



United States Department of Agriculture



National Aviation Safety and Management Plan



2024–2025

Forest Service

March 2024

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References:

USDA Forest Service Strategic Plan FY 2022-2026 [USDA Forest Service Aviation Strategic Plan](#)

Digest

The table below provides a list of changes made to the 2022-2023 National Aviation Safety and Management Plan (NASMP). *Note:* This list is not inclusive of all changes made.

Section	Description of Change
Throughout	Updated dates to show 2024-2025.
Throughout	Updated links to FAM publications, NWCG publications and others as appropriate.
Throughout	Updated Regional Aviation Safety Officer title placing “Officer” replacing “Manager.”
Throughout	Updated “State, Private, and Tribal Forestry” in place of “State and Private Forestry.”
Section 1	Updated Forest Service Aviation Core Values. 1.2.
Section 1	Updated references to Strategic Plan, including Aviation Strategic Goals. 1.3.
Section 2	Updated Washington Headquarters Aviation Positions in paragraph 2.2.
Section 2	Updated Region Aviation Positions in paragraph 2.3
Section 2	Updated Forest Service membership in NIAC, 2.6.4.
Section 3	Updated contracting information 3.6 and 3.7 with more detail on Multiple Award Task Order Contract (MATOC) and Fire Chemical contracts.
Section 3	Added Forest Supervisor approval to Aviation Operations Plans in 3.3.7
Section 3	NASMP issued every two years and then supplemented by Regions/Stations and Forests with an aviation program and updated when substantial program changes are made.3.3.1.
Section 3	Updated Facilities Homeland Security Response Plan information in 3.3.4.
Section 3	Removed documents in 3.3.4 (Aviation Management Plans) now included as part of NASMP Supplements.
Section 3	Added Cooperator letters Box link in 3.11.
Section 3	Removed New Project section 3.19. Replaced with 3.18 New Project/Program/Issue request
Section 5	Included Red Book reference to emergency exemptions in 5.5.
Section 5	Expanded to clarify definition of passenger in 5.11 to include non- crewmember.
Section 5	Added Uncrewed Aerial System (UAS) title
Section 10	Replaced New Project/Program Appendix.
Section 10	Added Templates for Preseason Cooperator letter and Cooperator Approval letter

1.0 Aviation Management Plan

1.1 Purpose

The purpose of the Forest Service National Aviation Safety and Management Plan (NASMP) is to describe Washington Office Fire and Aviation Management (FAM) leader’s intent, authority, roles and responsibilities, programs, and activities. Additionally, it provides strategic and operational direction as well as operational guidance to each organizational level. While the information contained within this plan references policy, this document implements policy that may change throughout the year. Although this is a biennial national plan, it may receive annual supplements at the discretion of the Washington Office and individual Regions and Forests. The USDA Forest Service must endeavor to place the safety of employees above all else and ensure recognized hazards are mitigated. The Forest Service’s goal is to develop a culture that achieves and maintains a zero-fatality rate. Prior to conducting any work projects, all risks should be mitigated to the lowest acceptable level. Incorporating the Aviation Safety Management System Guide with a strong Quality Assurance (QA) component will improve the operating model for safety, efficiency, and effectiveness.

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1.2 Mission, Vision, and Core Values

Forest Service Aviation Mission. To provide safe, efficient, and coordinated aviation support for agency operations; to support partnership agreements; and to meet current and future needs through innovation and technology in order to sustain the health, diversity, and productivity of the Nation’s forests and grasslands.

Forest Service Aviation Vision. Lead the world in aviation, supporting natural resources and wildland firefighting.

Fire and Aviation Management Core Values. Safety, integrity, treating people with mutual respect, and land stewardship.

Forest Service Aviation Core Values. To succeed in our mission as a public service organization, we believe in:

- Boldness

Take action, be proactive.

- Collaboration

Work with interagency collaborators.

- Continuous Improvement

Be self-aware and strive to be better.

- Customer Commitment

Consider Community and Customer needs.

- Diversity

Seek diverse perspective.

- Inclusion

Provide equal access to opportunities and resources.

- Innovation

Stay abreast of latest trends.

- Integrity

Always do the right thing.

- Transparency

Be open and Honest.

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1.3 Leader's Intent

The Forest Service's aviation program provides aviation tools that safely and efficiently accomplish missions related to the task of managing national forests. Aircraft are dynamic and highly effective resources that can be both expensive and unforgiving when used carelessly. These resources require competent operational oversight; and appropriate utilization of aviation resources can drastically improve operational effectiveness and efficiency, while reducing cost and overall risk. Aviation management requires balanced and pragmatic consideration of multiple complex factors, including safety, the environment, costs, and mission goals.

Goal 1: Prevent Accidents Through Proactive Risk Management.

Goal 2: Take Care of Our People.

Goal 3: Organize for Success.

Goal 4: Explore, Evaluate, and Adopt Emerging Technology to Achieve the Aviation Mission More Effectively.

Refer to the [USDA Forest Service Aviation Strategic Plan](#) Fiscal Years 2022-2026 for additional information.

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1.4 Aviation Policy

Management has defined policy in FSM 5700 and FSH 5709.16 that conveys aviation safety expectations and objectives to employees. Aviation safety policy in [FSM 5700](#) and FSH 5709.16 addresses roles, responsibilities, and authorities regarding aviation safety at each organizational level.

This process starts with a clear value-based philosophy of what the organization and its business model should be and what it is about. The relevance of safety principles to Forest Service aviation management cannot be overstated. These principles permeate the aviation management business model and drive SMS program design.

As an organization, our commitment is to manage risk to the lowest acceptable level. This effort is an iterative process that requires diligence in the following principal areas:

- Develop and maintain a safety culture that recognizes the value of safety management systems.
- Clearly define the duties, responsibilities, and accountabilities for all employees.
- Provide all employees with adequate training and information to enhance performance.
- Comply with or exceed all regulatory and agency specific requirements.
- Proactively manage the risks associated with our operation.
- Ensure externally supplied services and materials meet or exceed all regulatory and agency specific requirements.
- Determine specific performance goals and consistently measure performance against those goals.
- Conduct Aviation Management Reviews, Quality Assurance, and Safety Assurance Reviews to improve performance.
- Encourage all employees to report errors and safety issues in the spirit of a just culture.
- To formalize risk management as a part of the planning process, risk assessments should follow the format found in the NWCG Standards for [Aviation Risk Management, PMS 530](#).

1.4.1 Quality Principles

Aviation leadership shall ensure that policies and procedures are consistent with Aviation Safety Management System requirements defined in this manual. Aviation Safety Management System quality management (assurance and control) processes shall be consistent with agency processes to improve the efficiency of the entire organization.

