

BLM Alaska Fire Service EFF Crew Program – FAQ Sheet

What is the EFF Crew Program?

- EFF stands for “Emergency Fire Fighter”. The BLM Alaska Fire Service (AFS) hires EFF crews from villages located throughout the Upper Yukon, Tanana and Galena Fire Management Zones. These fire crews are hired to supplement the regular AFS workforce on an as-needed basis.
- These crews are classified as Type 2 wildland firefighting crews.
- AFS currently rosters 20 to 25 EFF crews on the state-wide rotation list managed by the Alaska Interagency Coordination Center (AICC), depending on crew availability. The villages from which these EFF crews are located and hired were pre-designated to have EFF crews because of their strategic locations.
- The State of Alaska Division of Forestry also hires and uses EFF crews. These crews are also on the official crew rotation list managed by AICC.
- General guidelines for both the State of Alaska and AFS EFF crews are set forth in the EFF Crew Management Guide.

(The State of Alaska Division of Forestry EFF crew program is not the same program as the AFS EFF crew program. While similar, there are differences in the way in which the programs are managed)

How often do EFF crews get hired?

- Not every EFF crew gets hired every season. Sometimes a crew gets hired for more than one assignment a season. On the average, each EFF crew gets hired for one assignment for the season.

How many days per season does an EFF crew get used?

- On the average, EFF crews get hired for approximately 16 days per fire season.

Who selects the individuals to be on the crew?

- The crew boss selects the individuals that make up the crew. However, AFS Zone management has final approval of each individual on the crew boss’ roster.
- Each EFF crew consists of 20 qualified individuals including 1 crew boss (CRWB), 3 squad bosses (FFT1) and up to 16 additional firefighters (FFT2). In some cases a crew will have two or three sawyers or “fallers” (FAL3 or FAL2) which take the place of FFT2s.

Who selects the crew boss?

- Crew Bosses are selected by Area/Zone FMO.

Is the BLM Alaska Fire Service required to hire EFF crews?

- AFS is under no obligation to hire EFF crews or any other EFF resources. All EFF resources that are available to AFS, including crews and single resources, are hired and used strictly on an “as-needed” basis and only when it is in the best interest of the government to do so.

Why do regular agency crews get assigned before EFF crews?

- The BLM and Division of forestry have standing crews that are assigned prior to the use of EFF crews. These regular agency crews are fully funded and have individuals who have been competitively hired to be on the crew for the season.

- Regular agency crew members live and work together for up to 90 to 120 days per season with little to no change in personnel.
- Agencies use these crews before hiring EFF crews because they are already being paid.

Can my village put together a crew now and get on the rotation list?

- No. AFS is not currently considering any additions to the list of available zone EFF crews.

Can more than one village come together to make up a crew?

- In some cases, the zone FMOs have made plans with crew bosses and villages to use certain crew members from other villages to develop needed crew supervisory positions. These sorts of plans must be made prior to the fire season and must be approved by AFS zone FMOs.
- If a designated EFF crew/village does not have the minimum required number of qualified crew members, squad bosses and/or a crew boss to field a crew at the time of dispatch, that crew will be removed from the rotation list. When the crew is once again able to field the minimum required number of personnel they will be placed back on to the rotation list at the bottom.

Are these village based EFF crews considered to be “Hot Shot” crews?

- No. All of the village based EFF crews are “Type 2” crews. Hotshot crews are “Type 1” crews which are required to be a full-time organized crew that works and trains as a unit 40 hours per week. In addition, Hotshot crews have extensive training and experience requirements for leadership positions.

What is the differences between a Type 2 crew verses a Type 2IA?

- Type 2 crews have three fully qualified Squad Bosses (FFT1). Type 2IA crews, on the other hand, have three qualified ICT5 (type 5 incident commanders) which allows the crew to be broken up into three separate squads to work on different areas or divisions on an incident.
- Type 2 crews: only 20% of the crew members must have at least 1 season of experience in fire suppression. On a Type 2IA crew 60% on the crew members must have at least 1 season of experience in fire suppression.
- Type 2 crews are not required to have any fallers (FAL3). Type 2 IA crews must have at least 3 FAL3s.
- Type 2 crews do not have to have purchasing authority. Type 2IA crews are expected to have purchase authority.
- Type 2 crews are not expected to be available nationally. Type 2IA crews are available nationally.
- For more information regarding crew types you can visit the National Interagency Fire Center (NIFC) and download the Interagency Standards for Fire and Fire Aviation Operations at the following web address: https://www.nifc.gov/policies/pol_ref_redbook.html

What kinds of training does the BLM offer each year for EFF?

