



# Interagency Time Unit Field Guide

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The Incident Business Committee (IBC), a National Wildfire Coordinating Group (NWCWG) entity, has created and produced the *Interagency Time Unit Field Guide* as an interim document until the committee has an opportunity to review the future options for the content and format of the *Interagency Incident Business Management Handbook*, PMS 902. Until then, this guide is posted on the IBC webpage at <https://www.nwcg.gov/committees/incident-business-committee/resources>.

The *Interagency Time Unit Field Guide* sets standard practices for properly documenting time for incident resources. It is not formal policy. Agency policy shall be followed according to the respective jurisdictional incident and/or agency.

The intent of this guide is to assist incident personnel assigned to wildland fire and all-hazard incident activities. This guide is designed to provide information to Time Unit Leaders, Personnel Time Recorders, Finance Section Chiefs, Incident Business Advisors, local unit personnel, and other incident business personnel on:

- Incident timekeeping,
- Casual employees,
- Travel, and
- Local government cooperator employees.

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## Section 1 - Casual Hire Information

- Single Resource Casual Hire Information form is collected by Finance for all federally hired casuals.
  - Forest Service casuals - the form is submitted with the OF-288 to Albuquerque Service Center Incident Finance (ASC-IF)
  - DOI casuals – the form is returned to the casual along with the OF-288 to take to the home unit, a copy should be kept in the finance package
- Casual employees as crew members – no Single Resource Casual Hire Information form is required, but crew manifest needs to be documented with the AD (Administratively Determined) rate, position code, and Employee Common Identifier (ECI).
  - Forest Service casuals – manifest is included with payment documents submitted to ASC-IF. Organized AD crews such as those from a Job Corps Center may take OF-288s home with them.
  - DOI casuals – manifest is kept in finance package
- Utilize Single Resource Casual Hire Information form and the AD Pay Plan to ensure employee is hired in an appropriate position and at the correct pay rate. For example, SEC2 is not a valid position for a casual hire.
  - Hiring unit information on the Single Resource Casual Hire Information form should match the information under Unit ID in e-ISuite.
- Exception positions for casuals must have an approved position description and can **only** be paid at one of the five approved exception position rates.
- Field promotions occur when a casual employee is directed to work in a position at a higher rate than initially ordered. The casual must meet the qualifications of the position for which they are reassigned. Field promotions can be for a single shift or for the duration of the incident. For single shift promotions, the majority of the shift must be spent working in the duties of the higher rate position. Field promotions are documented on the Crew Time Report (CTR) or a General Message form and include the effective date, position, and AD rate.
- Casuals hired as trainees are paid one AD pay rate lower than the full performance AD rate.
- Casuals who are reassigned from one incident to another do not need a new Single Resource Casual Hire Information form. The reassignment can be documented on the original form and the form sent with the casual to the new incident.
- Casuals are not entitled to paid days off after release from an assignment or at their point of hire.
  - If the casual extends beyond the normal 14 day assignment length and is kept at the incident and is away from their point of hire, they would be entitled to paid days off.
- For casuals working at their point of hire are not entitled to paid days off under any circumstance.
- Casuals working at their point of hire are not guaranteed 8 hours each day (i.e. warehouse, dispatch).
- Closing out casual OF-288
  - Forest Service casuals should have return travel time to home unit estimated and the OF-288 closed out prior to submitting to ASC-IF. Return travel time will be estimated. If there are delays during return travel, the hiring unit will be responsible for submitting pay documents for the additional time to ASC-IF.
  - DOI casuals have return travel time left open and the OF-288 is closed out upon arrival at the home unit.

- Travel
  - Forest Service casuals should be reimbursed via the OF-288 for POV mileage, lodging and baggage fees (with receipts), meals & incidental expenses. For additional information on the casual travel reimbursement, refer to <http://www.fs.fed.us/fire/ibp/personnel/personnel.html>
  - DOI casual travel is processed at their hiring unit. Information on the DOI travel reimbursement process can be found at: [https://www.nifc.gov/programs/cpc\\_agencymemos.html](https://www.nifc.gov/programs/cpc_agencymemos.html)

## Section 2 - Travel and Per Diem

- Hours in travel status are not exempt from work/rest ratio requirements and driving limitations must followed.
- MREs, sack lunches, and hot can meals meet the criteria for adequate food. Personnel may not claim per diem for those times when these types of meals are the only option.
- Nighttime travel – there is no prohibition on the time of day resources are allowed to travel. It is at the discretion of the home unit, incident agency or incident management team to manage resource fatigue and travel time.
- Resources that cross time zones while traveling stay in the original time zone through the end of the shift and start the subsequent shift in the new time zone.

