

NWCG FIRE INVESTIGATION SUBCOMMITTEE INTERNAL STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURES

(Revised 6/26/2026)

Purpose

The purpose of these standard operating procedures (SOP) is to establish internal protocols and procedures for the Fire Investigation Subcommittee (FISC). FISC is positioned under the Public Information Management Committee (PIC) and operates under the authority of the National Wildfire Coordination Group (NWCG) Executive Board and NWCG Master Charter.

The chair of the FISC is responsible for maintenance of this document and will ensure, at a minimum, an annual review is completed during a scheduled subcommittee meeting. This is a living document and may be modified any time the subcommittee, support staff, and/or primary member determines a need. All edits are approved by the FISC chair prior to a document update.

Mission and Objectives

The authoritative source for the FISC mission and objectives is the NWCG website at <https://www.nwcg.gov/committee/fire-investigation-subcommittee>.

The mission statement and primary objectives will be reviewed annually at the spring meeting.

Membership Management

Membership can consist of representatives (one primary and one alternate) from any NWCG primary and associate agencies, except for the National Association of State Foresters who can have up to three primary members. FISC members include:

- Department of the Interior
- International Association of Fire Chiefs
- National Association of State Foresters
- United States Forest Service

If a primary member is unable to attend a scheduled meeting, an alternate member should be identified by the primary member to serve in their absence. Alternate members have full primary membership authority whenever they are called upon to serve in that role.

Membership Requirements

All members' participation will be evaluated each year to continue membership, based on the following:

- Attendance of 75% of meetings. Meetings are established by the chair.
- Attendance of the annual weeklong spring and fall meetings.
 - In-person is preferred but a virtual option will be available.
- Review of all documents sent for review by the chair or task group leader.
 - If requested, response required by either comments, edits, or consensus (acknowledged) with content.
- Participation in assigned task groups and completion of assigned taskings.
- If a member cannot make a meeting or comment deadline, the member shall notify the chair and vice-chair ahead of time.

Subgroups, Liaisons, Advisors

Subgroups

The FISC has the following subgroups:

- None

The subcommittee may establish units, task teams, or assign individuals as necessary to advise and assist the work of the FISC. These will typically have a set expiration date. Units and task teams will not be tracked on the NWCG website.

If subgroups are established, they are expected to meet quarterly to revise, update, and review their assignments. Changes will be made in “track changes” and will be available on the SharePoint for all members to review. The chair will provide each subgroup/task group with any public comments received through NWCG’s public comment portal or other means of communication.

Refer to <https://www.nwcg.gov/committee-roles-and-membership-information> for additional information on roles and membership information.

Management Committee Liaisons

All management committees have assigned management committee liaisons to each of their subcommittees. These assignments will rotate as necessary. Their current chair and vice-chair will not typically serve in these management committee liaison roles. These management committee liaisons are listed on the subcommittee rosters. It is the responsibility of the subcommittee to ensure the assigned management committee liaison is invited to meetings and kept well informed of subcommittee business.

Subcommittee Liaisons and Advisors

Liaisons and advisors may be assigned based on need. Neither liaisons nor advisors will be tracked on the roster.

Liaisons participate in discussions but are not engaged in consensus decisions. Liaisons coordinate the flow of information between the subcommittee and a stakeholder. List any non-NWCG names and agencies or groups represented by the liaisons as well as a brief description of necessity (e.g., FEMA Representative – all-hazards guidance and coordination).

- Fire Analysis Subcommittee
- Incident Weather Subcommittee
- San Dimas - Ralph Gonzales
- Missoula Fire Laboratory - Sara McAllister
- National Fire Academy - Kevin Oliver
- FLETC
- ATF

Advisors participate in topic related discussions based on their area of expertise but are not engaged in consensus decisions. Advisors may or may not be from an NWCG member agency. List names and areas of expertise represented by the advisors as well as a brief description of necessity.

- Brian Clavier
- Scott Fischer
- Derek Hill
- Michael Abraham (Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives (ATF))
- Paul Claflin (Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives (ATF))

- Yvonne Becker (FLECTC)
- Alan Carlson
- Jim Engel
- Joe Hitselberger
- Brenda Rice
- Jim Shanley
- Terry Taylor
- Gary White
- Chris Warren (Arvada Fire Protection District)
- Scott Plumer (Arvada Fire Protection District)
- Steve Rinaldi (Durango Fire & Rescue)

International Advisors:

- Theo Bailey (Government of Alberta) (Canada)
- Jeff Henricks (Canada)
- Lisa Hudema (Government of British Columbia) (Canada)
- Ken Ness (Canada)
- Richard Woods (Australia)

Support Staff

The support staff position provides administrative and technical support to the subcommittee and will be tracked on the roster if a dedicated individual is assigned. The term of service should be staggered from the chair rotation to ensure continuity of internal processes.

