



## Wildland Firefighter Resources Shortage in the United States; is a national endorsement process the solution

Jason Steinmetz

**ABSTRACT**–The United States (US) has a wildland fire resources shortage. During peak fire season, the US struggles to fill fire leadership and support positions to manage the 68,000 wildland fires that occur on an annual basis. This wildland fire resource shortage happens on a yearly basis; with more large fires burning out of control and because of the competition for fire resources, many crucial positions go unfilled. During this presentation I will describe the problems that have driven the shortage of fire resources: older resource pool reaching retirement age, fewer government employees available to respond to fires, and the length of time to complete incident qualifications for positions. In the past, the US fire agencies have only deployed resources that are qualified under the National Wildfire Coordination Group (NWCG) Qualifications, which limits response of qualified resources outside the NWCG, specifically those positions that have a shortage problem, such as logistics, finance, and planning. This year FEMA released the National Qualification System (NQS) under the National Incident Management System. The purpose of NQS is to establish a minimum standard for qualification and certification for emergency responders positions across the US. The core tenets of NQS are minimum “discipline neutral” qualification requirements, performance standards, training, and qualification standards for each position for all incidents. NQS allows Endorsements which is a process in which the requirements of an NQS position are set to certain type of incident. An Endorsement is utilized for positions that require specialized, incident-specific experience in the type of incident to which an individual might respond. For example, an Operations Section Chief must have experience and training in wildland fire to get a Wildfire (WF) Endorsement. With limited positions having Endorsements, all other NQS positions are qualified to support all types of incidents. Participants will hear about NWCG’s procedure to establish WF endorsements and the process to utilize discipline neutral positions. The WF endorsement process will create an organized system to bring in other non-fire resources to support wildland fire incidents which, in turn, will open up more resources to respond to wildfires and mitigate the wildland fire resource shortage.

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