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**Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation**  
**Fire Protection**  
**COVID-19 Recommended Actions and Guidance**

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## **Adjustments to RT-130 and Work Capacity Testing Requirements** **for the 2020 Fire Year**

**Effective Date: 3/27/2020**

### **Agency Intent**

Below is the agency intent for Department of Natural Resources and Conservation's fire preparedness, COVID-19 mitigation actions, and COVID-19 precautions in the state's fire operations:

- The DNRC's mission critical work, including suppressing wildfires, will continue with appropriate risk management strategies consistent with current guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and state health safety guidelines regarding COVID-19 mitigation.
- The DNRC is committed to engaging in local and statewide COVID-19 emergency response while prioritizing and balancing our responsibilities to execute our mission critical duties.
- The best way to mitigate COVID-19 exposure throughout our fire operations is to maintain our capacity to do what we do best—succeed on initial attack, build the capacity of our local partners, and support our federal partners in doing the same.
- Community preparedness and fire prevention will play a critical role leading up to the 2020 Fire Season to reduce firefighter exposure and reduce nonessential interactions.
- Management of wildfire is inherently interagency and we are working to align national plans with ongoing efforts across Montana and the Northern Rockies Geographic Area.

### **Introduction & Purpose**

The purpose of this memo is to provide Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation Fire Managers with guidance on adjustments to wildland fire preparedness activities for the 2020 Fire Year. These activities include: Work Capacity Test (WCT), RT-130 and Wildland Fire Safety Training Annual Refresher (WFSTAR). Many wildland fire position qualifications require the completion of an annual RT-130 and WCT. Based on the current situation and guidance related to COVID-19, the goal is to reduce impact and exposure to our employees while maintaining our ability to respond to incidents and carry out mission critical wildland fire activities.

The Fire Protection Bureau has reviewed the risk of responder exposure to the Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) in relationship to the need to evaluate the physical, and training requirements of wildland firefighters as part of annual fire preparedness. The requirements have been separated into two categories: 1) Employees new to the State of Montana firefighting workforce, and 2) Incumbent/returning firefighters and firefighters who have transferred from a Federal, State or County agency. To this end, the following alternatives will be implemented effective immediately.



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## Recommended Actions and Guidance

### Employees new to the State of Montana firefighting workforce

- Work Capacity Test (WCT) are still required. Employees should complete a related light, moderate, or arduous work capacity test commensurate with the appropriate wildland fire qualification.
  - Discourage reuse or sharing of pack test vests more than once a day without taking proper mitigation steps. You should use proper disinfectant as per COVID-19 guidelines.
  - Encourage use of weight appropriate bladder bags, individually issued fireline packs or personal backpacks.
- Basic Firefighter Training: Required to complete S-130, Firefighter Training; S-190, Introduction to Wildland Fire Behavior; L-180, Human Factors in the Wildland Fire Service; IS-700, An Introduction to the National Incident Management System; and ICS-100, Introduction to the Incident Command System, and fire shelter proficiency training. Practice shelters should be cleaned and disinfected per COVID-19 guidelines following each use.

### Incumbent/Returning State of Montana Firefighters/Transferred Firefighters

- Work Capacity Tests (WCTs) are suspended for 2020. Training officers will input a WCT competency based on the previously attained 2019 level (light, moderate or arduous) and will include appropriate documentation in the employees training record.
- RT-130 and Wildland Fire Safety Training Annual Refresher (WFSTAR): Employees who have not completed RT-130 to date will be awarded the RT-130 competency. The competency will be awarded from their current expiration date identified in IQS.
  - The following actions are recommended in lieu of the formal refresher training:
    - Complete a self-study refresher utilizing the WFSTAR videos and support materials. Employees should include topics that focus on entrapment avoidance and related case studies, current issues, and other hazards and safety issues. (<https://www.nwcg.gov/publications/training-courses/rt-130/wfstar-catalog>)
    - To compensate for the hands-on fire shelter training, employees are encouraged to watch the “New Generation Fire Shelter” video (<https://www.nwcg.gov/committees/fire-shelter-andpersonal-protective-equipment-subcommittee>)
    - Predicted service information (<https://www.predictiveservices.nifc.gov/predictive.htm>)
    - Utilize content from the Lesson Learned Center (<https://www.wildfirelessons.net/home>)
- These exceptions apply to all DNRC EFF employees as well as applicable crew, water handling (engines and water tenders), and DNRC equipment contracts and agreements (EERA, IRA)

## Source:

FPB Memorandum No 20-001, 3/27/2020