1. “Create a constancy of purpose.” Replace short-term reaction with long-term planning. This applies to action plans that make adjustments for weaknesses and deficiencies.
 - Avoid reactive fixes to organizational problems.
 - Define the problems of today and the future.
 - Allocate resources for long-term planning and plan for high quality services.
 - Constantly improve product and service.
2. “Adopt a new philosophy.” Meaningful change can only take place from within the organization. Change focus from operations output to quality service.
 - Quality costs less not more.
 - The call for major change comes from the top.
 - Stop waiting for direction from upper management and instead seek direction by evaluating field customer needs.
 - “Cease dependence on inspection to achieve quality.” Quality does not come from inspection alone. If quality is designed into the process, and standards are fully implemented, then variation is reduced, and there is less need to inspect operations for defects.
 - Inspections should be used to collect data for process control and to provide input to guide management decisions resulting in a reduction in potential errors.
 - Quality cannot be achieved through reactive identification and elimination of errors because it perpetuates the fly/crash/fix/fly cycle.

3. “Do not award business based on price tag alone.” Our actions should be focused on the detection of variations between vendors' performances to identify the best service providers. Contract language should be consistent and clear, so vendors understand our requirements.

- Price alone has no meaning: change focus from lowest cost to best value.
- Develop a longer-term relationship (contract) between the operation and vendors.

4. “Improve constantly the system of production and service.” Each new action must constantly strive to reduce variation and introduce mitigations that reduce mishaps and improve effectiveness.

- Quality starts with the intent of management, which is found in directives.
- Design Quality into the system with a fundamental focus on teamwork in design.
- Constantly maintain awareness and continue to reduce waste.
- Constant improvement of the system requires greater efforts than reactively responding to errors and issues.

1.4.2 Aviation Promotion Principles

Management must be committed to the implementation of SMS as their highest priority: to provide safety resources, to continuously improve safety practices, and to provide a framework for responsibility and accountability.

1. "Institute a program of education and self-improvement." Personnel need a thorough grounding in the principles, tools, and techniques of SMS. People must learn new ways of working together as teams and adopt new behaviors that support the new management philosophy.

- Educate for higher awareness in management and in customers.
- Develop team-building skills in employees.

2. "Break barriers among staff areas." Another idea central to QA is the concept of the 'internal customer,' which in our case may mean that management processes, antiquated policies, budget allocations, and hiring restrictions are the barriers to our success. We need to act to correct such inefficiencies.

- Promote team work to identify internal barriers and satisfy the internal customer.
- Know your inefficiencies as well as those of your suppliers and customers.

3. "Adopt and institute leadership." Leadership means designing the system around high standards, building a quality culture, and modeling behavior that exemplifies the values to support such a culture.

- Remove barriers to foster pride of workmanship and recognize positive outcomes.
- Leaders must know the work they manage and supervise.

4. "Take action to accomplish the transformation." Everyone in the organization must work together to facilitate change management. Forest Service Aviation Managers at all levels in the program should:

- Be proactive within the implementation of the change management process.
- Include a cross section of people to implement the change from the top to the bottom.

1.5 USDA Forest Service Aviation Strategic Plan

The USDA Forest Service Aviation Strategic Plan provides an outline of how the agency will use aviation assets to accomplish the Forest Service mission: “To sustain the health, diversity, and productivity of the Nation’s forests and grasslands for the benefit of present and future generations.” The Aviation Strategic Plan defines Aviation Management’s vision, mission, values and goals. To accomplish the Forest Service Aviation mission, “To provide safe, efficient, and coordinated aviation support for agency operations; to support partnership agreements, and to meet current and future needs through innovation and technology in order to sustain the health, diversity, and productivity of the Nation’s forests and grasslands,” Aviation goals are focused on safety, people, organization, and technologically advanced assets. These goals are characterized by specific objectives. Key Performance Indicators/Performance Measures are used to define how well the agency has advanced toward accomplishing each objective. Strategies define the method or approach taken to accomplish the objectives and are reflective of opportunities and threats. Program Management Plans will move the strategies forward and will be specific, measurable, attainable, relevant, and time-bound. Progress will be reported in our annual aviation program report to assist the Forest Service with monitoring performance.

The Aviation Strategic Plan is the umbrella document that provides strategic context for all aviation activities. The plan is not a stand-alone document, but rather it complements, enhances, and guides other plans and strategies. The plan is tiered to higher level documents such as the Forest Service Strategic Plan. It is the long- term framework for guiding future Forest Service Aviation activities. The Aviation Strategic Plan 2022-2026 is the current version.

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1.6 Authority

This plan fulfills the requirements outlined in FSM 5700. This plan sets the standard that will be aviation policy and has been developed to provide standardization and policy for aviation programs. While this document is Forest Service specific, it does incorporate interagency standards.

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1.7 General Policy

The policy of the Forest Service requires employees to follow the direction in aviation manuals, handbooks, standards, plans, and guides as listed in this chapter, under FSM 5706. Aviation operations require regulations, manuals, handbooks, standards, plans, guides, and checklists to execute and coordinate operations in a safe and effective manner. Where the terms “shall” and “must” are used in manuals, handbooks, or guides, compliance with those items is mandatory and not discretionary (FSM 1110.8 – Exhibit 01 Degree of Compliance or Restriction in Directives). These principles should guide employees; they are authoritative but require employees to apply their judgment to solve problems. [FSM 1110](#)

Forest Service aviation policy is approved by the Deputy Chief, State Private, and Tribal Forestry.

Regions, Forests, and units may create local policy supplements which are more restrictive only for responsibilities and administrative procedures. Changes to safety, operations, airworthiness, pilot standardization and aviation training policy shall be approved only at the national office level.

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1.8 All Employees

All employees involved in aviation activities are responsible for acquiring, knowing, and following aviation policy and regulations [FSM 5704](#). Forest Service employees shall fly only in approved government aircraft flown by an approved pilot(s) (refer to Government Aircraft definition in [FSM 5700](#)). Approvals are specified in FSM 5700 and 5710. Employees are empowered and expected to manage the risks of aviation operations and make reasonable and prudent decisions to accomplish the mission. Employees shall use an operational risk management process to evaluate the risk and hazards prior to every flight. Individuals will be held accountable for their decisions, which should be based on policy, principles, training, experience, and the given situation.

Forest Service employees have the responsibility to immediately report to the appropriate official any instances of unsafe equipment or aviation operations (FSM 5704).

