



**TO :**

**FROM :** National Wildfire Coordinating Group

**REPLY TO :** NWCG@nifc.gov

**DATE :** 06/21/2002

**SUBJECT :** SAFETY ADVISORY : Work Rest Policy

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The attached is a clarification of the work/rest policy for federal employees.

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June 12, 2002

To: Geographic Area Multi-agency Coordination Groups  
From: National Multi-agency Coordination Group  
Subject: Work/Rest Guidelines, Length of Assignment, and Rest and Recuperation  
Action: Effective immediately this Memo supercedes all previous guidance

This memo is intended to document Interagency guidance for Federal and Tribal firefighters, overhead, dispatchers, and other support personnel regarding work/rest cycles, length of assignment, and rest and recuperation. These guidelines include those found in the Interagency Incident Business Management Handbook, NWCG Handbook 2, PMS 902, NFES 2160, Section 12.7; and the National Interagency Mobilization Guide, NFES 2092, and clarifications / additions as noted. State and/or federal laws, or specific policies, contracts, and agreements pertaining to specific personnel or activities (State employees, contractors, CDL and other drivers, air crews, etc.) take precedence over these rules. As a minimum, the following guidelines will be applied to all Federal, Tribal, state and contracted personnel on Federal jurisdictional fires.

The safety and health of all firefighters, both casual hire and regular government employees, is paramount and must not be compromised. The mental and physical condition of any firefighter must be taken into consideration, and that may dictate directed days off or de-mobilization prior to reaching the limits of the following guidelines. *The only exceptions to the following guidance will be an imminent threat to public and/or firefighter safety.*

### **Work/Rest Guidelines**

The Incident Business Handbook, Chapter 11, Part 12.7-1 states:

“To maintain safe, productive incident activities, incident management personnel must appropriately manage work and rest periods, assignment duration, and shift length for crews, overhead personnel, and support personnel. Plan for and ensure that crews, overhead personnel, and support personnel are provided a 2 to 1 work to rest ratio (for every 2 hours of work or travel, provide 1 hour sleep and/or rest). ....”

### **Clarification(s) / Addition(s)**

**Provide the opportunity for a minimum of 1-hour of rest for every 2-hours of work or travel regardless of work performed (incident/non-incident), incident type or jurisdiction, time of incident or operational period, or regular work schedule.**

**Work shifts, including the first operational period, will not exceed 24 hours.**

**All work shifts exceeding 16 hours, and every instance where work:rest cycles will be exceeded, require pre-approval and documentation by the appropriate Agency Administrator, Incident Commander, or other individual with expressly delegated authority. A work shift includes all hours of work or travel since the last rest period meeting the 2 to 1 work:rest ratio.**

### **Length of Incident Assignments**

The National Mobilization Guide states in Chapter 10, part 13:

“Incident assignments will not exceed 14 days, excluding travel. There may be situations where life and property are so imminently threatened, or suppression objectives are close to being met, that an exception is necessary to smoothly allow for replacements. Incident Commanders and agency administrators (responsible for the incident and home unit) will closely monitor the situation and jointly agree on extension. The Incident Commander will document, gain approval from agency administrators, and include the justification in the incident records, for any assignment that exceeds 14 days. However, no assignment will exceed 21 days except as stated in the following paragraphs. (Exception: military as outlined below.) Strong consideration and management of firefighting resources must ensure that back-to-back assignments are considered in the health, readiness, and capability of the resource. The health and safety of incident personnel and resources will not be compromised under any circumstance.”

“During National Preparedness Level 5, personnel can be given two days R&R after the first 14 day assignment, and be extended or reassigned up to an additional 14 days. This would be based on concurrence with resource and home unit. At the end of second 14-day assignment, resource will be released to home unit. Upon arriving home, resources should be allowed a minimum of four days, excluding travel before receiving another assignment.”

“Military battalions are mobilized on a 30 day commitment (including training and travel), by prior agreement, as well as the Strike Team Leaders and Battalion Liaisons assigned to those units. Assignments to FEMA incidents may also be extended to 30 days. However, Incident Commanders will give strong consideration as to the health and condition of these crews by varying the intensity and exposure of their assignments. ....”

The Incident Business Handbook adds from Chapter 11, Part 12.7-2:

“When filling incident assignments, individuals and their supervisors should consider when the requested individual’s last day off occurred, prior to mobilization, to ensure the individual’s readiness and capability for the assignment.”

And in 12.7-4:

“Supervisors must manage work schedules for initial attack, dispatch and incident support personnel during extended incident situations. During periods of non-routine or extended activity, these employees will have a minimum of 1 day off in any 21-day period.”

#### **Clarification(s) / Addition(s)**

**Days spent in staging or on ordered standby are counted as part of the length of assignment . All other elements of the policy apply.**

**Additionally, Military Crew Advisors and Battalion Military Liaisons can expect to be staged in hotel accommodations up to 5 days prior to actual assignment to a military unit, at which time the 30 day commitment begins.**

#### **R&R (Rest and Recuperation)**

“A. The need for R&R at an incident during a 14-day assignment (excluding travel) is normally not necessary. R&R may be provided if it is determined that the individual’s fatigue level may jeopardize safety and welfare.”

“B. Commander has determined that a longer than 14-day commitment is necessary R&R guidelines of one full day (24 hours) in a 14-day assignment or two full days in a 21-day assignment should be applied.”

/s/ Sue Vap, *Chair, National MAC Group*  
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