NWCG Incident Weather Subcommittee Meeting
September 17, 2026

Members/Invited Attendees:
Darren Clabo (NASF/SD State), Jim Wallmann (USFS, Vice Chair), Drew Daily (NASF/OK Forestry Services), Kari Fleegel (NWS), Colby Neuman (NWS), Eamon Engber (NPS), Karyn Lothrop (NASF/DCR/MA district fire warden), Dennis Burns (NASF), Troy Hershberger (Department of War), Larry Van Bussum (NWS), Brian Potter (USFS), Robert Field (NASA/Columbia), Sarah Lee (NWCG coordinator/deputy program manager), Nicole Oke (NWCG coordinator), Robyn Heffernan (NWS), Scott Stearns (NWS), Nick Nauslar (NWS), Heath Hockenberry (NWS), Paul Sopko (USFS), Tom St. Clair (BIA)

Actual Attendees: Robert Field, Darren Clabo, Kari Fleegel, Larry Van Bussum, Jim Wallmann, Dennis Burns, Scott Stearns, Brian Potter, Sarah Lee, Nicole Oke

Agenda

1. **Introduction of new NWCG Coordinator for the Incident Weather Subcommittee** (Nicole Oke)
2. **NWS: Lightning Terminology in forecast products** (Kari Fleegel/Scott Stearns/Larry Van Bussum)
3. **Wildland Fire Position Qualifications for Incident Meteorologist position** (Larry Van Bussum)
4. **Fire Weather Handbook updates and possible extension** (Darren Clabo)
5. **Round Robin** (all)

1. **Introduction of new NWCG Coordinator for the Incident Weather Subcommittee** (Nicole Oke)
   Nicole Oke will be our new Coordinator from NWCG. She is a detailer replacing Sarah Lee as the Coordinator for the Incident Command Branch II Committees, including our parent committee: Fire Planning Management Committee. Nicole was previously a training specialist at NWCG over 10 years.

2. **NWS: Lightning Terminology in forecast products** (Kari Fleegel/Scott Stearns/Larry Van Bussum)
   Eamon Engber brought up the varying terminology in NWS fire weather forecasts at our June 18th meeting. For example, “Chance of Lightning” is used from the NWS Medford and Eureka offices, while “Chance of Thunder” is used by NWS

Sacramento. Kari Fleegel, Scott Stearns, and Larry Van Bussum gave an update from the NWS perspective. The NWS Boise-Area Fire Weather SMEs are asking the NWS Office of Mission Delivery about adjusting the standards for thunderstorms forecasts to use a standard “Chance of Thunderstorms” instead of Chance of Thunder, Chance of Lightning, or Probability of Thunderstorms. The Chance of Thunderstorms would be based on the NBM probability of Thunder forecast, which is hourly out through 36 hours, then 3-hourly through 84 hours, and 6-hourly through the rest of the 7 days. ***If these changes are made, the Guide to fire weather forecast on the NWCG page would need to be updated.*

Forecasts would include Sky/weather, Chance of Thunderstorms, and Chance of Wetting Rain. Darren Clabo asked what the goal of including the chance of lighting is, as it could be seen as a pseudo replacement of the Lightning Activity Level which was taken out in 2025. Dennis Burns included that he didn’t think that any specific numbers for thunderstorms were necessary. Scott Stearns noted the difference between point and zone forecasts for these types of forecasts, and that the Chance of Precipitation is calibrated to observed precipitation while lightning is not. Jim Wallmann added that there will not be a one-size fits all solution. Sarah Lee and Nicole Oke mentioned that they don’t have an answer to this issue, but mentioned that the operational folks all have different needs and interests when it comes to fire weather parameters. The requested changes at the NWS level should give offices similar terminology with respect to lightning forecasts.

3. **Wildland Fire Position Qualifications for Incident Meteorologist position** (Larry Van Bussum)
   We continued to discuss the IMET position qualifications. This was also discussed in depth at our previous meeting. Larry Van Bussum shared an image of draft qualification.
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   This included:
   Required Training: ICS-100, ICS-700
   Required Experience: Bachelor’s degree or above in Meteorology or Atmospheric Sciences
   Physical Fitness Level: None Required
   Currency Timeframe: 5 years
   IMET position does not maintain currency in any other position, and neither does any other position maintain the currency for an IMET position.
   Other Training Which Supports Development of Knowledge and Skills: S-390, S-490

Additional Federal Agency Requirements (USFS): S-110, S-130, S-190, S-290, approval of Geographic Area Director, and satisfactory performance as an IMET.
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Each agency has different requirements. For the NWS, ICS-200, ICS-300, IS-800 S-290, and S-390 are also required. S-130 is not required by the NWS.

Darren Clabo added that S-190, S-290, and RT-130 should be required by all IMETs. However, it was agreed upon that S-190 was basic, and would not be needed for any current IMETs and that they would be grandfathered in. Sarah mentioned that it should be listed that having a Bachelors degree or higher in Meteorology or Atmospheric Sciences would be a course equivalent to having taken S-190. This would prevent folks from getting rejected from S-390 or other courses that require S-190.

Dennis Burns agreed, and asked that S-495 and S-590 be added into the “Other Training Which Supports Development of Knowledge and Skills.” There are only 3 IMETs currently trained and able to teach S-590. Jim Wallmann asked that S-491 also be added to this section, after the training has been refreshed. The names of some of the – 90 series courses need to be updated.
Larry will suggest edits and send it back to Darren for review. This can be revised annually.

After several discussions a vote was taken in July on whether RT-130 (Wildland Fire Safety Training Annual Refresher) should be included as a requirement for IMETs (Incident Meteorologists) in the 2027 Wildland Fire Qualifications Guide. We voted that it should be required. RT-130 is already required for NWS IMETs.

4. **Fire Weather Handbook updates and possible extension** (Darren Clabo)
The Fire Weather Handbook is currently 81 pages and organized under chapters. Darren Clabo mentioned that 90-95% of the work is complete and that it would be shared with subcommittee members soon so we could make any needed suggestions. October 31st is the end of the grant for this project. A no-cost extension in the process. Graphics are a concern, with several needing to be redone. Some S-290 graphics may be able to be used. Some advanced scientific models may be used to help create graphics. Scott Stearns asked if some graphics may be interactive if the intent is not to be a solely printed document. Darren strongly suggested keeping it as an active document with a solid list of any edits that are made. Darren will coordinate with Nicole around 2 months

before publishing is expected, with Nicole organizing a meeting with the group that assists with publishing.

5. **Round Robin** (all)
   Robert Field noted that the NASA INSPYRE (Injected Smoke and Pyrocumulonimbus Experiment) flights conclude 9/18/2026, and that the imagery coming out of the experiment is looking impressive.

   Troy Hershberger is a new primary member of the Incident Weather Subcommittee and is from the Department of War's Fire Planning Management Committee. Troy works at the Pentagon and has a history of working on burns across the south over the past 20 years. Darren Clabo will meet up with him soon to fill him in on the history and tasks typically associated with membership in this subcommittee.

   Nicole Oke mentioned that any roster updates can go through her, including any invitations to future meetings. While members did get a Microsoft Teams channel invitation, its use is currently on hold due to access issues for a few specific email domains.

   Sarah Lee let everyone know that the announcement for additional Coordinator positions is currently out.

Next meeting October 23, 2026, at 1 pm MT **typically the 3rd Thursday of each month**