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2.0 Aviation Management Organization

2.1 Organization

The Washington Office (WO) Fire and Aviation Management (FAM) is located at the USDA Forest Service National Headquarters in Washington D.C. and at the Washington Office in Boise, ID. The Forest Service has nine Regional Offices located throughout the United States.

- Region 1: Missoula, MT
- Region 2: Lakewood, CO
- Region 3: Albuquerque, NM
- Region 4: Ogden, UT
- Region 5: Vallejo, CA
- Region 6: Portland, OR
- Region 8: Atlanta, GA
- Region 9: Milwaukee, WI
- Region 10: Juneau, AK

There are five (5) Research Stations, one (1) Institute, and one (1) Laboratory.

Pacific Northwest Research Station: Portland, OR
Pacific Southwest Research Station: Berkeley, CA
Rocky Mountain Research Station: Ft. Collins, CO
Northern Research Station: Newtown Square, PA
Southern Research Station: Asheville, NC
Forest Products Laboratory: Madison, WI
International Institute of Tropical Forestry: San Juan, PR

Each Region has Forests or Stations located within their geographical location or area of responsibility.

2.2 Washington Office (WO) Headquarters Staff

2.2.1 Director, Fire and Aviation (FAM)

The Director, FAM, is responsible to the Deputy Chief for State, Private, and Tribal Forestry. The Director, FAM's responsibilities are located in the FSM 5704.

2.2.2 Deputy Director, Aviation and Operations

The Deputy Director, Aviation and Operations responsibilities are located in the FSM 5704.

2.2.3 Assistant Director, Aviation

The Assistant Director, Aviation responsibilities are located in the FSM 5704. The Assistant Director, Aviation provides national program direction, leadership, and management of the Forest Service aviation program, including coordination of aviation activities with other staffs, agencies, and groups, with an emphasis on aviation planning, budget, policy, operations, aircraft airworthiness, pilot standardization, aviation training and quality assurance. The Assistant Director, Aviation supervises:

- Aviation Business Operations Branch Chief
- Rotor-Wing Branch Chief
- Fixed-Wing Branch Chief
- Fire Chemicals Branch Chief
- Airworthiness Branch Chief
- Aviation Strategic Planning Branch Chief
- Aviation Safety Management Systems Branch Chief

2.2.4 Aviation Business Operations (ABO) Branch Chief

The Aviation Business Operations Branch Chief provides oversight, planning, coordination, and direction for aviation policy, budget, reporting, and analysis. The Aviation Business Branch also includes:

- Aviation Management Specialists (3)

2.2.5 Aviation Strategic Planning Branch Chief

The Aviation Strategic Planning Branch Chief develops aviation strategy for the Forest Service. The Strategic Planning Branch also includes:

- Aviation Management Specialist
- National Aviation Training Program Manager
- Assistant Strategic Planner/Integrator

2.2.6 Rotor-Wing Branch Chief

The Rotor-Wing Branch Chief provides oversight, coordination, and direction of Rotor-Wing and

UAS operations conducted by the National Office and Regions. The Branch Chief's responsibilities are located in the FSM 5704. The Rotor-Wing Branch also includes:

- National Helicopter Standardization Pilot Helicopter Inspector Pilots (3)
- National Helicopter Program Manager National Helicopter Operations Specialist
- National Assistant Helicopter Operations Specialist National Rappel Specialist
- National Aircraft Coordinator
- National Assistant Aircraft Coordinator
- National UAS Program Manager
- National UAS Specialist – Operations
- National UAS Specialist – Coordinator
- National UAS Specialist – Training
- National UAS Specialist – Data Management
- National UAS Specialist – Fleet Management
- National UAS Specialist – Aerial Ignition
- National UAS Specialist – Uncrewed Aerial Systems Pilot Standardization

2.2.7 Airworthiness Branch Chief

The Airworthiness Branch Chief provides leadership for agency aircraft and avionics inspector qualifications and training standards, aircraft and equipment standards development for all aircraft operated by the Forest Service, and aviation maintenance programs. The responsibilities of the Branch Chief are in FSM 5704 and the [FSH 5709.16 Ch40](#).

The Airworthiness Branch also includes:

- Aviation Safety Inspectors–Airworthiness (5)
- Aviation Safety Inspectors–Avionics (2)
- Aeronautical/Aerospace Engineer (1)
- Airworthiness Management Specialist/Analyst (1)

2.2.8 Fixed-Wing Branch Chief

The Fixed-Wing Branch Chief provides oversight, coordination, and direction of Fixed-Wing operations conducted by the National Office and Regions. The Branch Chief's responsibilities are located in the FSM 5704. The Fixed-Wing Operations Branch also includes:

- National Fixed-Wing Standardization Pilot
- Fixed-Wing Inspector Pilot
- National Airtanker Program Manager
- National Fixed-Wing Operations Specialist
- National Fixed-Wing Coordinator
- Assistant National Fixed-Wing Coordinator
- National Aerial Supervision Program Manager
- National Smokejumper Program Manager
- Aviation Program Specialist

2.2.9 Aviation Safety Management System (ASMS) Branch Chief

This position has the operational responsibility for development, implementation, and monitoring of the Aviation Safety Management System, including oversight of the following key SMS components:

- Policy
 - Coordinating Implementation of the National Aviation Safety Management Plan

- Ensuring ASMS Guide is current.
- Ensuring safety-related portions of the Federal Management Regulations (4CFR 102-33) are implemented.
- Ensuring adherence to FSM 5720 and FSH 5709.16 Ch 20.
- Establishing safety criteria and standards for National aviation contracts.
- Risk Management
 - Maintains a process for data collection and analysis as well as evaluation of aviation risk management and operational safety.
 - Ensures policies and procedures align with PMS 530.
- Safety Assurance
 - Investigating accidents and incidents-with-potential for accident prevention purposes
 - Completing SMS Audits and Reviews.
 - Reporting accidents and incidents to the Director, Fire and Aviation Management Staff Office and to Forest Service and Department Safety and Health officials. Determining the classification of mishaps as accidents, incidents with potential or incidents
 - Establishes safety criteria and standards for National aviation contracts.
 - Provides program oversight and direction for aviation education and training, including Interagency Aviation Training (IAT) and Lessons Learned
- Safety Promotion
 - Management and oversight of Aviation Safety Systems including; National Aviation Safety Center, National Aviation Safety Council, [SAFECOM](#) reporting system, aviation safety training and education.
 - Coordinates with the Aviation Branch Chiefs to assure aircraft and pilot standards incorporate latest lessons learned from incidents and accidents.

The Aviation Safety Management Systems Branch also includes:

- National Aviation Safety Officers (3).