Support staff responsibilities include but are not limited to:

- Attend all subcommittee calls or meetings and document with official meeting notes and action log.
- Assist the chair with the development of meeting agendas and invitations.
- Provide subcommittee webpage updates to the NWCG coordinator.
- Maintain and archive all FISC correspondence and provide appropriate documents (e.g., minutes, memos) to the NWCG coordinator.
- Disseminate correspondence to all members.
- Assist with all meeting logistics.

Chair and Vice-Chair

The chair will serve a two-year term that begins in November of each even numbered year. The chair is responsible for scheduling meetings as necessary to carry out subcommittee business and responsibilities. The chair may call and conduct meetings, submit subcommittee recommendations to other NWCG subgroups and the PIC. All correspondence will be approved and signed at the management committee level. The chair shall determine meeting agendas, submit necessary briefing papers and reports, and have minutes prepared for each meeting and distributed to the members. In addition, the chair may represent the subcommittee at management committee meetings or other NWCG meetings and events as appropriate.

In addition, the chair will:

- Provide leadership and direction to the subcommittee by overseeing the subcommittee's work, ensuring that it aligns with NWCG objectives and mission of incident qualifications and standards for interoperability.
- Guide the subcommittee in setting long-term goals and strategies and tracking the progress toward meeting those goals.
- Establish units or task teams, assign tasks to members and liaisons, and appoint group leaders.
- Guide discussions to for focus, productivity and participation of all subcommittee members.
- Represent the subcommittee in external meetings or activities advocating for the subcommittee's work and the interests. The chair may delegate any of these responsibilities if it can improve the efficiency of the subcommittee's duties.
- Seek outside collaboration with related subject matter experts, associations, and other fields related to wildfire investigation.

FISC will designate a vice-chair from amongst its primary members to serve a two-year term that begins in November of each even numbered year. The vice-chair performs the duties of the chair when the chair is not available or as requested by the chair.

The vice-chair of the subcommittee will support the chair in their leadership role and serve as a backup when the chair is unavailable. The vice-chair will assist the chair in organizing meetings, preparing agendas, and ensuring smooth operations as well as help facilitate discussions and maintain order during meetings. The vice-chair will assume the chair's duties when the chair is absent or unavailable and assume the leadership role in case of the chair's resignation. The vice-chair will encourage participation and ensure all members are involved in subcommittee discussions and tasks. Acting as a potential successor to the chair, the vice-chair will work closely with the chair to understand the broader goals and responsibilities of leading the subcommittee.

The chair and vice-chair will rotate among the member agencies in the following order (the initial chair and vice-chair will serve 7/2026-10/2026 and then the two-year rotations will begin):

- National Association of State Foresters (chair 7/2026-10/2026) (vice-chair 11/2030-10/2032)
- Department of the Interior (chair 11/2026-10/2028) (vice-chair 7/2026-10/2026)
- United States Forest Service (chair 11/2028-10/2030) (vice-chair 11/2026-10/2028)
- International Association of Fire Chiefs (chair 11/2030-10/2032) (vice-chair 11/2028-10/2030)

This rotation may be altered upon agreement of the subcommittee and their respective agencies. If an agency representative is unable to serve in the chair position, that agency is responsible for finding an alternate to serve as chair. The selected individual must be able to carry out all responsibilities required of the chair position.

Historical Assignments:

As new roles are filled, they can be added at the top.

- Shawn Zimmermaker – NASF (CAL FIRE) – Chair 2022-2026
- Teresa Rigby – BLM – Vice-Chair 2025-2026
- Branden Smith – USFS – Vice-Chair 2023-2025
- Scott Fischer – BLM – Vice-Chair 2022-2023
- Jerry Hepler – USFS – Chair 2020-2022
- Shawn Zimmermaker – NASF (CAL FIRE) – Vice-Chair 2020-2022
- Jeff Bonebrake – NASF (ODF) – Chair 2018-2020

- Jerry Hepler – USFS – Vice-Chair 2018-2020
- James Engel – NASF (CAL FIRE) – Chair 2014-2018
- Brenda Rice (Schultz) – USFS – Chair 2012-2014
- James Engel – NASF (CAL FIRE) – Vice-Chair 2012-2014
- Shannon Tokos – BLM – Chair 2010-2012
- Jeff Bonebrake – NASF (ODF) – Chair 2009-2010
- Alan Carlson – NASF (CAL FIRE) – Chair 2006-2009
- Paul Steensland – USFS – Chair 2000-2006

Decision Making

A quorum for conducting business shall be a minimum of two-thirds of primary members. Decisions will be based on a consensus of those members present. All decisions will be recorded in the meeting minutes. All member entities speak with one voice in the consensus model (quorum); internal agency or organizational differences should be resolved outside of meetings. For additional information on decision making see <https://www.nwcg.gov/committee-roles-and-membership-information>.

