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NWCG Incident Position Standards for Radio Operator

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The *NWCG Incident Position Standards for Radio Operator* establishes national interagency standards for operating as a Radio Operator (RADO) on wildland fires. These standards are meant to ensure safe, efficient, and effective operations in support of interagency goals and objectives and should serve as a guide to promote effective and consistent on-incident training. By definition, NWCG standards encompass guidelines, procedures, processes, best practices, specifications, techniques, and methods.

The Radio Operator Position Page, <https://www.nwcg.gov/positions/radio-operator>, in the NWCG position catalog, includes the Incident Position Description (IPD) and Position Qualification Requirements, as well as links to standards and references needed to perform the duties of a Radio Operator.

Tasks that are identified by a (*) are those tasks included for evaluation in the Position Task Book (PTB). Tasks not identified for evaluation in the PTB still represent standards for successful performance in the position and should be included in a comprehensive training assignment.

Where references are identified by a (**), refer to your home unit, agency, or organization for specific guidance and policy documentation. For example:

***Interagency Standards for Fire and Fire Aviation Operations (Red Book)*

The National Wildfire Coordinating Group (NWCG) provides national leadership to enable interoperable wildland fire operations among federal, state, Tribal, territorial, and local partners. NWCG operations standards are interagency by design; they are developed with the intent of universal adoption by the member agencies. However, the decision to adopt and utilize them is made independently by the individual member agencies and communicated through their respective directives systems.

Table of Contents

General References	1
Agency-Specific References	1
*Leadership Level 1, Follower (Provide Action)	2
Description	2
Behaviors	2
Knowledge.....	2
Prepare and Mobilize	3
*Ensure individual readiness.....	3
*Gather critical information pertinent to the assignment.	3
*Travel to and check in at assignment.	4
*Review the Incident Action Plan (IAP) and obtain briefing, objectives, and intent from supervisor.	5
Perform Radio Operator-Specific Duties	6
*Manage communications for general operations.....	6
*Respond to incident emergencies.	7
*Maintain inventory and track assigned equipment.	7
Communicate and Coordinate.....	8
*Ensure clear understanding of expectations and timely communication within and across Incident Command System (ICS) functional areas and chain of command.....	8
Participate in After Action Reviews (AARs).	8
Manage Risk	9
Ensure compliance with all safety practices and procedures for yourself and those around you.	9
Document	10
*Complete all administrative tasks and documentation in an accurate and timely manner.	10
Demobilize	11
*Return equipment and supplies as appropriate.	11
Complete demobilization check-out process before being released from the incident.	11

General References

- *NWCG Wildland Fire Position Qualification Flowchart*, PMS 308, <https://www.nwcg.gov/publications/pms308>
- *NWCG Incident Response Pocket Guide (IRPG)*, PMS 461, <https://www.nwcg.gov/publications/pms461>
- *A Preparedness Guide for Wildland Firefighters and Their Families*, PMS 600, <https://www.nwcg.gov/publications/pms600>
- *NWCG Standards for Interagency Incident Business Management*, PMS 902, <https://www.nwcg.gov/publications/pms902>
- *Incident Behavior Form*, PMS 935-1, <https://www.nwcg.gov/publications/pms935-1>
- Incident Command System (ICS) Forms, <https://www.nwcg.gov/ics-forms>
 - Incident Objectives (ICS 202)
 - Organization Assignment List (ICS 203)
 - Assignment List (ICS 204)
 - Incident Radio Communications Plan (ICS 205)
 - Medical Plan (ICS 206)
 - Medical Plan and Medical Incident Report (ICS 206 WF)
 - General Message (ICS 213)
 - Activity Log (ICS 214)
 - Accountable Property Assignment Record (ICS 219-9 WF)
 - Demobilization Check-Out (ICS 221)
 - Incident Personnel Performance Rating (ICS 225 or ICS 225 WF)
- Standard (SF) and Optional (OF) Forms, <https://www.nwcg.gov/publications/pms902>
 - Crew Time Report (CTR), SF 261
 - Emergency Equipment Shift Ticket, OF 297
- Job Aids, <https://www.nwcg.gov/training/job-aids>
 - *PSM-001, How to Correctly Fill Out the Crew Time Report (CTR), SF 261*, J-001
 - *Packing List for Wildland Fire Support Staff*, J-102
- InciWeb, <https://inciweb.nwcg.gov/>
- RT-130, Wildland Fire Safety Training Annual Refresher (WFSTAR): Radios of Fire, <https://www.nwcg.gov/publications/training-courses/rt-130/communications/com301>
 - Tutorial: Cloning the Bendix King KNG Handheld Radio
 - Tutorial: Programming the Bendix King DPH Handheld Radio
- Wildland Fire Application Information Portal, <https://www.wildfire.gov/>

