

Lesson 1: Introduction to FQS

Course Overview

The FEMA Qualification System (FQS) establishes the system for the qualification and certification of the FEMA workforce through experience, training, and demonstrated performance. This course provides an overview of FQS, orients FEMA employees to the processes and procedures of the system, and explains how FQS benefits the Agency, communities and disaster survivors, and FEMA employees.

By the end of this course, you will be able to:

- Explain how FQS benefits FEMA, communities impacted by incidents, and the FEMA workforce.
- Describe the processes and procedures of FQS.
- Describe how an employee progresses through FQS from trainee to qualified status.

Screen Features

- Click on the Course Menu button to access the menu listing all lessons of this course. You can select any of the lessons from this menu by simply clicking on the lesson title.
- Click on the Glossary button to look up key definitions and acronyms.
- Click on the Help button to review guidance and troubleshooting advice regarding navigating through the course.
- Track your progress by looking at the Progress bar at the top right of each screen. To see a numeric display, roll your mouse over the Progress bar area.
- Follow the bolded green instructions that appear on each screen in order to proceed to the next screen or complete a Knowledge Review or Activity.
- Click on the Back or the Next buttons at the top and bottom of screens to move backward or forward in the lesson. Note: If the Next button is dimmed, you must complete an activity before you can proceed in the lesson.

Navigating Using Your Keyboard

Use the “Tab” key to move forward through each screen’s navigation buttons and hyperlinks, or “Shift” + “Tab” to move backwards. A box surrounds the button that is currently selected.

Press “Enter” to select a navigation button or hyperlink.

Use the arrow keys to select answers for multiple-choice review questions or self-assessment checklists. Then tab to the “Submit” button and press “Enter” to complete a Knowledge Review or Self-Assessment.

Warning: Repeatedly pressing “Tab” beyond the number of selections on the screen may cause the keyboard to lock up. Use “Ctrl” + “Tab” to deselect an element or reset to the beginning of a screen’s navigation links (most often needed for screens with animations or media).

JAWS assistive technology users can press the Ctrl key to quiet the screen reader while the course audio plays.

Receiving Credit

To receive credit for this course, you must:

- **Complete all of the lessons.** Each lesson will take between 20 and 30 minutes to complete. It is important to allow enough time to complete the course in its entirety.
- Check the length of the lesson on the overview screen.
- **Remember... YOU MUST COMPLETE THE ENTIRE COURSE TO RECEIVE CREDIT.** If you have to leave the course, do not exit from the course or close your browser. If you exit from the course, you will need to start that lesson over again.
- **Pass the final exam.** The last screen provides instructions on how to complete the final exam.

Lesson Overview

You should now be able to navigate through this course. The rest of this lesson will explain the purpose, background, importance, and benefits of FQS.

Learning Objectives

By the end of this lesson, you will be able to:

- Define the purpose, background, and importance of FQS.
- Define incident management and incident support.
- Describe the relationship between force structure and FQS.
- Identify the benefits of FQS to members of the FEMA workforce.

What is FQS?

FQS qualifies and certifies the FEMA workforce through experience, training, and demonstrated performance. It applies to all incident management and incident support positions in:

Regional and National Incident Management Assistance Teams (IMATs).

- Joint Field Offices (JFOs).
- Regional Response Coordination Centers (RRCCs).
- National Response Coordination Center (NRCC).

FQS applies to all employees regardless of their position grade and appointment status including:

- Disaster assistance employees (DAEs.)
- Permanent full-time (PTF) employees.
- Cadre of on-call response and recovery employees (COREs).
- Temporary full-time (TFT) employees.

What is the Difference Between Incident Management and Incident Support?

FEMA's Incident Management and Support Keystone (IMSK) differentiates between incident management and incident support in the level and nature of response and recovery support provided to communities impacted by an incident.

Incident Management is the incident-level operation of the Federal role in emergency response, recovery, logistics, and mitigation. Responsibilities include:

- Direct control and employment of resources
- Management of incident offices and operations
- Management of the delivery of Federal assistance through all phases of emergency response

Incident Support is the coordination of all Federal resources that support emergency response, recovery, logistics, and mitigation at the Regional and National level. Responsibilities include:

- Deployment of national-level assets
- Support of national objectives
- Support of the program affected during the disaster
- Support of incident operations with resources, expertise, information, and guidance.

Why did FEMA Design FQS?

FEMA designed FQS in order to:

- Meet requirements outlined in the Post Katrina Management Reform Act of 2006 (PKEMRA).
- Ensure FEMA is consistent with the National Incident Management System (NIMS) and the Incident Command System (ICS).
- Ensure qualified workforce based on performance standards.
- Establish minimum, consistent, and fair qualification requirements for all workforce positions regardless of employment status.
- Strengthen the training and qualification standards for all workforce by implementing improvements based on analysis.
- Professionalize the workforce similar to other emergency management professions.
- Create a clear pathway for career development opportunities.
- Assist in the creation of analysis of the FEMA force structure.
- Improve Federal assistance to disaster-impacted families and communities.

What is the Background of FQS?

In designing FQS, FEMA determined a performance-based qualification system was most appropriate. FQS builds on previous agency credentialing efforts, such as previous draft Task Books, as a foundation to develop more robust capabilities within incident management and incident support Position Task Books (PTBs).

FQS:

- Follows best practices for performance-based qualification systems.
- Improves FEMA and interagency teamwork during incidents.
- Reflects employee knowledge and skills of ICS and programmatic expertise.

What is Force Structure?

The purpose of force structure is to have the appropriate number of personnel trained, exercised, and equipped to fulfill FEMA's disaster mission.

FEMA has evaluated its existing force structure requirements to establish minimum requirements for a trained and fully qualified workforce capable of responding to all-hazards incidents.

In its evaluation of force structure requirements, FEMA not only reviewed historic data on past incidents (such as size, scope, and staffing requirements), but also considered the types of incidents that were likely to occur in the future.

How Does FQS Relate to Force Structure?

Identifying force structure requirements help:

- Determine how many qualified individuals are needed for each FQS position.
- Minimize capability gaps.
- Ensure resources are effectively allocated to the highest priority needs.

FEMA does its best to accommodate its disaster workforce employees' preferences and interests when making FQS assignments. However, to meet its disaster mission, FEMA's FQS assignments must ultimately be guided by force structure needs and existing staffing gaps. Consequently, once you are qualified in a position, FEMA cannot guarantee you will be issued another PTB for advancement.

How Does FQS Benefit Me?

FEMA's disaster workforce is a valuable national asset. Your commitment as an incident management or support team member is invaluable to the Agency and our disaster survivors. The Nation depends on you during times of crisis and uncertainty to ensure we work together to achieve our Mission. You are the managers, and subject matter experts (SMEs), who bring technical and leadership capabilities to Federal disaster operations.

How was FQS Designed to Benefit Me?

FEMA designed FQS with you—the end user—in mind to:

- Recognize and build on your knowledge and experience.
- Certify the status you have earned through experience, performance, and training.
- Provide a pathway for your career development and goal achievement.
- Allow you to build your skills, experience, and confidence through training, education, and deployment opportunities.
- Ensure you have an opportunity to help survivors and communities recover.
- Ensure an even playing field with objective and transparent evaluations for all personnel.
- Establish minimum, consistent, and fair qualification requirements for all workforce positions regardless of employment status.

Lesson Summary

This lesson presented the following topics:

- Define the purpose, background, and importance of FQS.
- Define incident management and incident support.
- Describe the relationship between force structure and FQS.
- Identify the benefits of FQS to members of the FEMA workforce.

The next lesson presents information on FQS processes and procedures.