



NEWS RELEASE

STATE OF NEBRASKA

Nebraska Emergency Management Agency (NEMA)
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Contact:

Cyd Janssen, Nebraska National Forests & Grasslands PAO, (308) 432-0326, cdjanssen@fs.fed.us

Jodie Fawl, NEMA Public Information Officer, (402) 326-3179, Jodie.fawl@nebraska.gov

Nebraska Wildland Fire Academy Eight Years Strong

The Nebraska Wildland Fire Academy, (NWFA) is in the eighth year of the mission to provide high quality fire training education to western Nebraska and regional partners. Since 2007 more than 1,500 students have participated in NWFA and added important capacity to the region's fire and incident response.

Casey McCoy, Fire Training Manager for the Nebraska Forest Service and Weston Burch, Fire Management Officer for the Pine Ridge Ranger District of the Nebraska National Forests and Grassland, have both been involved in NWFA since the beginning. They reminisce that initial goals were to increase capacity for conducting prescribed burns; however through the years it's grown and expanded to include Incident Command Overhead and more classroom and field trainings for incident certification.

McCoy and Burch agree that the key improvement for the Academy was to use the Incident Command System Overhead Team approach to run NWFA, which was implemented in 2012. Burch said this improved the organization, student experience, training and getting classes completed in a timely manner. It also provides opportunity for members of various agencies to complete overhead team position task books to prepare them as future certified incident management team members.

McCoy noted that the highest enrollment was 2012 with more than 300 students. "While NWFA is geared toward regional volunteers, each year students travel long distances to participate. We've had students from Wisconsin, North Dakota, Minnesota and this year two students from Texas."

Paul Fidler and Rory O'Malley-Adams traveled 18 hours from Lytton Springs, Texas to attend NWFA, having learned about it through a Wildland Firefighters group on Facebook. Fidler said, "I'm so impressed with the quality of instructors, the number of classes offered and the price – even considering travel this is the most economical training around. We are taking as many classes as we can these nine days."

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