## Section 3 - Compensable Meals

- Compensable meals are addressed in the Interagency Incident Business Management Handbook (IIBMH) in Chapter 10, page 10-15. In order to be eligible to be compensated for meal breaks, these three criteria must be met:
  - Fire is not controlled; and
  - Operations Section Chief makes the decision that it is critical to the effort of controlling the fire, personnel remain at their post of duty and continue to work as they eat; and
  - The compensable meal break is approved by the supervisor at the next level and it is documented on the CTR, SF-261.
- Justification for a compensable meal must be documented on a CTR and approved by the next level supervisor or Incident Commander.
- Compensable meal breaks include time spent eating while traveling in a plane, bus or other vehicle; however, time spent eating during travel interruptions is non-compensable, e.g. eating while waiting in airport or stopping at a restaurant, and must be shown as a break on the CTR.
- Personnel assigned to support positions are required to take a minimum 30 minute break and should document all meal breaks taken (IIBMH, Chapter 10).

## Section 4 - Hazard Pay/Environmental Differentials

- Hazard Pay applies to General Schedule (GS) government employees. Environmental Differential applies to Wage Grade (WG) government employees and has several categories that may be applicable to incident work. Casual employees are not entitled to hazard pay or environmental differential.
- Hazard pay and environmental differential entitlement is based on duties performed, not the position occupied. Personnel claiming hazard pay or environmental differential must meet one of the criteria specified in the IIBMH. (IIBMH, Chapter 10)

- Hazard pay or environmental differential must be documented on a CTR and approved by the incident supervisor.

## Section 5 - Staging/Mob Centers

- Personnel assigned to staging areas are guaranteed their base hours (8, 9, or 10). There may be occasions where staged personnel are assigned other duties that may entitle them to more than base hours.
- Personnel arriving at incidents from staging or mobilization centers may not have had time entered on an OF-288. If they have a signed CTR, OF-288s may be created at the incident to account for the staging or mobilization center hours. Time spent in staging or at a mobilization center should be charged against the appropriate accounting code.
- Time spent in staging or at a mobilization center counts against length of assignment period.

## Section 6 - Mandatory Days Off

- After a 14 day assignment, regular government employees are entitled to two paid days off upon release from an assignment provided the days off fall on normal work days. Days off must be taken immediately upon return from the incident and must be consecutive.
- Paid days off for state and cooperator employees are based on regulations in their respective agreements.
- Employees who extend beyond 14 days must be given 2 days off prior to day 22 if extending beyond 21 days. Resources extending to 21 days may work through day 21 and return home on day 22. Appropriate documentation of the extension should be completed at the incident.

## Section 7 - First Day Worked

- There is no standard definition for first day worked. A general consideration could be that if an employee has more work hours in a shift than travel hours that would be the first work day for that employee.

## Section 8 - Law Enforcement Personnel

- Federally commissioned law enforcement personnel (SEC1) are not required to take meal breaks. Reference 5 CFR 551.431(a)(1) and 5 CFR 550.112 (k)(1) for additional information.
- State commissioned law enforcement personnel may be compensated for meal breaks depending upon home unit regulations.
- Non-commissioned law enforcement personnel (SEC2) should take meal breaks.
- Lodging for SEC1s may be appropriate in the situation where the requirement to double lock a weapon cannot be met at the base camp. It is not an automatic entitlement for SEC1s to be housed in hotels during incident assignments.
- Incidents may utilize local law enforcement personnel through the agreement process. Incident agency policy should be followed as it relates to time keeping and payment requirements.

## Section 9 - Work/Rest

- There may be situations on an incident that require crews or single resource personnel to work hours beyond what is considered normal for work/rest standards. This is acceptable provided resources are given the appropriate hours off to mitigate the excess hours or brought back into compliance at the earliest opportunity possible. In situations where the excess hours are not mitigated immediately, incident

agencies or incident management teams need to assess fatigue level of the resource before making a decision on additional down time.

- Excess shift documentation needs to meet incident agency requirements.

## Section 10 - Guarantees

- When assigned to an incident, the only guaranteed hours are those related to employee base hours.
  - Personnel assigned to staging areas are guaranteed their base hours (8, 9, or 10). There may be occasions where staged personnel are assigned other duties that may entitle them to more than base hours.
  - Employees who are injured or become ill while assigned to an incident are only guaranteed base hours on the day of injury or illness. Employees cannot earn overtime hours for time spent at a medical facility, nor travel to and from. Personnel accompanying injured or ill employees are entitled to be compensated for hours at medical facilities and travel time.
  - There are no guaranteed hours on first and last days. Employees are entitled to only actual hours worked.

## Section 11 - Local Government Cooperator Personnel

- Timekeeping for cooperator resources is dependent upon which agreement the resource is ordered under. Some local government cooperators require original CTRs be returned home with them. Finance personnel should verify with cooperators or read the applicable agreement if available. The CTRs should be copied and left in the finance package.
- Original OF-288s should be given to the cooperator and not submitted to payment centers directly from the incident.
- The need to track cooperator equipment varies from agreement to agreement. The cooperator should know what is needed for payment purposes. If the cooperator is unsure, the information should be found in the applicable agreement.
- For documentation of work/rest compliance, incident resources who are entitled to portal to portal pay should complete CTRs showing actual hours worked. CTRs should be kept in the finance package. No OF-288 needs to be created.
- Tribal employees assigned to an incident are under agreement with the BIA and should be treated as federal employees for timekeeping purposes. The agreement is between a tribe and the BIA for payment purposes only and the agreement is not needed at the incident.