

Topic: 2019 Revision of Red Book Chapter 5 - Implementing USFS Agency Administrator Certification Program for Wildfire and Prescribed Fire.

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Issue Summary: Previous to 2019, the USFS Agency Administrator (AA) Certification Program addressed wildfire decision making only. The following changes to the 2019 Interagency Standards for Fire and Fire Aviation Operations (aka Red Book) have been implemented in order to add Prescribed Fire certification standards and implement several other updates to the Wildfire AA certification process including inclusion of a Taskbook requirement for AAs:

Line Officer vs. Agency Administrator Roles and Responsibilities

- Oversight responsibilities for wildfire incidents which previously were tied to Line Officer position title (e.g. Regional Forester, Forest Supervisor, District Ranger) replaced with a system tied to Agency Administrator Certification Levels. Line Officers are still responsible to make the assignment, but cannot assign someone that does not possess the appropriate certification.
- Specifies that fire program oversight Core Competencies are expectations for Line Officers (position authority) as opposed to Agency Administrators who only have oversight for specific incidents or projects
- Ensures that FMO/Fire Staff that are AA certified do not have collateral duty and are operating as either FMO or AA but not both on any given incident.
- Encourages timely publication of WFDSS decisions. Current analysis shows average of 4 days for initial WFDSS decision (range 1 to 12 days), giving the appearance of lax or “negligent” behavior when defending our actions or decisions.
- Add clarification that according to FSM 5130 only Type 1 & 2 ICs require a written delegation of authority and such a formal delegation is not required of all IC levels.
- Removed old language that gave Forest Supervisors full authority for all prescribed fires in order to establish the Prescribed Fire AA Certification Program administered by the Regional Forester.
- Added specific responsibilities to Line Officers related to the approval of prescribed fire plans.

Updates to AA Certification Program

- Clarification to AA Certification Program that it now consists of two separate and distinct certifications, one for wildfire, and another for prescribed fire.
- Core competencies for AA – these are different than those identified for Line Officers and are specific to the AA role and incident or prescribed fire project.
- Replaced “Learning Action Plan” with “Task Book” throughout as the primary method for documenting demonstrated ability.
- Refined the definition of AA as it applies to USFS and the AA certification program.
- Refined definition of “acting AA” as it applies to USFS and the AA Certification Program.
- Requirement for Regional Foresters to do annual recertification of all AAs.
- New requirement for a properly qualified AA to be assigned as the primary decision maker which is different than previous version where local Line Officer may have retained some authority, only a qualified AA can make decisions.
- Added “grandfather” clause for previously qualified AAs.
- Added Risk Management and WFDSS Training requirements.

- Removed burn boss qualifications from “qualifying experience”. Instead of being an automatic qualifier, such experience would instead be considered as “other experience that supports”.
- Added Currency Requirement – must perform as AA for Type 3+ wildfire at least once every 3 years; currency is evaluated annually.

New Prescribed Fire AA Certification Program

- This program mimics the wildfire certification program which is a shift from current FSM. Currently FSM 5140 authority to approve prescribed burn plans is held at the Forest Supervisor level (if minimum training is met); FSM 5140 will be revised by 2019 to implement this change
- Requirement that an AA qualified at the appropriate level has to sign as the approver of the burn plan even if that was not the locally assigned AA; Co-signing by the mentee provides documentation to support future certification levels.
- NFLC prescribed fire group agreed that the authority to ignite is a decision that should be retained by that unit’s designated Line Officer as they will manage with the results, but should also be approved by a fully qualified AA/coach.
- Establishes 3 levels of certification that align with the Prescribed Fire Complexity process, an NWCG accepted standard; they are different from the Working/Journey/Advanced levels in wildfire which makes them discernable and should help avoid confusion between these distinct types of certification, Prescribed and Wildfire.
- Currency requirement – must practice prescribed fire plan review/approval at least once every 3 years.
- Aligns with new direction in soon-to-be revised FSM 5140 clarifying when it is appropriate not to require a burn boss for fires in patrol status, and when a burn boss must be assigned to implement additional elements from the burn plan.

Agency Administrator (AA) Certification Implementation Guidance for 2019

A note from the National Line Officers Team (NLOT): The AA taskbook has been developed to comply with FSM and Red Book direction and provide a consistent method to ensure that Agency Administrators are developing and maintaining core competencies in wildfire and prescribed fire management. Below are key recommendations to begin use of the new AA certification process in 2019. This is an introductory year and begins a three year transition from the use of the Learning Action Plan to the AA taskbook to certify qualifications to meet new Red Book policy. The expectation is not to make this change overnight, but to have a phased implementation, seek feedback and make needed improvements to the taskbook over the next three years. Please use the taskbook feedback form or contact your Regional representatives to NLOT to provide feedback on the taskbook and AA certification program as a whole.