2.2.10 Fire Chemicals Branch Chief

The Fire Chemicals Branch Chief is responsible for oversight, coordination, and direction for wildland fire chemicals used by the USDA Forest Service and serves as Chair of the NWCG Fire Chemicals Subcommittee.

2.2.11 National Forest Health Protection Aviation Manager

The National Forest Health Protection Aerial Survey Program Manager (NFHPASPM) is responsible for coordinating forest health aviation operations with the appropriate Regional Aviation Safety Manager, and Regional Aviation Officer.

2.3 Regional Office (RO) Staff

Regional level aviation organizations vary based on workload and overall organization. The Regional Aviation Officer and Regional Aviation Safety Manager are the two consistent positions.

2.3.1 Regional Forester

Regional Forester responsibilities are in FSM 5704.

2.3.2 Regional Aviation Officer (RAO)

The RAO is responsible for the oversight, coordination, and direction of aviation operations activities conducted by the Regional Office. The RAO responsibilities are in FSM 5704.

2.3.3 Regional Aviation Safety Officer (RASO)

The RASO reports to the Director or the Deputy Director and is responsible for implementation, fostering and promoting SMS, including Policy, Risk Management, Assurance and Promotion. Their responsibilities are in FSM 5704.

2.3.4 Regional Aviation Safety Inspector (ASI), Airworthiness / Regional Aviation Maintenance Program Manager

The ASI, Airworthiness is responsible for the maintenance and airworthiness program conducted by the Regional Office. The ASI responsibilities are located in FSH 5709.16, Chapter 40 and in the [Aircraft Inspector Guide \(AIG\)](#).

2.3.5 Regional Aviation Safety Inspectors – Avionics

The ASI, Avionics, performs regional aviation avionics program management, including planning, organizing, implementing, and controlling the aviation avionics program. The ASI accomplishes equipment, aircraft, and operator inspections and evaluation to support the National and Regional Forest Service.

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2.3.6 Regional Aviation Position

These include Fixed-Wing, Rotor-Wing Specialists and Uncrewed Aircraft Systems at the region level.

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2.4 Forest Staff

2.4.1 Line Officer

Line Officers who supervise employees that use aircraft to support agency programs (first and second level supervisors as determined by the agency) will meet the Interagency Aviation Training (IAT) requirements for supervisors. Knowledge required includes aviation safety, policy, risk management, and supervisory responsibilities. Line Officer responsibilities are in FSM 5700.

2.4.2 Forest Aviation Officer/Unit Aviation Officer (FAO/UAO)

The FAO/UAO manages the forest aviation program by providing technical and management direction of aviation resources to support Forest programs. The FAO/UAO responsibilities are located in the [FSM 5704.35b](#). Some forests employ “service-first” positions to fulfill the FAO/UAO responsibilities. On those units, the position is referred to as a UAO.

2.4.3 All Employees

All employees involved in aviation activities are responsible for acquiring, knowing, and following aviation policy and regulations (FSM 5704.). Forest Service employees shall fly only in approved government aircraft flown by an approved pilot(s) (refer to Government Aircraft definition in FSM 5700). Approvals are specified in FSM 5700 and 5710. Employees are empowered and expected to manage the risks of aviation operations and make reasonable and prudent decisions to accomplish the mission. Employees shall use an operational risk management process to evaluate the risk and hazards prior to every flight. Individuals will be held accountable for their decisions, which should be based on policy, principles, training, experience, and the given situation.

Forest Service employees have the responsibility to immediately report to the appropriate official any instances of unsafe equipment or aviation operations (5704).

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2.5 Additional Aviation Positions

2.5.1 Station Aviation Officer (SAO)

The SAO coordinates the station aviation activities with the appropriate FAO/UAO and/or the RAO. The SAO may provide general aviation oversight and technical advice under the guidance of the FAO/UAO or RAO. The SAO shall meet the Aviation Manager qualifications in [Interagency Aviation Training Guide](#).

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2.6 National Groups/Committees

2.6.1 Washington Office (WO) Aviation Management Team

The WO Aviation Management Team consists of all members of the WO Aviation staff, including the Assistant Director, Aviation; six Branch Chiefs; Program Managers, specialists, and supporting staff.

2.6.2 National Aviation Officer Council (NAOC)

The NAOC includes the AD, Aviation, WO Aviation Branch Chiefs, and Regional Aviation Officers. Helicopter Operations Specialist Committee (HOSC), Fixed Wing Program Committee (FWPC) and UAS Committee (UASC) as subsidiary committees to the NAOC.

2.6.3 National Aviation Safety Council (NASC)

The NASC is a chartered aviation safety counsel comprised of Regional Aviation Safety Officers, the

WO Aviation Safety Branch, FHP Aviation Program Manager, National Aviation Training Manager, Airspace Program Manager, an RAO rep, as well as all Branch Chief's designated as adjunct members.

2.6.4 Interagency Committee on Aviation Policy (ICAP)

This committee is chaired by the General Services Administration (GSA) and includes all federal agencies that own or hire aircraft. GSA established the committee at the direction of the President's Office of Management and Budget (OMB). GSA publishes regulatory policy for aircraft management in [41 Code of Federal Regulations \(CFR\) 102-33](#), "Management of Government Aircraft," and [41 CFR 300-3; 301-10; and 301-70](#), "Travel on Government Aircraft." [OMB Circular A-126, "Improving the Management and Use of Government Aircraft,"](#) provides the basic guidance for management of federal aviation programs and for travel on government aircraft."

2.6.5 National Interagency Aviation Committee (NIAC)

The National Interagency Aviation Committee ([NIAC](#)) is established to serve as a body of resident aviation experts, assisting NWCG with realizing opportunities for enhanced safety, effectiveness, and efficiency in aviation related operations, procedures, programs and coordination. NIAC is chartered under the Equipment and Technology Branch of NWCG.

Committee membership will reflect a mix of people who are knowledgeable in the subject area and who represent NWCG member agencies and organizations, including representation from Department of Interior (DOI) Office of Aviation Services (OAS).

The WO Branch Chiefs, Fixed-Wing, Rotor-Wing, and ASMS are designated by the WO Assistant Director, Aviation as Forest Service representatives to NIAC.

