



Southwest Coordinating Group

Arizona Department of Forestry and Fire Management
Bureau of Indian Affairs: Southwest, Navajo, Western Regions
Bureau of Land Management: Arizona, New Mexico
National Park Service: Intermountain Region
New Mexico State Forestry Division
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service: Region 2
U.S. Forest Service



Date: September 10th, 2025

To: Southwest Area Fire Community

From: Southwest Coordinating Group

Subject: Priority Trainee Program Implementation for Fire Season 2026

The primary mission for the Priority Trainee Program is developing an interagency workforce by mobilizing trainees to incidents, assisting them in critical experience for Fire Management position requirements and successional planning for Complex Incident Management Teams.

Nationally, Complex Incident Management Teams (CIMs) and single resource overhead provide the support structure for managing wildland fire and all-hazard incidents. We must prepare for the future by training individuals to ensure that key positions remain intact over time. The Southwest Priority Trainee Program (SWPTP), as part of the larger National Priority Trainee Program (PTP) provides an avenue to mobilize priority trainees to incidents in support of interagency succession objectives.

The Geographic Area Training Representative (GATR) is delegated the responsibility of managing the Priority Trainee Program with the GATR/SWPTP Duty Officers, implementing the program during the fire season (April 1st - September 1st) to include coordination with other Geographic Areas to share opportunities for mobilization of priority trainees.

Program Management

Critical ICS positions are identified through the collaboration of the GATR and various Southwest Area Committees with final approval of the Southwest Coordinating Group (SWCG).

Applications are received from November 3rd through February 2nd, with prioritization work occurring shortly thereafter through the collaboration of the GATR and committees with final approval by the SWCG.

Southwest Area Trainee orientation will occur annually.

Mobilization Process

The Southwest Priority Trainee Program will be utilized for all trainee mobilization nationwide.

Mobilization of trainees in the Southwest Area will occur in the following dispatch priority order:

1. Trainee within the dispatch zone where the incident resides.
2. Priority Trainees from the Southwest Area Priority Trainee List. If none are available, after communication from the GATR/SWPTP Duty Officer, trainees from within the SWA that are not on the Priority Trainee List.
3. Trainees from the National Priority Trainee List.
4. Normal ordering of trainees outside of the geographic area may occur.

The GATR/SWPTP Duty Officer will collaborate with Complex Incident Management Teams (CIMs) to identify training opportunities. Orders received in Expanded from the Ordering Manager, are then to be forwarded to SWCC who will collaborate with the GATR/SWPTP Duty Officer.

Individuals who apply to Primary Trainee positions on CIMs are highly encouraged to also apply to the Priority Trainee Program. During the team's unavailability period the GATR/SWPTP Duty Officer will work to get rostered trainees on fire assignment for speed to competency.

We strongly encourage individuals to apply for the Priority Trainee Program and watch for announcements coming out November 3rd.

Please contact the Geographic Area Training Representative for the Southwest Area if there are any questions: Elliott Herrera – etherrera@blm.gov

Southwest Coordinationg Group Chair