

Alaska Crew Boss Academy

The Alaska (EFF) Crew Boss Academy has been delivered for over 20 years on odd numbered years. The Academy runs for 14 continuous days, typically in mid-May. Past locations for the Academy have varied, including Galena, McGrath, and Fairbanks (Fort Wainwright). In recent history, the Academy has taken place at Fort Wainwright, mainly to facilitate logistical needs with ease and to bring overall costs down.

Historically the Academy has accepted 24 candidates, and more recently 28 candidates, to accommodate an additional need for Crew Bosses. Available slots are allocated equally (50%) between BLM (Alaska Fire Service) and the State of Alaska (DOF).

Potential candidates are recommended by the agency based on past crew experience and performance, and ultimately chosen by the candidates home village. A typical Alaska Crew Boss Academy candidate possesses a depth of history working on Alaska EFF fire crews, and at least a few seasons of squad boss experience.

While attending the Academy, the candidates receive credit for successful completion of the several National Wildland Coordinating Group (NWCG) courses:

- S-230 Crew Boss
- S-290 Intermediate Wildland Fire Behavior
- RT-130 Annual Fireline Safety Refresher
- WCT Work Capacity “pack” Test
- Wilderness First Aid / CPR
- An additional course, determined by group skill level also occurs (typically I-200 Intermediate ICS, L-280 Followership to Leadership, or S-215 Wildland fire in the Urban Interface.)

In addition to NWCG classes, the Crew Boss candidates are also provided several hands-on breakout group exercises, including; map and compass skills, communication and briefing skill development, and cohesion practice. A “field day” is incorporated near the end of the Academy with “simulated” exercises focusing on combining and executing skills learned throughout the courses.

The Academy cadre consists of; two Academy Coordinators (1 AFS, 1 DOF), a Lead Instructor, several Unit Instructors, four Coaches, four EFF Crew Boss Mentors (chosen based on outstanding past Crew Boss performance), and a logistical position to facilitate the many moving parts of a large organization during the Academy.

Upon successful completion of all units and exercises, along with coach’s approval, the candidates depart with the knowledge, skills, and abilities to begin performing as Crew Boss trainees, under the guidance of qualified Crew Bosses. It typically takes a Crew Boss trainee 3 quality assignments on incidents to complete the Crew Boss task-book and be recommended as a fully qualified Crew Boss.