NIAC Sub Committees include:

- Aviation Risk Management Subcommittee
- Interagency Aerial Supervision Subcommittee
- Interagency Airspace Subcommittee
- Interagency Airtanker Base Subcommittee
 - Airtanker Base Directory Unit
 - Standards for Airtanker Base Operations Unit
 - Airtanker Base Training and Qualifications Unit
- Interagency Airtanker Board (IAB)
- Interagency Aviation Preparedness Task Team
- Interagency Aviation Strategic Plan Subcommittee
- Interagency Aviation Training Subcommittee (IAT)
- Interagency Cooperator and Pilot Standards Subcommittee
- Interagency Fire UAS Subcommittee (IFUASS)
- Single Engine Airtanker (SEAT) Board
- Smokejumper Aircraft Screening and Evaluation Subcommittee
- Interagency Helicopter Screening and Evaluation Subcommittee

- Interagency Helicopter Operations Subcommittee
 - Aerial Capture Eradication and Tagging Animals Unit (ACETA)
 - Interagency Aerial Ignition Unit
 - Standards for Helicopter Operations Unit
 - Interagency Helicopter Rappel Unit
 - Helicopter Short-Haul Unit

2.7 Program Overview

The Forest Service aviation program is comprised of national, regional and forest organizations. All agency-owned and operated (WCF) aircraft are registered to the Washington Office and hosted by regions. The WO applicable program is the lead for all agency contracted aircraft used by the interagency wildland firefighting community including Airtankers, smokejumper aircraft, Type 1, 2 and 3 helicopters, Aerial Supervision Module (ASM) and lead plane aircraft, infrared (IR) airplanes, aerial tactical supervision aircraft, water scoopers and other miscellaneous aircraft. These aircraft are acquired for the primary use of the Forest Service; however, they are available for use by other federal, state, and partners and cooperators as specified in agency policy, agreements and procedures. The majority of Forest Service aviation use is for wildland fire management and support. Other aviation uses include forest health protection, wildlife survey, law enforcement, and projects related to natural resource management.

Regions and Forests should include in their respective supplement an overview or link to an overview of their aviation organization.

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3.0 Administration

3.1 General

The administration section establishes management responsibilities, policies, and procedures for the administration of the aviation program in the Forest Service.

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3.2 Reporting and Documentation Requirements

The Forest Service is responsible for providing for the following:

- Responses to Department of Agriculture [Office of Inspector General \(OIG\)](#) audits.
- Responses to Congressional inquiries.

Meeting the requirement of the [Federal Requirement for Federal Aviation for Interactive Reporting System \(FAIRS\)](#).

- Approving and documenting senior executive travel in agency and agency-procured aircraft as required by OMB Circular A-126.
- Retaining contract management records for 6.5 years.
- Complying as applicable with existing records holds and freezes for all records.
- Responding to [Freedom of Information Act \(FOIA\)](#) requests – All aviation records are subject to Freedom of Information Requests.
- Maintain a Pilots Record Database per 14 CFR Part 111.1 for all agency pilots.
- Responses to Government Accountability Office audits.
- Report all aviation accidents to GSA per 41 CFR 102-33 Subpart E. Responses to National Transportation Safety Board recommendations/inquiries.

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3.3 Aviation Plans

Aviation Management Plans, with the exception of the National Aviation Safety and Management Plan (see section 3.3.1), must be approved by the appropriate line officer.

Aviation Operational Plans must be approved by the appropriate fire or aviation program manager. (FSM 5711). See Section 3.3.10 (Aviation Operations Plans) of this document.

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3.3.1 National Aviation Safety and Management Plan (NASMP)

The NASMP provides information regarding Forest Service aviation organization, responsibilities, administrative procedures, and policy and is intended to serve as an umbrella document to be issued nationally every two years and then supplemented by Regions/Stations and Forests with an aviation program and updated when substantial program changes are made. The Assistant Director, Aviation will maintain a current National Aviation Safety and Management Plan ([FSM 5711.2](#)). The Director, Fire and Aviation approves all national safety and aviation management plans and addendums/changes to these plans.

3.3.2 Regional and Station Homeland Security Response Plan

Each Region and Station must develop a Homeland Security Response Plan that details the security actions that each Region and Station will implement, based upon the Homeland Security threat level.

The Regional or Station Homeland Security Response Plan must be reviewed by the Fire and Aviation Management staff, HQ Washington Office ([FSH 5709.16, Chapter 30](#)). The Regional and Station Homeland Security Response Plans are approved by the Regional Forester.

3.3.3 Regional Aviation Mishap Response Plan

Regional Foresters have responsibility to ensure that every Forest Service unit that utilizes aircraft develops and annually updates, an Aviation Mishap Response Plan ([FSM 5710](#)). The Regional Aviation Mishap Response Plan is approved by the Regional Forester.

3.3.4 Facility Homeland Security Response Plan

Each aviation facility must develop a Facility Homeland Security Response Plan that is specific to that aviation facility and details the security actions the facility will take for each Homeland Security alert ([FSH 5709.16, 38.34](#)). The Facilities Homeland Security Response Plan is approved by the appropriate Forest Supervisor and updated when substantial program changes are made.

3.3.5 Forest and Station Aviation Mishap Response Plan

Forest Supervisors, Station Directors, District Rangers, and other officials designated with line authority have responsibility to ensure that every Forest Service unit that utilizes aircraft develops and annually updates, an aviation mishap response plan (FSM 5710).

3.3.6 Mission Aviation Safety Plans (MASP)

A MASP is submitted independent of a Forest or Station Aviation Management Plan. A MASP shall be developed and approved as required in the FSM 5700.

3.3.7 Aviation Operations Plans

Operations Plans shall be developed and updated annually by the program managers. Specific Operations Plans will be developed for National Programs. Regions may supplement national operations plans as necessary.

Aviation facility plans will be developed for national, regional, and forest aviation bases.

National Aviation Operations Plans will be approved by the Assistant Director, Aviation. Regional Aviation Operations Plans will be approved by RAOs. Forest/Unit Aviation Operations Plans will be approved by Forest Supervisors and Fire Management Officers or Fire Staff Officers.

Specific Operational Plans will be developed for national, regional, or local permanent and temporary:

Airbase Operations

Helicopter operations (Exclusive Use)

- Helitack
- Rappel
- Tank/Bucket Operations
- External Loads
- Night Air Operations
- Emergency Medical Short-Haul

Smokejumper Operations

Airtanker Operations

- Very Large Airtanker

- Large Airtanker
- Scoopers
- Single Engine Airtankers (SEATs) Scooper Operations

Aerial Operations

- Light Fixed-Wing operations
- Uncrewed Aircraft Systems Operations
- Law Enforcement & Investigation Operations Forest Health Protection (FHP)
- Research

National Infrared Operations Plan (NIROPS)

Natural Resource Management and Protection

These plans at a minimum should include:

- Authority
- Aircraft
- Aircraft Quantity
- Funding
- Contracts
- Sustainment
- Mission Requirements
- Facilities
- Safety Management Systems
- Staffing

National Operations Plans shall be approved by the Assistant Director, Aviation. Others by the commensurate regional and forest level line officer (FSM 5704).