1. **Certification levels for 2019:** Experience and training achieved in 2018 (or prior), documented with a Learning Action Plan will be used to determine certification levels for the 2019 wildfire and prescribed fire season. Regional Foresters will have 2019 Certifications out to Forests in spring of 2019 and this is the starting point for use of the task book.
2. **Taskbook use:**
 - a. Starting in June 2019, AAs will utilize the task book to document experience. We will no longer use the Learning Action Plan.
 - b. Taskbooks should be initiated by the Forest Supervisor or their designee.
 - c. Tasks to achieve core competencies will be assessed by an AA qualified at the next level above the trainee. This evaluator can be an assigned AA Coach or the qualified AA for the incident or Rx fire.
 - d. The Forest Training Officer will review AA taskbooks for completion and readiness for approval, then send to Regional Training Officer, who will review and forward onto the Regional Line Officer Team. Forest red card committees do not need to review the taskbooks.
 - e. Final AA certification decisions are the responsibility of each Regional Forester.
3. **RLOT role in managing certification:**
 - a. If not already in existence, it is recommended that each Region create a Regional Line Officer Team (RLOT) or equivalent (such as the Fire and Line Leadership Team in R8) to manage the AA certification program.
 - b. Annually, RLOTs (or equivalent) will evaluate requests for changes to individual AA certification levels based on demonstrated experience and training and recommend AA certification levels to Regional Forester for the coming fire season.
 - c. Regions are encouraged to develop priority training lists to facilitate AAs getting needed experience and to work between the Regions to provide assignments. An effective method used in several regions is the operation of an AA Desk staffed during fire season.
 - d. NLOT will compile a national list of certified AAs from lists provided by regions annually by June 1 and distribute to all regions.
4. In 2019, the NLOT will be asking for **focused review and feedback** of the task book by Coach-Shadow pairs. This review will be facilitated through regional NLOT representatives.

Frequently Asked Questions – AA Taskbook 2019

1. What about the experience I have documented in a Learning Action Plan?

Retain documentation of experience gained prior to 2019 in a Learning Action Plan and submit alongside your task book.

2. What is the documentation tool for currency?

Currency requirements are defined in the Red Book, Chapter 5. To maintain currency of skills, AAs will document experience using the line officer experience record form. This record form will be made available to and distributed by RLOT members and posted on [Decision Support Toolbox webpage](#).

3. Why the 3 year currency vs 5 year currency?

It is important to stay current with skills, new technologies, risk management and decision support. For this reason, maintaining certification levels with AA experience every three years was selected. This currency will be evaluated by NLOT and Regional Foresters for effectiveness.

4. What happens if I don't meet 3-year currency requirements?

If an AA does not maintain currency, the certification level will be re-evaluated by the RLOT. The Regional Forester will then make certification determinations based on competencies, experience and training. The taskbook also lists the upper level courses and participation as an AA with the 620/520 courses that can be used in maintaining certifications.

5. Can I fill my task book out electronically after the incident or does it need to be hard copy?

The AA task book must be filled out hard copy, similar to other task books.

6. Is this a NWCG taskbook?

No. At this time, during the transition period, the AA task book has not gone through NWCG review.

7. Do I have to initiate a new task book for each certification level I am working on? For example, I am currently on a working level, but would like to gain experience doing some of the journey level tasks, can I do that?

This task book contains the tasks for all AA certification for both wildfire and prescribed fire. The common tasks for all positions are listed first. These tasks need to be completed only once. The tasks specific to each position are listed following the common tasks. If the trainee desires to qualify for more than one position covered in this task book, they will need to complete the position specific tasks for each position they are seeking.

8. What is the role of the Agency Administrator Representative? Can I be a representative for the AA and an AA trainee at the same time?

The AA Rep can and should be used as an opportunity to document Core Competencies of an Agency Administrator. For example, if a Journey AA is delegated authority as an AREP on a Type 1 Incident, the Qualified Advanced AA on that incident should document the Core Competencies the AREP completes as a part of that assignment. These roles and responsibilities should be clearly defined by the Agency Administrator in a delegation letter for Type 1 and Type 2 wildfires.

9. How do I an order AA?

Regions will continue to maintain an AA list and manage an AA desk during the fire season. These lists can then be used to name request an AA through ROSS.

10. Should I initiate a Forest Service taskbook as a BLM AA for FS certification?

An AA taskbook is not required by the BLM. If you are going to serve as an AA for the Forest Service, then a taskbook will be required. Current AA qualification review by the Regional Forester may be requested.

Have another question not included here? Please submit it to NLOT through this link: [AA Cert FAQs](#)

