

***NATIONAL WEATHER SERVICE INSTRUCTION 10-402
MAY 31, 2022***

***Operations and Services
Products and Services to Support Fire and Other Incidents, NWSPD 10-4
IMET SERVICES TO SUPPORT FIRE AND OTHER INCIDENTS***

NOTICE: This publication is available at: <https://www.nws.noaa.gov/directives/>.

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Type of Issuance: Routine

SUMMARY OF REVISIONS: This revision supersedes NWSI 10-402, *IMET Services to Support Fire and Other Incidents*, dated March 17, 2017. Major changes:

- (1) Clearly states in section 7 that the IMET is responsible for confirming the paying agency contact information.
- (2) Section 9 clarified to indicate that non-IMETs may be used for non-wildfire support.

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IMET Services to Support Fire and Other Incidents

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1 Definitions

Incident Meteorologist (IMET). An IMET is a volunteer National Weather Service (NWS) forecaster who provides on-site weather and environmental information, normally at an Incident Command Post (ICP). This information is used to maintain the safety of the responders as well as to allow the incident management team (IMT) to make tactical decisions based on current and expected fire environment conditions.

All-hazards Meteorological Response System (AMRS). The AMRS is a portable data, observation, and communications system. The system contains a computer for querying weather and environmental data, a communications module for voice and data transmissions in remote areas, and surface and upper air observation equipment for gathering on-site weather data.

National Wildfire Coordinating Group (NWCG). The NWCG is an interagency group comprised of the land management agencies tasked with wildland fire management. These agencies include the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), Department of Interior's Bureau of Land Management (BLM), Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA), Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS), and National Park Service (NPS), as well as the Department of Agriculture's US Forest Service (USFS), National Association of State Foresters (NASF), the Federal Emergency Management Agency's (FEMA's) US Fire Administration, International Association of Fire Chiefs, and the Intertribal Timber Council. The NWS serves on NWCG committees as the weather experts. The NWCG develops, maintains, and communicates interagency standards, guidelines, qualifications, training, and other capabilities that enable interoperable wildland fire operations among federal and non-federal entities.

National Fire Weather Operations Coordinator (NFWOC). The NFWOC serves as the operations coordinator for the IMET program.

2 Authorities

IMET support is available from NWS offices with designated IMETs and will be provided upon request of federal, state, tribal, or local government emergency response agencies in support of wildland fires or other events that threaten life or property. Support will be subject to the availability of NWS resources and limited to federal fire agencies participating in the Interagency Agreement for Meteorological and Other Technical Services, individual state/local interagency agreements and requests by a public safety official who represents such support as essential to public safety. Details on the NWS's responsibility for IMET services can be found in the National Agreement at the following website under the "Administrative" header links: <https://www.weather.gov/fire>.

3 Guidance

3.1 NWCG Guidance

NWCG maintains handbooks and guides on mobilization of resources as well as incident business practices. The NWS will conform to these standards and guidelines as much as possible. The NWS National Fire Weather Program Manager (NFWPM) maintains ultimate authority on which guidelines and standards the NWS adopts.

NWCG guidance on mobilization can be found in the National Interagency Mobilization Guide (NFES 2092) at: <https://www.nifc.gov/nicc/mobguide/index.html>.

NWCG guidance on standards for fire operations can be found in the Interagency Standards for Fire and Fire Aviation Operations Guide (NFES 2724), also known as “The Red Book”, at: <https://www.nifc.gov/standards/guides/red-book>.

NWCG guidance on incident business management can be found in the Interagency Incident Business Management Handbook (NFES 002160) at: <https://www.nwcg.gov/sites/default/files/publications/pms902.pdf>.

NWCG guidance and training reference for operational personnel for wildland fire incident can be found in the Incident Response Pocket Guide (NFES 001077) at: <https://www.nwcg.gov/sites/default/files/publications/pms461.pdf>.

3.2 National Fire Weather Annual Operating Plan

The National Fire Weather Annual Operating Plan between the NWS and the land management agencies can be found in the Administrative Links section of the national fire weather web page at: <https://www.weather.gov/fire/>.

3.3 IMET Google Sites

Details on equipment, training, mobilization, administrative procedures, day-to-day operations of the IMET program, best practices, and current and historical information on the IMET program and the incidents they have served can be found at: <https://sites.google.com/noaa.gov/nwsimetsite/home>.

4 Certification and Qualification

IMET certification and qualification requirements are addressed in NWS Instruction (NWSI) 10-405, *Fire Weather Services Training and Professional Development*, and can be found at: <https://www.nws.noaa.gov/directives/sym/pd01004005curr.pdf>.

4.1 Red Cards

The NFWOC will maintain all IMETs’ and trainees’ certifications and qualifications on the NWCG’s Incident Qualifications and Certifications System (IQCS). IQCS will generate a certificate, commonly referred to as the “Red Card” that certifies that the IMET or trainee has the proper training and qualifications to respond to an incident. The NFWOC will issue the red cards annually.