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3.4 Land Use Policy for Aviation Activities

The regulation of aviation activities on or over Forest Service managed lands is solely dependent on Land Management Plans (LMP) direction and any applicable [Federal Aviation Regulations \(14 CFR\)](#). Temporary aviation operations on Forest Service lands may be restricted due to LMP direction. FAOs should coordinate with resource managers to identify areas of restriction when developing Operating Plans, Forest Aviation Management Plans, and Mission Aviation Safety Plans. When identified by resource managers, FAOs should implement any invasive species control measures for aviation activities. FAOs also coordinate reporting of any fire chemical aerial application in or near waterways.

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3.5 Budget

Budgeting is completed on a three-year cycle. Out year budget requests are submitted to Congress in the President’s Budget in February, six months prior to the fiscal year for which they were submitted. The budget request is then vetted separately through the U.S. Department of Agriculture and [Office of Management and Budget \(OMB\)](#). Finally, it is then aggregated with all other agency and program requests into the President’s Proposed Budget. The current year budget is finalized after congress passes an Appropriations Bill.

WO Branch Chiefs shall develop program/project budget proposals in early 2nd Quarter for submission to the BC, Aviation Business Operations upon request.

Aviation programs, aviation contracts, and national long-term fire-retardant contracts funded by the Washington Office shall be requested for commitment and obligation by the Assistant Director, Aviation unless otherwise designated. Approval of the -224 is by a FAM Budget Analyst. Aviation programs and aviation contracts that require requests for contract action (FS 6300-4) shall be approved by the Assistant Director Aviation unless otherwise designated.

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3.6 Contracting

All aircraft services contracts and aircraft acquisition/purchase contracts will be initiated at the regional level through the applicable Washington Office program manager and Branch Chief. All Forest Service aircraft contracts will use the acquisition process defined in the Aviation Program Acquisition Strategy referenced below.

Reference the FS Aviation Contracting Process Guide for contracting process and procedures. Aircraft are acquired through different types of contracts, Exclusive-Use (Ex-Use), Call-When-Needed (CWN), Indefinite Delivery/Indefinite Quantities (IDIQ), or Performance/End-Product. Exclusive-use contracts are generally used when the agency has a definite aircraft need for a specific period of time. Exclusive-use aircraft are guaranteed a minimum amount of use through a Mandatory Available Period (MAP). Daily availability is usually less expensive with exclusive-use contracts since the vendor is guaranteed a minimum amount of work.

Call-When-Needed contracts are a way for the agency to have ready access to a pool of aviation assets that meet a minimum standard, usually used for non-recurring missions or during periods of surge activity often related to wildland fire suppression. CWN contracts have been used to negotiate guaranteed MAPs with reduced rates from normal CWN rates to supplement exclusive use aircraft. The disadvantages are that the aircraft may not be available, the agency personnel and vendor personnel don’t have the same opportunity for crew cohesion that an exclusive-use crew has, and that daily availability rates are generally higher since the vendor has no guaranteed work.

Indefinite Delivery Indefinite Quantity (IDIQ) contracts are used to acquire supplies and/or services when the exact times and/or exact quantities of future deliveries are not known at the time of contract award. These contracts are also known as delivery order contracts (for supplies) or task order contracts (for services). These contracts generally limit the Government’s obligation under the contract to the minimum quantity specified in the contract; this minimum guarantee will be due to the contractor, regardless of whether we actually place orders for that quantity. The contracts provide for an indefinite quantity, within stated limits, of supplies or services during a fixed period. The

Government places orders for individual requirements. Quantity limits may be stated as number of units or as dollar values.

Multiple Award Task Order Contracts (MATOC) is an IDIQ contract used to acquire aircraft services when the exact times and/or exact order quantities are not known at the time of contract award. Contracts are awarded based on fixed unit prices and contractor technical capabilities, with task orders issued against the contract as the services are needed. Exclusive use items are issued a task order that further defines the need for that exclusive use location or aircraft. MATOCs are flexible enough to allow “on ramps” which allow new vendors to enter the main pool of vendors if they meet the requirements of the core contract. Vendors already on the MATOC are allowed to propose new or different aircraft during the contract period. These contracts limit the Government’s obligation under the contract to a minimum guarantee that is due to the contractor, regardless of whether orders are placed for that quantity. While the awarded Multiple Award Task Order Contracts are subject to protest, subsequent task orders under \$10 million cannot be protested.

MATOCs are currently being used for helicopter support services for all three types of aircraft, light fixed-wing, multi-engine airtankers, multi-engine water scoopers, and smokejumper aircraft. Most are ten year contracts with two five year performance periods when vendors can resubmit proposals to adjust prices or propose new aircraft. As other aircraft services or aviation related contracts are needed, a MATOC may be used.

Performance contracts are intended to procure services where the emphasis is on end product or end result. This approach to contracting focuses on defining what is desired, with levels of acceptability defined by performance levels. End-product service contracts are frequently awarded to accomplish field projects where the contractor supplies all personnel and equipment to provide a “service” or “end-product”. Many contractors may choose to utilize aircraft to meet the performance objectives of these contracts. The end product service contract should not be confused with “flight service” aircraft procurements as these two types of procurements are totally separate and distinct in the way that they are initiated and managed.

Fire Chemicals Contracts include:

- Cache Support: The procurement of class A foams and water enhancers to support the National Cache System will be procured through the Logistics Contracting Branch (LCB) of Incident Procurement Operations (IPO) within Procurement and Property Management (PPS).
- Regional Support: The procurement of class A foams and water enhancers to support the Regions will be through the local Field Procurement Operations contracting office for your Region.
- National Support: The procurement of long-term fire-retardant products will be through the LCB, FAM Aviation based on input from the Regions. The LCB will support the procurement of these requirements for PPS.

The Aviation Program Acquisition Strategy (Strategy) documents how the Aviation Program collectively plans, executes, and manages all aviation acquisitions (i.e., contracts or procurements) required to meet agency goals, objectives and performance measures. This Strategy is not a stand-alone document, but rather complements, enhances, and guides other plans and strategies. It is the long-term framework for guiding all future Forest Service aviation procurement activities. The Strategy will be updated in response to any changes in Forest Service strategic plans, goals, objectives, key performance indicators or Forest Service budget to ensure ongoing alignment. Aviation includes five different program areas; Helicopters, Large/Very Large Airtankers, Multi-engine Water Scooper Aircraft, Diverse Mission Fixed-Wing aircraft, and Uncrewed Aircraft Systems (UAS).