Agency-Specific References

- ***Interagency Standards for Fire and Fire Aviation Operations (Red Book)*, <https://www.nifc.gov/standards/guides/red-book>
- ***National Interagency Incident Communications Division (NIICD) User's Guide*, <https://www.nifc.gov/resources/NIICD/niicd-documents>
- ***National Interagency Standards for Resource Mobilization*, <https://www.nifc.gov/nicc/logistics/reference-documents>
- ***Radio Discipline on the Fireline*, <https://www.nifc.gov/sites/default/files/blm/training/RadioDiscipline.pdf>

***Leadership Level 1, Follower (Provide Action)**

Followers have several responsibilities: to become competent in basic job skills, take initiative, learn from others, ask questions, and develop communication skills. For additional information, review the Level 1 description, expected behaviors and knowledge, suggested development goals, and self-study opportunities <https://www.nwcg.gov/committee/leadership-committee/leadership-levels>.

Description

- Leadership development starts the first day of the job.
- Followers function as a team member.
- Part of being a leader is exercising good followership and understanding human dynamics.
- Followership begins the journey of becoming a student of fire.

Behaviors

- Performs entry-level incident management tasks, contributing to team mission accomplishment and performance.
- Takes responsibility for personal actions and decisions, demonstrating the core value of integrity.
- Takes initiative to ensure the mission is accomplished and team performance is improved.
- Practices the five communication responsibilities to develop skill and ensure individual contribution to risk management.
- Interacts with team members, in a positive and constructive manner, to build team cohesion.
- Acts with humility and learns from others to improve technical and leadership skills.
- Asks questions to increase individual knowledge and improve the safety of self and team members.

Knowledge

- Knowledge of the wildland fire leadership values, principles, and traits to inform expectations of their behaviors as a team member.
- Knowledge of leadership concepts, including courage, compassion, authenticity, humility, and empathy to inform expectations of their behavior as a team member.
- Knowledge of the risk management process to understand their role in accident prevention and decision-making.
- Knowledge of the decision-making process to inform their role in an effective decision process.
- Knowledge of the impacts of cumulative and traumatic stress to assist in ensuring resilience and mental and emotional health.
- Knowledge of the elements of human factors and barriers to situational awareness to understand how human elements can contribute to team performance and fireline safety.
- Knowledge of the value differences of thought and perspective bring to team performance to ensure respectful interactions with team members and to contribute to a positive team culture/command climate.



Prepare and Mobilize

***Ensure individual readiness.**

When to start task: Prior to assignment.

Resources to complete task: *IRPG; A Preparedness Guide for Wildland Firefighters and Their Families*, PMS 600; *NWCG Standards for Interagency Incident Business Management*, PMS 902; Wildland Fire Application Information Portal; Incident Qualifications Card (Red Card); resource order; General Message (ICS 213); Medical Plan (ICS 206); *Packing List for Wildland Fire Support Staff*, J-102; *******Interagency Standards for Fire and Fire Aviation Operations* (Red Book); *******National Interagency Standards for Resource Mobilization*.

How to accomplish task:

- Obtain approval from your supervisor.
- Verify your data and status is current in resource ordering applications (e.g., Interagency Resource Ordering Capability [IROC]).
- Prepare for a 14-21-day assignment.
 - Prepare to be absent from home and family. Refer to *A Preparedness Guide for Wildland Firefighters and Their Families*, PMS 600 and *Packing List for Wildland Fire Support Staff*, J-102.
- Assemble a RADO kit, including the following:
 - *******Interagency Standards for Fire and Fire Aviation Operations* (Red Book)
 - Physical or digital copies of the following forms (using a digital storage device, such as a USB drive):
 - Medical Plan (ICS 206)
 - General Message (ICS 213)
 - Activity Log (ICS 214)
 - Radio/telephone station log
- Ensure access to a personal or work email address.
- Have access to a copy of your agency contracting agreement if applicable.