4.2 Currency

The IQCS requires that a certified IMET complete a mission at least once every five years. As a best practice, the NFWOC will strive to ensure that certified IMETs complete a mission at least once every three years.

4.3 Roster

The NFWOC, in cooperation with the Regional Fire Weather Program Manager (FWPM) and

the local office manager, will maintain a list of current IMET trainees and certified IMETs. The NFWOC and Regions will collaborate to ensure that each region has a sufficient number of IMETs and trainees for the upcoming fire season. When an IMET leaves the IMET program, the NFWOC will work with the Regional FWPM to identify a replacement. The NFWOC has final determination on the IMET roster, including number of IMETs at any one station and number of trainees.

5 Equipment and Gear

5.1 Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

IMETs will conform to NWCG standards in regards to PPE while on an incident. This requirement will be relayed to the IMET by their IMT supervisor.

Each IMET will be provided with a pair of standard fire crew boots as PPE. Any repairs or replacements need to be coordinated through the NFWOC.

5.2 AMRS

The NFWOC, NFWPM and the National Fire Weather Science and Dissemination Meteorologist (NFWSDM) will manage the AMRS. Property items will be on local office property but managed by the national fire program. Requests for replacement parts for the AMRS should be addressed to the NFWOC. Only trained IMETs will operate the AMRS. The NFWOC has final determination on the placement of the AMRS after consultation with the Regional FWPM.

6 Mobilization

IMET support to IMTs at an ICP takes precedence. Support to Interagency Geographic Area Coordination Centers (GACCs), Emergency Operations Centers (EOCs), and other off-site locations will be considered on a case-by-case basis and will depend on resource availability as well as consulting with the Regional FWPM, the impacted Weather Forecast Office (WFO), and the user on the best means to provide meteorological support.

6.1 Availability

Offices that host an IMET are making a commitment to nationally support wildland fire response and will, to the best of their ability, ensure the availability of their IMET for missions when requested. Overtime of the office staff to cover the absence of the IMET is reimbursable under the National Agreement and can be used in order to free up an IMET for mobilization.

IMET availability is maintained using the IMET Google Sites Availability Page. The IMET will coordinate with their supervisor on a regular basis and update this site with their availability. Availability may be updated as conditions warrant. The NFWOC will attempt to follow the availability calendar as closely as possible. However, especially at National Interagency Coordination Center (NICC) Preparedness Levels (PL) 3, 4, and 5, the NFWOC may request more IMETs be made available for immediate dispatch. In general, unless personally unavailable, an IMET should always be released to fill a mission request. Managers can follow the IMET Availability & Backfill Flowchart located on the IMET Google Sites Availability page, <https://sites.google.com/noaa.gov/nwsimetsite/incidents/availability-list>, for possible mitigation strategies to ensure mission fulfillment as well as office staffing responsibilities.

IMETs, having volunteered for this duty, are expected to make themselves as available as much as possible during the peak fire season for their region as well as the peak fire season nationally, which normally runs from June 1 through September 30.

6.2 Dispatch

When an incident requests an IMET, that order goes to the GACC serving that area. The GACC will contact the NFWOC who will determine which IMET will be deployed. The order will be processed through the fire agencies' Interagency Resource Ordering Capability (IROC) and the IMET will be contacted by their local dispatch or expanded dispatch with a Resource Order and reporting instructions. The NFWOC will ensure that the dispatch is coordinated with the IMET and the IMET's supervisor. It is the supervisor's responsibility to ensure that a timely response, generally one (1) hour, on IMET availability is possible any time day or night, any day of the year. The NFWOC will work with IMETs and individual supervisors to ensure this is the case.

Guidance on processing travel orders for the IMET is given on the Reimbursable Information page of the IMET Google Site at <https://sites.google.com/noaa.gov/nwsimetsite/admin/reimbursepay-cap>. Guidance on the mobilization of IMETs can also be found in the NWCG National Mobilization Guide linked above.

The NFWOC is responsible for maintaining a database of incidents and IMET missions and to update this database on a regular basis. The NFWOC is also responsible for issuing reports on IMET status as needed. The NFWOC will also prepare an annual report summarizing IMET missions. This report will be disseminated via the national fire weather webpage at: <https://www.weather.gov/fire/>.

7 On-site Operations

Upon check-in at an incident, the IMET will confirm the paying fire agency for the incident and document this information in the appropriate dispatch logs. If the paying agency is not the US Forest Service, the Department of Interior, or the state of California, Oregon, Washington, or Texas, then the IMET must contact the NFWOC immediately so that payment information can be coordinated prior to the IMET being released from the incident.

During an IMET's time at an incident, the immediate day-to-day operations will be supervised by a designee at the incident within the Incident Command System (ICS), normally the Plans Section Chief (PSC). The IMET will perform duties as assigned, utilizing safety precautions and business practices outlined by the NWCG guidance linked above. The IMET is the ultimate weather authority on the incident they are assigned to and should perform any reasonable duty that is assigned to them and within their duties as a meteorological advisor to the incident. When an IMET feels an assignment at an incident is unsafe, they have the obligation to identify, to the degree possible, safe alternatives for completing that assignment. Turning down an assignment is one possible outcome of managing risk.

