

**THE ROLE OF ZONE TRAINING COMMITTEES  
WITH PUBLIC TRAINING PROVIDER MOU**

# Desk Manual

**Background:**

In the late 1980's wildfire management agencies were experiencing a reduction in forces that created a shortage of organized 20-person crews and engine crews. To address this shortage in Oregon the Oregon Department of Forestry (ODF) developed a Crew Contract with the various reforestation companies that existed in the Pacific Northwest. Shortly after, ODF also developed an Engine & Tender Contract. By 1989 the Forest Service (FS) and Bureau of Land Management (BLM) began using these contract resources on federal fires. By 1991 their use had grown significantly and the decision to develop interagency agreements was made. With the higher training standards that were required on federal incidents the issue of private sector training had to be addressed.

In 1993 the Pacific Northwest Wildfire Coordinating Group (PNWCG) developed two memoranda of understanding (MOU) to address how the private sector could obtain certifiable wildfire training for their firefighters working under the new Interagency Crew and Engine/Tender Agreements. One MOU set forth procedures and standards to recognize 100-level and 200-level National Wildfire Coordinating Group (NWCG) course presented by instructors certified by Firefighting Contractor Associations. The other MOU set forth standards and procedures to recognize NWCG courses presented through Public Training Providers (PTP). The initial version of the PTP MOU was also limited to 100-level and 200-level NWCG courses. In 1998 the PTP MOU was expanded to include specific 300-level NWCG courses and provided a petition process for the PNWCG Training Working Team (TWT) to approve presentation of other 300-level and 400-level NWCG courses.

This MOU system was the first of its kind in the nation and in 1994 NWCG issued a position paper providing guidelines for private sector training that was designed around the PNWCG system.

The PTP MOU is designed to have personnel from the local wildfire management agencies involved. The purpose of this paper is to outline in detail what that local involvement is. It will focus on the role of the Interagency Zone Training Committees (ZTC) and the responsibilities of the Zone Committee Chair.

**Overview of the PTP MOU:**

- The MOU forms a partnership between PNWCG and the Public Training Provider (PTP) to accomplish delivery of S-100 through S-200-level fire training courses; S-300, S-330, S-336, S-339, and S-390; and I-100, I-200, I-300 and I-400 courses.
- Representatives of the Public Training Provider (community college or state college/university), Interagency Zone Training Committee (Committee Chair) and PNWCG (the PNWCG MOU Representative) sign the PTP MOU.

**NOTE: When a PTP becomes interested in entering into an MOU with the PNWCG they may first approach the Chair of the appropriate ZTC, the TWT or the PNWCG MOU Representative. Regardless of the first contact the Zone Chair will be brought into the process immediately to work with the PTP so they understand the MOU and the appropriate signatures are acquired.**

- The MOU authorizes the PTP to issue NWCG Certificates of Course Completion to students graduating from courses listed on their annual operating plan.
- The RESPONSIBILITIES section outlines what the PNWCG, PTP and ZTC individually and jointly agrees to do under the MOU.
- Appendix A provides the instructor standards for various NWCG courses.

- Appendix B defines the process for the PTP to petition for offering courses that are not covered in the MOU.

**Key language:**

The following information covers key language in the PTP MOU that speaks to the role of the Interagency Zone Training Committees and their Chair. The specific section and paragraph that contains the key language is listed.

PTP Responsibilities:

- III. B. 1. Requires the PTP to meet annually with the ZTC to establish an annual operating plan.
- III. B. 5. Requires the PTP to establish an Advisory Committee that has a minimum of one representative from a local wildland fire management agency to guide wildland fire training programs offered by the institution.

**NOTE: This is a very important requirement in that this Advisory Committee and the wildfire agency member provide the quality control for the wildfire training presented by the PTP. If a second wildfire agency person from a second agency is available this will strengthen the Advisory Committee for performing the quality control role.**

- III. B. 6. Requires the PTP to provide the names of Advisory Committee members and their professional affiliations (employer, representative group) to the PNWCG and ZTC representatives.

**NOTE: The local wildfire agency member on the Advisory Committee is a key communications link between the Zone Training Committee and the PTP. It is important that the ZTC Chair has the name(s) of this person(s) and establishes regular communications with them.**

- III. B. 7. Requires the PTP to submit petitions to the PNWCG TWT to request approval to offer non-covered courses. The specific process to do this is contained in Appendix B of the MOU.

