National Wildfire Suppression Association

“The Contract Fire fighting Industry”
Fire Suppression Activities
Fire Suppression Activities
National Wildfire Suppression Association

• Purpose & scope of NWSA
  - NWSA strives to develop a professional wild land fire fighting industry and raise the standards for the industry with safety our first concern.
  - Voluntary national association representing over 225 private sector contractors nationwide.
  - Association has been in existence since 1991.
NWSA Membership Consists of:

- Full Members
- Individual Members
- Certified Instructors
- Corporate Sponsors
- Associate Members

We maintain dialogue with other National Associations in the industry.
Resource Types

• Crews
• Engines
• Tenders
• Caterers
• Showers/Hand washing units
• Dozers
• Timber Fallers
• Other Misc. Single Resources/equipment
Where are our members?

- Oregon
- Washington
- California
- Nevada
- Wyoming
- Idaho
- Montana
- Minnesota
- British Columbia
- North Carolina
- Arizona
- Utah
- Missouri
- Mississippi
- Colorado
How many of us are there?
Number of Contractors

NUMBER OF CONTRACTORS

YEARS


NUMBER

0 20 40 60 80 100
Crew Usage by Agency

2006 CONTRACT CREW USE BY AGENCY

- USFS R6: 88%
- USFS OTHER: 12%
- BLM: 8%
- BIA: 1/2%
- OTHER STATES: 2%
- NPS: 1/2%
- ODF: 5%
- FWS: 1%
- USFS TOTAL: 83%
Crew use by State

2006 CREW USE BY STATE

- OR: 69%
- WA: 17%
- CA: 6%
- AZ: <1%
- ID: 1%
- VA: <1%
- NV: <1%
- UT: <1%
NWSA Membership

• Chapters
  – Pacific Northwest Chapter
  – Great Basin Chapter
  – California Chapter
  – Eastern US Chapter
  – National Contract Resources Chapter
  – Northern Rockies Chapter

• Associate Members
  – Northwest Contract Firefighters Assn.
  – Oregon Firefighting Contractors Assn.
  – Northern Rockies Wildfire Contractors Assn.
  – Western Forest Fire Services Assn.
  – Umpqua Community College
NWSA Membership

• Corporate Sponsors –
  – Vendors that support our efforts, some of them offer discounts to our members.
  – Vendor show held annually at our convention.
NWSA Board of Directors

- Rick Dice, President
- Don Moss, Vice President
- Lee Miller, Sec/ Treasurer
- Claren Nilsson, Board Member
- Mike Edrington, Board Member
- Mike Sulffridge, Board Member
- Mike Wheelock, Board Member – National Contract Chapter Rep.
- Jay Sparks, Board Member – Eastern U.S. Chapter Rep.
- Ed Wright, Board Member – Great Basin Chapter Rep.
- Bruce Ferguson, Board Member – PNW Chapter Rep.
- Jim Wills, Board Member – California Chapter Rep.
- Leonard Oftedahl, Board Member – Northern Rockies Region
Advisory Board Members

- Rich Denker, Western Forest Fire Services Assn.
- Jesse Morrow, Umpqua Community College
- Nelda Herman, Oregon Firefighting Contractors Assn.
- John Bennett, Northwest Contract Firefighters Assn.
- Dave Russell, Northern Rockies Wildfire Contractors Assn.
NWSA Staff

• Debbie Miley, Executive Director

Contracted Staff

• Stan Kunzman, Training Coordinator
• Chuck Burley, Governmental Affairs Consultant
Goals of NWSA

– To support and assist NWSA members so they can be successful in their areas of contracting expertise and work to raise the bar in the standards of the industry.
– To achieve national recognition as a professional organization providing personnel and equipment that meets or exceeds national standards.
– To provide the agencies with a cost effective, quality product for the use in Emergency Response.
– To offer to our membership education and information regarding issues that affect them in this arena.
HISTORY OF CONTRACT FIREFIGHTING INDUSTRY

• 60’s to 80’s most of the private sector firefighting was primarily done in R-6 by company mill crews, company logging crews, or independent logging crews. The early 70’s brought on specialized contractors that provided crews for private land owners.

• Equipment was signed up on the spot with EERA’s /Crews signed on as AD’s.

• Early 80’s Fuel and Fire companies and reforestation companies become more prevalent providing crews and equipment to help fight fires.
HISTORY OF CONTRACT FIREFIGHTING INDUSTRY

- Mid 80’s saw agencies downsizing—more landowners relying on contract crews and equipment. Large fires increasing—More private sector used.

- 1980-86 contractors pushed for formal contracts for engines and crews. Many meetings with agencies all over the country to promote the private sector increasing the use of full service burning contracts with state and federal agencies.

HISTORY OF THE CONTRACT FIREFIGHTING INDUSTRY

• 1988 Yellowstone Fires-Resulted in large growth in the private sector for Engines/Tenders/crews and other equipment.