Refer to Section 3.10 for End Product Contracts.

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3.7 Aviation Contract Start/Modification/Extension

Aircraft contract start dates and MAP lengths are a coordinated decision between the National Office and Regions based on current funding available. Long-term fire-retardant contracts have MAP lengths that are coordinated with the Regions, the National Airtanker Program Manager, and the Fire Chemicals Branch Chief based on current funding available.

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3.8 Contractor Performance

All CWN and exclusive-use contractor performance will be documented in accordance with [FSH 6309.11](#). Contract Officer Representatives (CORs) are required to complete contractor evaluations annually using the [Contractor Performance Assessment Reporting System \(CPARS\)](#). It should be noted that [SAFECOMs](#) are non- punitive and are not used to document contractor performance or determine contract awards.

All contractor performance for the purchase of fire chemicals will be documented annually using the Contractor Performance Assessment Reporting System (CPARS). Contracting Officer’s Representatives are responsible for the completion of the annual ratings within the CPARS system. Disagreements on the ratings will be adjudicated by the Contracting Officer’s supervisor and in conjunction with the Contracting Office’s Representative.

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3.9 End Product Contracts

An end-product contract is intended to efficiently and effectively accomplish certain projects with no internal operational controls or specifications from the Forest Service aviation personnel. Certain aviation operations, such as aerial application of herbicides and insecticides, seed, fertilizer, prescribed burn projects, and some Burned Area Emergency Rehabilitation (BAER) projects may be administered in a more efficient and less expensive manner if contracted on an end-product basis, instead of through a Forest Service flight services contract. Refer to [FSH 5709.16 Ch. 10](#) for more information on end-product contracts.

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3.10 Aircraft Acquisition

Aircraft (including UAS) transfer, acquisition, and lease shall be approved by the Washington Office Director, Fire and Aviation Management (FAM). The Washington Office Aviation Management shall initiate all aircraft transfers, acquisitions, and leases using an Office of Management and Budget, OMB Circular A- 11, Business Case (Aviation Business Case).

An Integrated Project Team will be designated to develop Aviation Business Cases. Aviation Business Cases will be recommended by the Director, FAM and approved by the Deputy Chief, State, and Tribal Forestry.

- Additional review and approvals may be required by the agency and the Department of Agriculture prior to submission to the OMB.

Aviation Business Cases for all Forest Service aircraft must be formally revalidated every 5 years. The Forest Service recently published an Aviation Program Acquisition Strategy that will be operational as of 1/1/2021. This acquisition strategy emphasizes the application of basic program and project management techniques to manage major program acquisitions. Forest Service Aviation has five Aviation Programs that are major non-IT and mission critical programs. These are helicopters, large airtankers, multi-engine water scoopers, diverse mission fixed-wing aircraft, and uncrewed aircraft systems.

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3.11 Cooperator Aircraft

Cooperator aircraft operations are performed in accordance with policy in FSM 5710, FSH 5709.16 Chapters 36, 40, and 50 [Interagency Standards for Fire and Aviation Operations \(Red Book\)/ NWCG Standards](#), and the [National Interagency Mobilization Guide](#). Specific limitations are included in the specific cooperator letter (Template in Appendix and samples in <https://usfs.box.com/s/11t7vsqr4pp8ltp6n8x49v3kqscswoum>)

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3.12 Aircraft Administrative Use and Reporting

Utilize the Forest Service [Administrative Use of Aircraft Desk Reference Guide](#) to provide guidance and clarify the administrative use of aircraft.

The USDA Property Management Regulation (PMR) Chapter 110-33, supplements Federal Management Regulation 102-33 Management of Government Aircraft. Both documents are agency wide policy for the use of Government aircraft to accomplish official business. In coordination with the Office of Management and Budget Circular A-126, they restrict the operation of government aircraft to defined official purposes: restricting travel on such aircraft, requiring special review of

such travel on government aircraft by senior officials or non-federal travelers under certain circumstances, and codifies policies for reimbursement for the use of government aircraft. The transportation of passengers or cargo on Forest Service aircraft shall be limited in accordance with these Regulations.

[FSH 6509.33_301](#) Federal Travel Regulation requires that all employees have a travel authorization for any official travel. Each instance of administrative use of a Forest Service aircraft to transport passengers must be justified, documented, and approved, and as such, will comply with the requirements contained in FSM 5710

All documents pertaining to these flights must be maintained by Dispatch and on file for two years.

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3.13 Dispatching

3.13.1 General

All flights (other than scheduled commercial air carrier flights) will be arranged by qualified aviation dispatchers (ACDP) and/or appropriate aviation manager and approved at the appropriate management level.

3.13.2 Administrative Use Flight Requests

Reference the Forest Service [Administrative Use of Aircraft Desk Reference guide](#).

3.13.3 Mission Flight Requests

All flight requests for mission flights shall follow the National Mob Guide, Chapter 20.

3.13.4 Non-Incident Related Flight Requests

Follow local procedures.

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3.14 Forest Service Incident Business System (IBS) and Aviation Management Information Systems (AMIS)

Flight time, daily availability, and other authorized charges or deductions shall be recorded on a Flight Use Report in [Incident Business System \(IBS\)](#) (FSH 5709.16 Ch. 10). The data shall be entered and reviewed by the Government and the Contractor's Representative.

Working Capital Fund (WCF) aircraft use is entered into the [Aviation Management Information System \(AMIS\)](#) or Incident Business System (IBS) as applicable.

For Administrative Use flight reporting reference the Forest Service Administrative Use of Aircraft Desk Reference guide.

3.14.1 Office of Aviation Services (OAS) Aviation Information Reporting Support (AIRS)

All Department of Interior (DOI) contracted aircraft utilize the OAS Aviation Management System (AMS) web based flight reporting system. The AMS application is available at <https://ibc.doi.gov/acquisition/aviation/vendor/airs>.

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3.15 Working Capital Fund (WCF) (Fleet Aircraft)

All agency owned and operated WCF aircraft are FAA registered to USDA Forest Service, Boise Idaho. WCF aircraft are hosted by regions, but national use is the primary goal to increase use and lower overall costs.

The purpose of the WCF is to provide a sustainable funding mechanism for the operation and replacement of agency owned aircraft that support fire suppression and non-fire aviation activities. WCF aircraft are subject to the same regulations regarding capitalization and depreciation as other WCF non-expendable personal property.