Meetings

FISC shall meet quarterly or as necessary to conduct business. FISC may also meet in-person upon request of the chair at a location to be determined by the chair. Calendar invitations will be managed by the coordinator via online calendar.

Agenda items will be submitted to the chair and support staff by subcommittee members or liaisons/advisors. A written agenda will be provided to subcommittee members, alternates, and liaisons/advisors at least seven days prior to the meeting. The chair and support staff may conduct an agenda setting call to determine agenda topics prior to compiling the agenda; the NWCG coordinator can be involved with agenda setting based on needs of subcommittee members. Agenda items will be prioritized prior to the start of each meeting and additional items may be added by consensus of the subcommittee.

Meeting minutes will be taken by the support staff or a subcommittee member and will be finalized within one week of the meeting and distributed to subcommittee members for review/comment. Notes will be finalized at the beginning of the next scheduled meeting and sent to the NWCG coordinator for review and posting.

NWCG Products

Stewardship of NWCG products (including publications, training courses, videos, glossary terms and data standards) will be held at the management committee level. The PIC may delegate review and update of the products to their subcommittees. Final review, agency vetting, and approval are the responsibility of the management committee. Stewardship for all products is outlined on the NWCG website. For information on agency vetting and alignment of assigned products, see *NWCG Standard Operational Procedures*, PMS 900.

Position Management

FISC has delegated oversight of the following NWCG positions:

- Wildland Fire Investigator (INVF)
- Wildland Fire Team Leader (INVL)

Incident position descriptions and position qualifications will be reviewed by the subcommittee on an annual basis at the October meeting. Recommended changes will be discussed with the management committee, as well as other management committees/subcommittees as appropriate and coordinated with the NWCG coordinator.

Additional Operating Procedures / Processes

Detailed information on subcommittee processes, procedures and expectations can be found in the *NWCG Standard Operational Procedures*, PMS 900. Collaborative storage space (e.g., Teams, Google Drive) will be established through NWCG by the coordinator.

Courses and Publications

- FI-110
 - Wildland Fire Learning Portal Course
 - Last updated: 2023
 - Required update: **2028**
- PMS 412
 - Last update: March of 2025
 - Required update: **March of 2028**
- FI-210
 - Last update: April 2025
 - Required update: **April of 2028**
- FI-310
 - Wildland Fire Learning Portal Course
 - Last update: 2025
 - Required update: **2030**
- X-900
 - Wildland Fire Learning Portal Course.
 - Last update: 2024
 - Required update: **2029**
- X-902
 - Wildland Fire Learning Portal Course.
 - Last update: 2026
 - Required update: **2031**
- Future X-#### course development to cover all the major cause classifications
- FI-410
 - Intermediate Wildfire Investigation Course (TBD)
 - Focused on fire in differing fuel types, slope, time of day, and evaluation of variances.
- FI-510
 - Advance Wildfire Investigation Course (TBD)
 - Major fire investigations. Review of large-scale macro fire pattern indicators.

Subgroups

Each member of FISC shall be assigned to a minimum of two subgroups. The subgroups will be led by an assigned member (primary, associate, advisor, or liaison) selected by the Chair. The lead is identified in bold below. Each subgroup will be responsible for work projects assigned to them by the Chair. At each FISC meeting (virtual or in-person), each task group will report on the progress or needs of their assigned work project. Subgroup leaders will be responsible for the participation of subgroup members.

PMS 412 and FI-210

- Project Lead
 - Shawn **Zimmermaker**, Scott Kenney
- Fire Behavior and Fire Pattern Indicators
 - Alan Carlson, **Chris Warren**, Ken Ness, Kip Kemak, Branden Smith, Jeff Henrick, Brenda Rice, Jim Shanely, Jeremy Verdiel, Scott Kenney
- Methodology and Fire Scene Evidence
 - Gary White, **Scott Kenney**, Teresa Rigby, Scott Plumer, Ryan Andrade, Jeff Henrick, Brenda Rice, Logan Briscoe, Michael Abraham
- Witness Interviews and Documentation
 - Scott Kenney, Jeff Moyer, Teresa Rigby, Scott Plumer, **Theo Bailey**, Steve Holmes, Terry Taylor, Logan Briscoe
- Ignition Factors and Sources
 - Derek Hill, Ken Ness, Kip Kemak, **Branden Smith**, Michael Abraham, Joe Hitselberger, Lisa Hudema, Jim Shanely
- Wildfire Arson Recognition
 - Derek Hill, **Jeff Moyer**, Theo Bailey, Scott Fischer, Sean West, Jim Engel, Logan Briscoe