• Five fire contractors met at a restaurant in Sacramento and discussed the need for a private sector association. They were attending a Fuels & Fire Convention.

• 1987-89 First Pilot Crew Contract with State of Oregon.

• 1987-89 First Pilot Engine Contract with Mt. Hood FS.
HISTORY OF THE CONTRACT
FIREFIGHTING INDUSTRY

- 1989 Type 2 FS Crew best value contract on the Siuslaw shot down.

- 1989 CWN crew and engine contracts in Region-1 on the Superior & Lolo national forests.

- 1991 NWSA was formed to push for training recognition and deal with other private industry problems.
• 1991 Interagency crew and Engine contract was developed for Region 6 that included National Park Service, BLM, ODF, USFS and DNR.

• With this contract came Self- Certification, allowing contractors to certify their own training and qualifications.

• With the growth of the industry and use of private sector came problems with self certification.

• 1993 First private crews from Region 6 sent out of region to Southern California.
HISTORY OF CONTRACT FIREFIGHTING INDUSTRY

• NWSA finally got approval from NWCG to pursue a Memorandum of Understanding. NWSA was the first Association to have MOU and a Recognized training program that provided an avenue to Certify Instructors and provide quality training to the private sector. With the PNWCG, NWSA also started work on a Database Storage System to track training in the private sector and work on a way to stop fraudulent carding.

• 1994 Biggest Fire season on record as of that date. Crews and engines sent all over the west.
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1995-1999 Region put out various forms of crew and engine contracts.

1999 NWSA met with National Fire Directors BLM and FS. Discussions were held on the need for a National Crew and Engine contract with standard language. NWSA believed that there needed to be tiered contract system that would promote higher standards in the industry.
HISTORY OF CONTRACT FIREFIGHTING INDUSTRY

• 2000 was a big fire year, NWSA continued dialogue with the agencies operational personnel on the need for higher level contract resources.

• In 2001 Assistant National Director Dennis Pendleton commits to a National Contract crew and engine contract, and starts the long process to establish guidelines, and hire a contract administrator for the program.
HISTORY OF CONTRACT FIREFIGHTING INDUSTRY

• In 2002 the first National Crew and Engine Contract-Best Value were awarded with 3 optional years.

• National Type 2 IA crew and National Contracts very successful for both parties.
The National Best Value Engine was not renewed by NIFC following the 2004 fire season and it was RECOMMENDED by USFS Assistant Director of Fire & Aviation that the regions continue to use this contract with its standards. Several regions choose not to do this.

The reason for this was lack of program management personnel by the agency.
HISTORY OF CONTRACT FIREFIGHTING INDUSTRY

• The National Best Value Type 2 IA Crew Contract did stay in tact, and re-issued by the Forest Service.

• NWSA continues to believe that Best Value Contract is in the best interest of all parties. These contracts are binding between both parties, it allows for an agency panel knowledgeable in suppression to make decisions on awards that include past performance, corporate history, training and safety to name a few as factors for award, not just price.
Major Issue of concern to NWSA Members

• Contract Accountability & Enforcement
  - This is our number one priority. The agencies have the ability to pull contracts or put sanctions on contractors and up to this point they have not been able to get a handle on this, therefore it has been hard to try to “raise the bar” if all contractors are not held to the same standard.
Issues Affecting NWSA Members

• Hazardous Fuels & Fire Prevention Work
  – Wildland Urban Interface is a major concern for our members. We need more contract work in this area. Our industry can provide a key service in wildland interface fires, with the reduction of these hazardous fuels.
Current Regulations

These are current regulations which the industry must adhere to:

• Occupational Health & Safety Admin.
• U.S. Farm Labor Licensing
• Department of Transportation (Federal & State)
• Migrant & Seasonal Worker Protection Act
• The Service Contract
• Insurance Requirements (Liability, Workers Compensation & Property)
• FARS
Types of Agreements Currently Used

• **EERA**
  - Used throughout the nation to sign up equipment such as engines, dozers, graders, vehicles, saws, pumps etc. Whenever needed usually on a daily rate. No competitive process. Anyone can qualify. It is used to sign up equipment right on the fire or through preseason agreements.

• **Equipment Agreement USFS Interagency**
  - An agreement that is called a contract. Preseason inspections and some requirements written in for training etc. Anyone can qualify to be on a call list. No competitive process. It is not a performance based contract.

• **Oregon State Interagency Crew Agreement**
Type of Contracts Used

• U.S. Forest Contracts
  – Competitive crew contract with requirements. A negotiated best value contract. Procured by individual forests.

• National Park Service Contract
  – Competitive with requirements. Crew Contract. A negotiated best value contract. Procured by the NPS.
Type of Contract Used
Cont.

• National Engine Contract USFS
  - Commercial contract with the federal government, Best Value (Performance Based Contract) competitive bid with requirements and mandatory availability. Pre evaluation of company, personnel and history before award. Multi-year contract with unilateral option years.