- Each training season (March thru May) the BLM Alaska Fire Service facilitates the annual required Fireline Safety Refresher (RT-130) and the Work Capacity Test (PHFT-A or Pack Test) in 30 or more different villages throughout the Upper Yukon, Tanana and Galena Zones. In recent years the BLM has entered into agreements with Council of Athabascan Tribal Governments and Tanana Chiefs Conference to have those organizations facilitate the RT-130 and Pack Test in many of these villages.

- AFS also facilitates two Rookie Firefighter Academies near Fairbanks. Each zone selects candidates from applications to attend one of these academies. Each academy holds 25 to 30 individuals and there is no cost to the rookie firefighters.
- AFS facilitates Squad Boss (FFT1) training workshops which holds anywhere from 15 to 25 students. This training occurs when the zones have a need for it (not every year). There is no cost to the students and all EFF are paid while attending.
- AFS and the State of Alaska DOF together facilitate one Crew Boss Academy every two years in Fairbanks. This academy takes place over two weeks and holds up to 30 students. This includes classroom and field training along with scenario participations. There is no cost to the students and all EFF are paid while attending.
- AFS facilitates a Wildland Fire Power Saws class (S-212, Chainsaws) which holds 15 to 25 students. This class is a one week long class (5 days) and includes classroom training as well as field training. There is no cost to the students and all EFF are paid while attending.
- AFS offers the initial dispatch class (D-110/ROSS) that takes place in April and/or May. This is a four day course in which some students are able to complete their EDRC (Expanded Dispatch Recorder) task book. There is no cost to the students and all EFF are paid while attending.
- AFS and DOF offer training for PTRCs (Personnel Time Recorders) and EQTRs (Equipment Time Recorders) yearly.

Am I guaranteed work if I've been trained by the BLM?

- No. All EFF/AD single resource personnel and crews are hired on an “as needed” basis and there is no guarantee of any work being available.

What is the “Regional EFF Crew” concept and how is this different than the current EFF Crew Program?

- Currently all AFS EFF crews are “village based” which means that within a single village there is enough qualified firefighters to form a crew. This includes 1 CRWB, 3 FFT1s and 16 FFT2s (or 3 FAL3s and 13 FFT2s). Basically the entire crew is made up of individuals from the same village.
- A “Regional Crew” would contain individuals from more than one village. A chosen crew boss would be allowed to select crew members from different villages to make up the crew. This would accommodate villages who don't have enough crew members to make up an entire crew as well as allow the crew boss to have a larger work force to select the best firefighters from.

What is the Alaska Emergency Firefighter Type 2 Crew Management Guide?

- Alaska EFF Crew Management Guide (the Guide), is a combined effort between State and Federal agencies to established interagency standards for crew configuration, administration, training and conduct and discipline of both State of Alaska DOF and BLM Alaska Fire Service EFF crews and individual overhead.
- The purpose of the Guide is to establish standard operating procedures and guidelines to be used by the fire suppression organizations in Alaska for utilization of Type 2 EFF crews. The Guide establishes requirements, standards, procedures, and practices for organizing, training, utilizing, and evaluating EFF crews.

How can I get a copy of the Alaska Emergency Firefighter Type 2 Crew Management Guide?

- The guide can be downloaded using the following internet link.
 - https://fire.ak.blm.gov/content/admin/awfcg_committees/Operations/Emergency%20Firefighter%20Crew%20Management%20Committee/2016%20Alaska%20Emergency%20Firefighter%20Type%202%20Crew%20Management%20Guide.pdf

What is a “Contract Crew” and how are they different than our EFF crews?

- Beginning in 2018, AFS will be offering up to four contracts for village or regional based Type 2 wildland firefighting crews.
- Contract crews are 18 to 20 person crews that are trained, outfitted, organized and managed solely by the contractor, not by the BLM. The contractor is responsible for all their own crew administration tasks including training, records management, red cards, tools and gear among other things.
- Contract crew members become employees of the contractor when they are hired. They do not become BLM employees as is the case now. The government pays the contractor for any work the crew does and the contractor, in turn, pays wages to the employees (firefighters).
- The contractor is providing the government with a “service” (firefighting) which the government then pays for.
- If a contractor in a village is awarded a contract for a crew (service) from that village, the expectation is that existing EFF responders within that village would become the necessary workforce for the contractor to hire employees from.