

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
Office of Fire and Aviation
3833 South Development Avenue
Boise, Idaho 83705

August 4, 1999

In Reply Refer To:
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EMS Transmission 8/4/99
Instruction Memorandum No. OF&A 99-020
Expires: 9/30/2000

To: State Directors
From: Director, Office of Fire and Aviation
Subject: Fire Fighting Requirements for Dispatchers

In May this office sent out a proposal to establish a basic fire fighting experience criterion for our career fire dispatch positions. To date, we have received five written responses. In addition, my staff has discussed this issue with personnel specialists and personnel with fire dispatch experience at the national and geographic level.

Based on these responses and combined with our firm belief that fire dispatchers in career positions are required to make decisions in support of wildland fire management objectives and often these decisions have to be made with little if any management involvement, we believe it is imperative dispatchers have an understanding of wildland fire operations that can only be acquired from direct fire operations experience. The one consistent argument against this concept is the comparison between our dispatch centers and local police/fire department 911 dispatch offices. We do not see this as a valid comparison. Our career dispatchers must be able to operate not only from preplanned responses but also improvise based on a rapidly changing wildland fire scenario. We require these people to anticipate and react to an ever-changing situation. We require that our dispatchers understand what may be a critical resource or critical information that must be provided to the on-the-ground fire fighter.

The issue before us is to define a realistic fire experience requirement which would insure BLM career dispatchers have the knowledge necessary to carry out the responsibilities of the position.

To insure this requirement is met, this policy will apply when hiring a career seasonal or permanent full time dispatcher and will be applicable for any position in the BLM where the major duty of the position is to dispatch personnel, equipment, or aviation resources to wildland fire. This policy will not be retroactive and will not apply to our temporary workforce. We would expect dispatchers in temporary positions to be working under closer supervision than our career employees. The policy is as follows:

“Experience on an organized crew where an individual received training and experience on a variety of initial attack, extended attack or project fires which would provide a knowledge of the fire support requirements provided by the dispatch function is required.” This is the type of experience that could typically be met by serving in a temporary fire position in a BLM or other wildland fire management organization for one season.

If you have further questions concerning the interpretation of this policy, please contact Ron Dunton, 208-387-5154.

Signed by:
Lester K. Rosenkrance
Director, Office of Fire and Aviation

Authenticated by:
Pat Lewis
Supervisory Mgmt. Asst.