7.1 Coordination

IMETs should coordinate with the local WFO on a regular basis while on-site at an incident within that WFO's County Warning Area (CWA). It is the IMET's responsibility to ensure the

hosting WFO has the IMET's contact number where they can be reached 24/7 while on assignment. The WFO will assist the IMET as much as possible while the IMET is on-site within their CWA, including performing weather watches overnight when requested, inclusion on local and regional coordination calls, etc.

7.1.1 Watches and Warnings

In cases of watch or warning issuance by the local WFO, the IMET should defer to the local office. However, in the absence of a watch or warning from the local WFO, the IMET has the discretion to issue a watch or warning for the incident only. The IMET will coordinate with the local WFO, or in the absence of time, will notify the local WFO of any such issuance as soon as is practicable. If an office issues a watch or warning for the zone that contains the incident, the IMET includes this watch or warning in their Incident Action Plan (IAP) forecast.

7.2 Fire Line Safety

IMETs cannot visit an active fire line without an escort from fire line certified agency personnel. IMETs may drive along an active fire line in order to complete an assignment from their incident supervisor as long as that supervisor is aware of the IMET's route, method of travel, estimated arrival time, and is aware that the IMET may be alone in the vehicle. The incident supervisor will make a determination if the route is safe for the IMET to proceed, but ultimately the IMET uses their best judgment to determine if the route is safe.

7.2.1 Hazard Pay

The Incident Commander (IC) or his/her designee has ultimate authority on authorizing hazard pay. This will be noted on incident time and attendance records. Details on IMET hazard pay can be found in the Reimbursable Information of the IMET Google Sites.

7.3 Documentation

IMETs will ensure all documentation related to their time at an incident is kept up to date and stored on the IMET Google Sites or given to the proper personnel at the ICP. This includes, but is not limited to: forecasts, spots, narratives, logs, observations, time sheets, etc. The requirement for retention of forecast and observation records from an incident is fulfilled with the individual incident folder created and maintained by the IMET on the IMET Google Sites. No physical copies of the forecasts or observations need to be retained at the WFO.

7.4 Duration and Extension

IMET missions may last up to 14 operational days, not including travel time. The NFWOC will coordinate the rotation of IMETs to incidents when a swap with another IMET is needed. Any extension of an IMET mission beyond the standard 14 days is required to have the approval of the incident, the IMET's supervisor, and the NFWOC.

7.5 Equipment

The IMET is responsible for the safe transport and physical security of equipment to and from an incident. If traveling by air, items such as laptops and cell phones should be taken as carry-on to ensure equipment security and safety. The AMRS should never be shipped via the fire agency cache system as this will cause confusion and possible loss of the equipment. AMRS should

either be transported by the IMET themselves, or in rare instances shipped by commercial carrier to and/or from their destination.

7.6 Performance Rating

IMETs should request an Incident Personnel Performance Rating from the Fire Behavior Analyst (FBAN) or PSC prior to departure. A copy of the evaluation should be sent to the NFWOC.

8 Post-Dispatch

Post-dispatch administrative procedures are outlined in the IMET Google Sites Reimbursable Information page linked above.

8.1 Reimbursable Expenses Report (RER)

IMETs are responsible for timely and accurate submission of the RER as well as any supporting documentation to support the RER as outlined in the guidance. Supervisors are responsible for ensuring the IMET has time to complete the paperwork, ensuring the report is error free, and submitting the report to their Regional FWPM in a timely manner, normally within five (5) days after the end of the pay period of the IMET's return. Regional FWPMs are responsible for ensuring that the RER is processed correctly and the reimbursement is processed.

All staff involved in filling out RERs should strive to submit correct, complete and timely packages. Incorrect, incomplete, or late (more than one (1) pay period after return from mission) submission of the RER to Regional headquarters will result in increased workload and delays in reimbursement to the NWS. Habitual incorrect, incomplete or late RER packages may result in corrective action by the regional office or NFWPM.

The Regional FWPM will submit a quarterly reimbursement report to the NFWPM. This will allow the NFWPM to monitor the fire agency reimbursable account and ensure reimbursement per the Interagency Agreement.

9 Non-wildland Fire Incident Support

IMET requests from wildland fire incident management teams, through the normal wildland fire ordering process, to support non-wildland fire events (e.g., hurricane recovery) will be coordinated by the NFWOC, WFO, and the Regional Operations Center (ROC). It may be determined that the best resource to support the incident is a non-IMET technical specialist.

If the WFO and the ROC determine that the most appropriate resource to provide service to a non-wildland fire, non-wildland fire agency incident management team (e.g. a FEMA mission assignment) is an IMET, the WFO and ROC will coordinate with the NFWOC to ensure that IMET can be deployed and the IMET program can still meet wildland fire obligations.

Wildland fire is the top priority for availability and response by an IMET, with other incidents supported as program resources allow.