project conducted by the Montrose Translational Health Lab at Colorado State University.
  - The proposal is planned to be briefed to JFSP Board in January 2026.



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<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ JFSP may not be able to conduct human health research; new partnerships may be needed.</li><li>○ Discussed the lack of current guidance on whether you can shower in pay status. Looking to see if changes can be made to the <i>NWCG Standards for Interagency Incident Business Management</i>, PMS 902.</li><li>○ Discussed the existing methodologies used by fire departments to reduce contamination and cross contamination of gear and continued engagement with IBC and RMC to work towards adding language on showering and/or decontamination to <i>NWCG Standards for Interagency Incident Business Management</i>, PMS 902.</li><li>○ Discussed IBC identifying a CFR that relates to the issue and asking the solicitor for guidance.</li></ul>	