

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
OFFICE OF FIRE AND AVIATION
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To: State Directors
From: Director, Office of Fire and Aviation
Subject: Fireline Leadership Course Equivalency

For the past two years, the Office of Fire and Aviation Management has contracted for the delivery of a training course entitled *Fireline Leadership* for BLM Interagency Hotshot Crews. Based on guidelines found in the National Wildfire Coordinating Group (NWCG) publication 310-1, I certify the *Fireline Leadership* course as an agency equivalent course for the NWCG *S-301 Leadership and Organizational Development* course. Completion of any government-sponsored *Fireline Leadership* course, retroactive to January 2000, will meet all training course requirements that would be satisfied by attendance at a *S-301* course.

The *Fireline Leadership* course has been extremely well received by management evaluators and by participants. The course is produced and delivered by a private vendor, Mission Centered Solutions. This week-long course focuses on the leadership issues that are of concern in high-risk environments where stress and time-compressed decision making influence leadership and where poor leadership can result in loss of life, property, and resources.

The decision to certify *Fireline Leadership* equivalent to *S-301* for BLM personnel was arrived at after careful consideration and analysis of both courses. Below are some of the issues that were taken into account.

1. The *Fireline Leadership* course addresses the primary subject areas of the *S-301* course: Communication, Leadership, Delegation, Conflict Resolution, and Evaluating Performance.
2. It does not address the scattered basic supervision content in *S-301* that is redundant with "First 40" Supervision training.

3. It does not address the Civil Rights content in *S-301* that is redundant with agency mandatory training.
4. The target audiences are similar for both courses.
5. The Fireline Leadership course hours exceed the *S-301* course hours.

The Bureau of Land Management is investing time and money in providing the *Fireline Leadership* course to its fire management personnel. In addition to stand-alone course delivery, *Fireline Leadership* will also be taught as part of the curriculum of the Advanced Academy in the interagency Wildland Fire Apprenticeship Program. Requiring employees to undergo redundant training is expensive for the agency, overtaxes scarce training resources, and wastes employees' time.

The current *S-301* course was scheduled to undergo a revision and be renumbered as *S-381* in FY 2000. This revision was put on hold because the NWCG parent group felt that the leadership content of the current curriculum was inadequate and asked the Training Working Team to provide recommendations to address this issue. Those recommendations have been submitted and accepted by the Training Working Team. The recommendations can be viewed in their entirety at <http://www.fire.blm.gov/training/blmtrng/blmtrng.html>. Included in these recommendations is a proposal to discontinue *S-301* and replace it with a true leadership course that would be nearly identical to the *Fireline Leadership* course that is currently being used by the Bureau of Land Management and the U.S. Forest Service.

It is within an agency's discretion to provide training that can be substituted for an NWCG S-course product. In the January 2000 edition of the *310-1*, on pages 8 and 9, are two sections that address this question:

Section E: A portion of this section reads as follows, "Agency equivalent courses may be substituted for required courses when learning and performance objectives meet or exceed required course learning and performance objectives."

Section F: A portion of this section reads as follows, "The knowledge and skills necessary for successful completion of the tasks in a position task book are provided in the identified courses, but may also be acquired in a variety of ways, including on-the-job training, work experience, and identified formal training as determined by one's agency."

As an equivalent course, *Fireline Leadership* addresses and exceeds the primary leadership content and objectives found in *S-301*. It exceeds the number of course hours required for *S-301*. Lastly, the revision of the current *S-301* course, scheduled to begin in 2000, has not yet begun, and no revised course will be available in the near future.

If you have further questions on this subject, please contact Larry Sutton, BLM Training Unit Leader, at 208-387-5374.

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