Updating of PMS 412 and FI-210 will occur on the three-year cycle and follow the following timeline:

- Next update due in March 2028
- Task groups will meet each quarter and update FISC on each subcommittee meeting to ascertain feedback.
- The task group will address any new information or public comments as a first review group. The task group will then present their recommendations to the entire FISC.
- The October in-person meeting will be the final input opportunity for the revise due in March. Upon the completion of the October meeting, the PMS 412 will be submitted to NWCG publishing for their review.

FI-310

- Project Lead
 - **Scott Fischer**, Logan Briscoe
- Unit 1: Behavioral and Pattern Analysis
 - **Scott Kenney**, Jeff Moyer, Theo Bailey, Alan Carlson, Richard Woods, Scott Fischer
- Unit 2-3: Wildland Arson Investigation Techniques and Major Case Planning and Management
 - Derek Hill, Cooper Fouch, Theo Bailey, **Logan Briscoe**, Richard Woods, Yvonne Walker
- Unit 4-5: Arrest, Search, and Seizure and Law Enforcement Interview Tactics
 - **Cooper Fouch**, Ken Ness, Brian Clavier, Sean West
- Unit 6-8: Physical Evidence Management, Expert Witness Testimony, Case Presentation
 - Gary White, **Brian Clavier**, Steve Holmes, John Harris, Yvonne Becker
- Exercises
 - **Scott Fischer**

Updating of FI-310 will occur on a five-year cycle, next due in the Spring of 2030

FI-110, X-900, X-902, and FISC Glossary

- FI-110
 - Scott **Kenney**, Kip Kemak, Jeremy Verdiel, Jon Handrick, Lisa Hudema

- X-900
 - Teresa Rigby, **Joe Hitselberger**, Jim Engel, Chris Warren, Michael Abraham, Lisa Hudema
- X-902
 - Jon Handrick, **Lisa Hudema**, Steve Rinaldi, Teresa Rigby, Derek Hill
- Glossary
 - Gary White, **Ryan Andrade**, Steve Rinaldi

Updating of FI-110 will occur on a five-year cycle (sooner if requested), next due in the Spring of **2028**

Updating of X-900 will occur on a five-year cycle (sooner if requested), next due in the Spring of **2029**

Updating of X-902 will occur on a five-year cycle (sooner if requested), next due in the Spring of **2031**

Updating of FISC glossary will be a continuous process and conduct as required or requested.

Wildland Fire Learning Portal (WFLP)

- **Scott Fischer**, Jon Handrick, Scott Kenney, Theo Bailey

WFLP Roles Defined:

Category Manager – The FISC has its own category within the WFLP. The FISC has a Category Manager assigned to this category. This person is the FISC primary representative for the WFLP and has the ultimate responsibility for updating and managing course templates, on demand courses, and managing the FISC category.

Course Creator - A course creator is an Editing Trainer with the ability to create new courses in the WFLP. Course creators are assigned to a category or categories in the WFLP. To create a new FI-310 course, you must have access to the FISC category. Contact the Category Manager for assistance to get access to the FISC category.

Editing Trainer - Editing Trainers can edit a course but cannot create new courses unless they have the course creator role added on.

New Course Development and Research

- X-Courses
 - Wind/solar/flare stacks or expand X-900 to include these
 - Arson for non LEOs
 - Equipment/Vehicle once new research is produced
- FI-311 Civil Cost Recovery Development
- Wildfire Case Prep and Testimony
- FI-410 Intermediate
 - Slope and time of day ignitions. Differing fuel types.
- FI-510 Advanced
 - TBD

Archives/Website

- Logan Briscoe

Public Comments

- Chair

Wildfire Cause Classifications Task Group

- Jeff Moyer, Shawn Zimmermaker, Gary White, Teresa Rigby

Data Management Committee

- Shawn Zimmermaker, Jeff Moyer, Teresa Rigby

NFPA

- Shawn Zimmermaker, Jeff Henricks, Derek Hill, Chris Warren, Steve Rinaldi

International Partnerships

- **Shawn Zimmermaker**, Derek Hill, Michael Abraham, Theo Bailey, and Jeff Henricks

Global Wildfire Collective-International Wildfire Investigation Council (IWIC)

- Shawn Zimmermaker,