***Gather critical information pertinent to the assignment.**

When to start task: Upon receipt of resource order.

Resources to complete task: Agency-specific guidelines; agency-specific travel system; InciWeb; resource order; local standard operating procedures (SOPs); regional mobilization guides; Incident Action Plan (IAP); geographic area supplements; National Weather Service (NWS) forecasts; *******National Interagency Standards for Resource Mobilization*.

How to accomplish task:

- Obtain and review the following contents of the resource order:
 - Incident/project name
 - Incident/project order number
 - Office reference number (cost code)
 - Descriptive location/response area
 - Incident base/phone number
 - Request number



- Resource requested
 - Reporting date/time and location (e.g., Incident Command Post [ICP])
 - Special instructions (e.g., authorized equipment such as laptop, cell phone, rental car)
- Obtain and review the travel itinerary, including the following:
 - Mode of travel
 - Estimated time of departure (ETD) and location of departure
 - Estimated time of arrival (ETA) and location of destination
 - Location for rest overnight (RON) if unable to make end destination within the operational shift
- Ensure your personal information on all documentation is correct.
- Start building situational awareness by reviewing the following incident-specific references:
 - Geographic area intelligence reports
 - Weather information
- Contact incident personnel for specific site information and conditions (e.g., sleeping arrangements).

***Travel to and check in at assignment.**

When to start task: Upon receipt of resource order.

Resources to complete task: *Incident Behavior Form*, PMS 935-1; *NWCG Standards for Interagency Incident Business Management*, PMS 902; agency-specific travel protocols; dispatch center; contact list; ****National Interagency Standards for Resource Mobilization.**

How to accomplish task:

- Confirm travel arrangements and ETA with dispatch.
- Follow agency-specific air and ground travel guidelines.
 - Air travel considerations include the following:
 - Complying with weight limitations
 - ❖ Refer to Chapter 10 of the ****National Interagency Standards for Resource Mobilization.**
 - ❖ If your baggage exceeds airline limitations, additional fees may apply.
 - Checking bags for hazardous materials
 - Ground travel considerations include the following:
 - Following driver work/rest ratio
 - Considering logistical needs (e.g., restrooms, restaurants)
 - Ensuring secure transportation of government equipment
 - Referencing your agency's per diem and lodging rate policy
 - ❖ Check with your incident supervisor, Fire Management Officer (FMO), or Fire Business Office to learn how to provide justification when the lodging rate exceeds per diem allowances.
- Maintain a professional attitude and appearance at all times during travel.
- Ensure check-in procedures are complete as specified by the Incident Management Team (IMT).
 - Be prepared with the following:
 - Resource order
 - Incident Qualifications Card (Red Card)
 - Agency-specific agreement sheet
- Obtain a current copy of the IAP.



***Review the Incident Action Plan (IAP) and obtain briefing, objectives, and intent from supervisor.**

When to start task: Upon arrival at the incident.

Resources to complete task: Resource order; IAP; Incident Qualifications Card (Red Card); radio traffic logs; line supply orders; inventory and resource tracking system; Incident Objectives (ICS 202); Organization Assignment List (ICS 203); Assignment List (ICS 204); Incident Radio Communications Plan (ICS 205); Medical Plan (ICS 206).

How to accomplish task:

- Locate the Communications Unit.
- Contact your incident supervisor, who could be any of the following:
 - Incident Communications Center Manager (INCM)
 - Communications Unit Leader (COML) if INCM is unavailable
 - Logistics Section Chief (LSC) if neither INCM nor COML are available
- Ensure your briefing includes the following information:
 - Situation
 - Hours (shift start/end times)
 - Specific duties/assignments (e.g., cloning radios, equipment check-out, monitoring unit communications phone)
 - Camp layout and location of your work area and equipment
 - Briefing times and requirements
 - Relevant points of contact within the Communications Unit and Logistics Section
 - Expectations for interacting with various other units and staff (e.g., Safety, Medical, Supply, Ground Support)
 - Radio protocol and etiquette
 - Procedures
 - Documentation, inventory, and data retention procedures
 - Map of fire operations and resource tracking procedures
 - Safety considerations and emergency procedures
 - Procedures for signing and submitting Crew Time Report (CTR), SF 261 and Emergency Equipment Shift Ticket, OF 297 forms
 - Procedures for receiving, processing, and tracking line supply orders with the Supply Unit and Ground Support Unit
- Review the IAP for the following key documents and information:
 - Incident Objectives (ICS 202)
 - Organization Assignment List (ICS 203)
 - Assignment List (ICS 204)
 - Incident Radio Communications Plan (ICS 205)
 - Medical Plan (ICS 206)
 - Leader's intent
 - Incident information
 - Operational period(s)
- Review any other relevant documents that will provide additional context to the incident and your role.



Perform Radio Operator-Specific Duties

***Manage communications for general operations.**

When to start task: Throughout the assignment.

Resources to complete task: IAP; RT-130, WFSTAR: Radios of Fire; Incident Radio Communications Plan (ICS 205); General Message (ICS 213); Activity Log (ICS 214); Radio Discipline on the Fireline; ***National Interagency Incident Communications Division (NIICD) User's Guide.*

How to accomplish task:

- Operate IT and radio equipment as required for daily operations.
- Demonstrate competency with speaking on the radio and following procedures.
 - Speak clearly and write legibly when using radio or telephone or documenting communications.
- Assist with radio cloning and ensure the Incident Radio Communications Plan (ICS 205) is correctly input into radios.
- Clone radios for incident needs.
- Check communications personnel in and out of the field to ensure accountability.
- Track incident resources as required by the IMT.
 - Log and map the locations and status of safety-critical units, especially those in high-risk areas.
- Receive and process orders from the field (e.g., line supply orders, logistics orders).
 - Record and verify order.
 - Transmit to the appropriate unit.
 - Verify order is complete.
- Adjust actions based on changing information and evolving situation awareness.
 - Communicate changing conditions as necessary.
- Relay messages to appropriate incident staff in camp or in the field using General Message (ICS 213).
- Record radio traffic for pertinent incident information and incoming/outgoing communications.
- Maintain communication logs, ensuring all documenting procedures are followed and implemented.
- Manage documentation (e.g., General Message [ICS 213] forms, line supply orders) as directed by the INCM or COML.
- Report communication issues that are observed to the INCM, COML, and/or Incident Communications Technician (COMT) as appropriate.



***Respond to incident emergencies.**

When to start task: Immediately upon receiving notification, during, and until completion of a significant event.

Resources to complete task: *IRPG*; IAP; Medical Plan and Medical Incident Report (ICS 206 WF); Incident Within an Incident (IWI) Plan.

How to accomplish task:

- Review and understand IMT or host agency SOPs for emergencies and safety issues.
 - Follow training and SOPs from leaders (e.g., INCM, COML, Medical Unit Leader [MEDL], or incident safety personnel).
 - Review reference materials available to support actions (e.g., *IRPG*, Medical Plan and Medical Incident Report [ICS 206 WF], IAP).
 - Understand roles and responsibilities within the Communications Unit.
- Manage radio traffic for safety concerns (e.g., spot fires, drone sightings, severe weather) and relay safety-related messages to the appropriate personnel (e.g., incident safety personnel, MEDL).
 - Communicate and relay safety information ensuring situational awareness of hazards and updates.
- Facilitate communication during an IWI following the IMT SOPs.
- Document all radio traffic related to medical incidents, including any communications or actions taken.

***Maintain inventory and track assigned equipment.**

When to start task: Throughout the assignment.

Resources to complete task: Accountable Property Assignment Record (ICS 219-9 WF); inventory and resource tracking system; radio kits; radio kit inventory sheets; IAP.

How to accomplish task:

- Audit inventory at specified intervals as directed by the INCM/COML.
 - Review Accountable Property Assignment Record (ICS 219-9 WF) forms (i.e., T-Cards) and verify data within the tracking database to ensure accuracy and consistency.
- Flag or identify broken radios and other communications equipment.
- Check in and check out communication equipment, documenting the required personnel information on the Accountable Property Assignment Record (ICS 219-9 WF) (i.e., T-Card) and following established procedures.