Zone Training Committee Responsibilities:

- III. C. 1. Requires the ZTC to meet annually with the PTP to establish an annual operating plan.

**NOTE: The annual operating plan should be developed and approved by the institution's Advisory Committee in coordination with the ZTC. The ZTC Chair can accomplish the annual meeting requirement by attending in person or sending a ZTC representative to the Advisory Committee meeting(s) when the annual operating plan is developed for approval. The operating plan is a key document for monitoring the quality of their training program. The operating plan in essence becomes the institution's course schedule. Often the schedule is developed by the various quarters or semesters.**

- III. C. 2. Requires the ZTC to provide, as available, qualified cadre to the PTP.

**NOTE: Agency instructors may be used by PTP's to present wildfire training to private sector personnel. Our attorneys (state & federal) have advised us not to train private sector personnel directly but approved instructing through a community college or similar institution, subject to specific agency policies. The PTP will need your assistance securing quality instructors. Agency instructors help assure the training meets our quality standards. This is one area where frequent communication with the local agency member of the Advisory Committee will be necessary. The ZTC becomes a key focal point for the local agency member of the Advisory Committee to tap into, to gain access to other agencies' resources. When agency instructors are not available, recognized private sector wildfire instructors may be an acceptable alternative.**

- III. C. 3. Requires the ZTC to monitor the training provided by the PTP.

**NOTE: No standard has been established to accomplish this monitoring. A decision to monitor a course will depend on what is known about the cadre. If the quality of the cadre, especially the Lead Instructor, is known to be top notch, then it may not be necessary to monitor the course. On the other hand if little is known about the cadre then it might be advisable that someone monitor the training. Use your judgment here. The same goes for how much of the course a person monitors. If it is a weeklong course and the initial quality is acceptable, you may not wish to stay for the full 40 hours. When prioritizing how much of a course to monitor it is recommended you at least monitor the safety critical elements. Periodic reviews of student evaluations are another way to monitor course quality and are recommended.**

- III. C. 4. Requires the ZTC involvement in petitions for non-covered courses (see discussion under APPENDIX B below).
- APPENDIX A, Instructor Qualification Requirements: Provides the qualification standards for the Lead and Unit Instructors of each course covered in the MOU. The standards are taken from the Course Coordinator's Guide, PMS 907 and where appropriate the Instructor Guide of each course.
- APPENDIX B, Non-covered Course Petition Procedures: Provides the procedures to be followed by a PTP to gain approval to offer a course that is not covered automatically under the MOU.
  - When a PTP desires to provide a course that is on the non-covered course list in the APPENDIX, they must first submit a petition to the Chair of the ZTC to gain TWT approval. The petition must provide the following information:
    - A description of the need for the course.
    - List of Lead and Unit instructors that will be presenting the course and a brief description of their qualifications for teaching the course.
    - Dates of the course and total hours of instruction.
    - Location where the course will be presented.
    - Contact person and phone number.
    - Information on special considerations being planned relating to the course.
  - The Chair of the ZTC, after reviewing the petition with the ZTC, will forward the petition to the PNWCG MOU Representative with their recommendations. The recommendations will include:
    - A summary of any discussions with the PTP or their Advisory Committee.
    - A summary of any discussions the whole ZTC may have had regarding the petition.
    - The proposed evaluation process for the course and the assigned evaluator.
  - The PNWCG MOU Representative, in consultation with the ZTC Chair, will coordinate a review of the petition with the TWT and notify the PTP of the decision of the TWT.
  - Any course evaluation made on an approved-petitioned course will be sent to the PNWTC and be filed.

**Conflict resolution:**

There currently is no language in the MOU that addresses conflict resolution. Therefore, the following guidance will be followed should a conflict arise during the normal execution of MOU business:

**NOTE: If conflicts pertaining to any provisions of the PTP MOU can not be resolved within the established PTP, Advisory Committee and ZTC relationship, then the ZTC Chair shall report the situation to either their TWT Liaison or the MOU Representative. The MOU Representative and TWT will determine the appropriate resolution to these reported conflicts. The ZTC Chair will be kept informed of the resolution process and may be asked to assist in the remedy implementation.**