• National Crew Contract USFS
  - Request for Proposal, Best Value (Performance Based Contract) with requirements, mandatory availability and competitive competition. Evaluation of proposal key personnel, company and history before award. Multi-year contract with unilateral option years.
Hazardous Fuels Contracts

- NWSA encourages the use of RFP (Request for Proposal). Contracts awarded based on corporate history, past performances.
Safety

- Safety Issues the Industry is addressing.
  - Safety of our employees on and off the line.
  - Personal Protective Equipment
  - Fire weather education
  - Driver Safety Training Program
  - Crew Boss Leadership Training Program
  - Crisis management
  - New NWSA training manual written & reviewed
  - Development of a Crisis Mgmt Plan within our Association to assist members if need arises.
In 1993 the National Wildfire Coordinating Group (NWCG) issued a position paper on training qualifications and certification for Non-NWCG Entities.

This NWCG position paper provides guidance to member agencies, private sector contractors nationally recognized associations, and educational institutions in order to establish and maintain similar training standards within legal and contractual constraints. This position paper made two important recommendations:

Develop Memorandums of Understanding (MOU’s) to formalize training, advisory and support arrangements between NWCG members and nationally recognized contractor associations.

Certification of non-NWCG member agency instructors and students must meet or exceed appropriate NWCG prerequisite qualifications and current requirements.
NWSA Training Program

The National Wildfire Suppression Association (NWSA) has training MOU’s in many geographical areas:

Examples are:

- Pacific Northwest Coordinating Group
- SWFMB (Southwest Fire Management Board Member) USFS
Training

- NWSA meets or exceeds national standards
- NWSA recognized by state & federal agencies
- NWSA database tracks all training by NWSA Instructors and is open to other users by affiliation.
- Training committee that sets the standards in requirements for NWSA based on many factors including the 310-1.
- Code of Ethics for all instructors.
- Annual Mandatory Training Session for Instructors to update on changes/requirements.
Training Programs Cont.

• Provide variety of workshops at our annual conference on issues that affect our members:
  – Driver Training
  – Drug/Alcohol Supervisory Training
  – Cohesiveness Issue
Training Programs Cont.

- NWSA policy requires instructors and members to comply with qualification requirements for the skills and knowledge unique to fire and aviation management and the Incident Command System as established by the NWCG in the “Wildland and Prescribed Fire Qualification System Guide”, PMS 310-1.

- Instructor will also comply with any additional MOU requirements as set forth by the NWCG geographical areas.

- NWSA certification standards are higher than the ones established by the Course Coordinators Guide. NWSA instructors are certified by the NWSA Training Coordinator. All instructors must meet or exceed the National Standards.
• Complimenting the training program is a Data Storage and Qualification Card System. The NWSA Data Storage system stores information on personnel trained by NWSA Instructors. In addition to personnel information, the system tracks training courses and incident position qualifications. Agency Incident Command Teams have limited access the data base from the Incident Base (Fire Camp) and validate a firefighter’s qualification card. The Data Storage system provides; training certificates, class rosters, certification letters, event information, and Incident Qualification Card with firefighter’s picture. We believe that the NWSA system is a system that is secure, and is being nationwide.

• The NWSA Training Manual is reviewed and revised annually, in order to maintain consistency and stay current with NWCG standards. The manual is a ready reference for a course coordinator or instructor providing training. In addition to the manual, the NWSA Training Committee developed a “Code of Ethics for Instructors of the National Wildfire Suppression Association”.

• For additional information, please contact Stan Kunzman, NWSA Training Coordinator at 541-389-3526 or visit our website: [www.nwsa.us](http://www.nwsa.us).
Issues Concerning Private Sector

- We have issues with
  - Rising costs of liability insurance.
  - Cross State Workers Compensation Coverage
  - Immigration issues
  - Non standardization of requirements/contract/MOU’s across agency/state and regional lines.
What can NWSA members do for you?

• Encourage/help the agencies to find ways (money & manpower) to oversee the compliance of the contract, review training classes, discourage use of contractors that are in violation of contract upon dispatch and check-in (no radios, poor equipment, unable to communicate with camp based on language barriers etc.)
What can NWSA members do for you?

- NWSA Members can provide the following:
  - Fully crews that perform hazardous fuels reduction.
  - Thinning
  - Hand piling
  - Pruning
  - Slash burning
  - Hazardous Fuels Planning
  - Chipping

Contract crews come fully equipped to perform any of these functions. Employees are hired locally, and many position are permanent positions with benefits. Many contractors make us of college students during the fire season for these positions.
How can we work together on common issues?

• Encourage the use of Request for Proposals with Best Value Criteria which would encourage the contractor to do a good job as these are performance based contracts.

• We encourage the agency personnel to consider Individual Membership with NWSA that would allow communication both ways, and help them keep up with what is happening on the contract side.

• We encourage open communication to get to know our capabilities and to help us find common ground that we can work on to make our combined efforts in preserving and protecting our environment a success.
NWSA will continue to try to foster a cooperation between private and agency.
NWSA Information

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