Communicate and Coordinate

***Ensure clear understanding of expectations and timely communication within and across Incident Command System (ICS) functional areas and chain of command.**

When to start task: Throughout the assignment.

Resources to complete task: *IRPG*; *NWCG Wildland Fire Position Qualification Flowchart*, PMS 308; IAP; IMT SOPs.

How to accomplish task:

- Participate in Communications Unit briefings and meetings.
- Brief transitioning personnel by reviewing key items such as the following:
 - Incident updates
 - Open action items needing closure
 - Radio issues or other communication challenges
 - Any other critical information or watchouts
- Track map locations for Medical Unit personnel (e.g., ambulances, emergency medical technicians [EMTs], Rapid Extraction Module Support [REMS] teams).
- Maintain a contact list for personnel across the incident as assigned (e.g., MEDL, incident safety personnel, other resources).

Participate in After Action Reviews (AARs).

When to start task: Following a significant event.

Resources to complete task: *IRPG*.

How to accomplish task:

- Engage in unit-level and IMT AARs as appropriate.
- Provide lessons learned to improve program and individual development.

Manage Risk

Ensure compliance with all safety practices and procedures for yourself and those around you.

When to start task: Throughout the assignment.

Resources to complete task: *IRPG*; IAP; IMT SOPs.

How to accomplish task:

- Monitor for signs and symptoms of fatigue, illness, or injury in yourself, and take appropriate action to mitigate risks (e.g., resting, medical attention, reassignment).
- Report accidents, injuries, and safety concerns to your incident supervisor and appropriate incident personnel (e.g., MEDL, incident safety personnel).
 - Document as appropriate.
 - Refer to the Emergency Medical Care section of the *IRPG*.

Document

***Complete all administrative tasks and documentation in an accurate and timely manner.**

When to start task: Throughout the assignment.

Resources to complete task: *IRPG; NWCG Standards for Interagency Incident Business Management, PMS 902; PSM-001, How to Correctly Fill Out the Crew Time Report (CTR), SF 261, J-001; General Message (ICS 213); Activity Log (ICS 214); Accountable Property Assignment Record (ICS 219-9 WF); IAP; IMT SOPs.*

How to accomplish task:

- Ensure the following proper documentation is completed:
 - Crew Time Report (CTR), SF 261
 - Emergency Equipment Shift Ticket, OF 297
 - General Message (ICS 213)
 - Activity Log (ICS 214)
 - Accountable Property Assignment Record (ICS 219-9 WF) (i.e., T-Card)
 - Line order forms
 - Radio and telephone logs
 - Issue reports/waybills
- Ensure documentation is organized and stored according to incident or agency protocols, making it accessible for review or future reference.

Demobilize

***Return equipment and supplies as appropriate.**

When to start task: Throughout the assignment.

Resources to complete task: Inventory and resource tracking system; inventory sheet in kits;

***National Interagency Incident Communications Division (NIICD) User's Guide.*

How to accomplish task:

- Assist the INCM/COML with demobilization of Communications Unit equipment.
 - Complete kit inventory.
 - Clean radios and organize radio kits for shipping.
 - Document unresolved issues or items.

Complete demobilization check-out process before being released from the incident.

When to start task: At the end of assignment.

Resources to complete task: Demobilization Check-Out (ICS 221); Incident Personnel Performance Rating (ICS 225 or ICS 225 WF); IAP; local SOPs; agency-specific travel system; regional mobilization guides; ***National Interagency Standards for Resource Mobilization.*

How to accomplish task:

- Ensure incident and agency demobilization procedures are followed.
- Return equipment and supplies assigned to you to appropriate units.
- Complete demobilization check-out process before being released from incident.
- Upon demobilization, report status to home unit including reassignment (if approved) or ETA.

The *NWCG Incident Position Standards for Radio Operator* is developed and maintained by the Incident Logistics Subcommittee (ILSC), under the direction of the Incident and Position Standards Committee (IPSC), an entity of the National Wildfire Coordinating Group (NWCG).

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