The Working Capital Fund Accounting Operations Handbook, chapter 40 provides detail on the WCF Aircraft Program. The WCF Aircraft User Guide provides greater detail on how to accomplish day-to-day financial management, operations, and tasks. Additionally, for more information regarding WCF fleet aircraft, refer to FSM 5700.

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3.16 Federal Excess Personal Property (FEPP)

The FEPP program refers to Forest Service owned property that is on loan to State Foresters for the purpose of wildland and rural firefighting. Once acquired by the Forest Service, it is loaned to State and local cooperators for firefighting purposes. For policy guidance regarding FEPP Aircraft, refer to Chapter 40 of [FSH 3109.12](#) and Chapter 40 of the [FEPP Desk Guide](#).

The Regional Aviation Officer may:

- Review all State aviation operations plans for compliance with Forest Service and State excess property direction.
- Help establish minimum standards for pilot qualifications and maintenance for FEPP aircraft.
- Help coordinate and/or establish an approved source of parts for excess property aircraft, such as the Department of Defense (DOD).
- Review State security risk assessments and mitigation plans.
- Participates in the review of acquisition documents prior to transfer of aircraft.

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3.17 Program Reviews

Program reviews will be conducted in accordance with FSM 5710 and FSH 5709.16 Chapter 30.

3.18 Forest Supplement. Placeholder. New Project/Program/Issue Requests

For new projects/programs/Issues, use the Initial Aviation Proposal Template in Attachment 10.4. A Project/Program/Issue may include the following examples:

- Modification to Program: Changing or modifying a current Agency program: Night Flying, Short-haul Insertion for firefighting, etc.
- Additional Operational Capability: Adding a technique or capability to a program or an individual location: Single-skid, Toe-in, and Hover Exit/Entry Procedures (STEP), Rappel, UAS, etc.
- New Program: A new program is one that the Agency does not currently have or perform: Hoist, Fixed-wing ISR, etc.
- Policy Waiver: A change to policy for a specific reason or mitigation: Cold weather clothing for appropriate environments in lieu of ALSE requirements, etc.

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4.0 Aviation Safety Management Systems (ASMS)

4.1 General

Safety is the state in which the possibility of harm to persons or property damage is reduced to, and maintained at or below, an acceptable level through continuing processes of hazard identification and risk management.

ASMS is not a safety program; rather it is a system which aligns, assesses, and organizes an organization's existing safety processes around the concept of system safety. ASMS incorporates a proactive approach using hazard identification and risk management to achieve accident prevention.

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4.2 Aviation Safety Management System (ASMS)

The Federal Aviation Administration defines Safety Management System (ASMS) as the formal, top-down, organization-wide approach to managing safety risk and assuring the effectiveness of safety risk controls. It includes systematic procedures, practices, and policies for the management of safety risk. ASMS offers a complimentary solution based on structuring the existing rules and continuous review of the efficacy of those rules. Thus, the system ensures that guidance and regulation meet the original intent and that they have no unforeseen adverse side effects. ASMS can be considered as functioning like a filing system, which structures the organization's existing safety initiatives and provides a review process for how well those initiatives function. SMS is divided into four components: Policy, Risk Management, Assurance, and Promotion. Further

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4.3 Policy

ASMS is a critical element of management responsibility in determining the agency’s safety policy and ASMS also defines how the agency intends to manage safety as an organizational core function.

- Policy guides aviation safety philosophy, principles and practices.
- Policy provides framework for aviation plans (refer to section 3.3 of this document).
- Policy assists in the development of local standard operating procedures.
- Policy will foster and promote aviation principles and safety management systems within the Regions.

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4.4 Risk Management

To provide structure to control risk in operations, a formal system of hazard identification and safety risk management is essential. The risk management process is designed to manage risk to acceptable levels by the identification, assessment, and prioritization of risks followed by coordinated application of resources to minimize, monitor, and control the probability and/or impact of undesirable events.

The agency:

- Will define a process for risk acceptance that defines acceptable and unacceptable levels of safety risk; establishes descriptions for severity levels, and likelihood levels.
- Will define specific levels of management that can make safety risk acceptance decisions.
- Will define acceptable risk for hazards that will exist in the short-term while safety risk control/mitigation plans are developed and executed.
- Will establish feedback loops between assurance functions to evaluate the effectiveness of safety risk controls.

The necessary steps in the risk assessment process are outlined in the [NWCG Standards for Aviation Risk Management PMS 530](#).

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4.5 Assurance

The safety assurance component involves processes for quality control, mishap investigation, and program reviews.

- Provide aviation safety oversight and review through active field presence and encourage a reporting culture between management and aviation.
- Monitor established standards and procedures and make corrections as needed.
- Monitor accident and incident trends, and implement appropriate prevention action.
- Report accidents and incidents with potential in accordance with the local emergency response plan.
- Conduct accident and incident investigations.
- Provide guidance, coordination, and monitoring of safety evaluations conducted by the Regional aviation staff and Forest/Unit Aviation Officers.
- Provide assistance in aviation activities to ensure best practices and procedures are understood.
- Promote and provide corrective action on SAFECOM reports, develop trend analysis and communicate lessons learned.
- Review aviation accident and incident reports and follow-up on action items.

QA techniques can be used to provide a structured process for achieving objectives. Forest Service efforts to date have concentrated on the development and implementation of comprehensive policy revision, risk management processes, SMS promotion and training.

All effort should be made to focus corrective action as specifically as possible.

4.5.1 Aviation Safety and Technical Assistance Team (ASTAT)

During increased levels of wildland fire activity, an Aviation Safety and Technical Assistance Team assures safety by providing (1) on-the-spot safety and technical assistance to aviation operations and (2) a conduit through which the field can communicate to Fire and Aviation Management. When conducting reviews, an ASTAT team should follow direction as stated in:

- Forest Service Aviation Safety Management System Guide
- Interagency Standards for Fire and Fire Aviation Operations

4.5.2 Aviation Safety Communiqué–SAFECOM

SAFECOMs fulfill the Aviation Mishap Information System (AMIS) requirements for aviation mishap reporting for the Forest Service. The SAFECOM reports any condition, observance, act, maintenance problem, or circumstance which has the potential to cause an aviation-related mishap. The SAFECOM system is not intended for initiating punitive actions. Submitting a SAFECOM is not a substitute for “on-the-spot” correction(s) to a safety concern. It is a tool used to identify, document, track and correct safety related issues. This form is located on the SAFECOM web page, Interagency SAFECOM System. All personnel involved in aviation activities are encouraged to submit SAFECOMs when they feel such action is warranted.

4.5.3 Aircraft Accident Investigation Process

The National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) is an independent federal agency responsible for

investigating all civil and public aviation accidents. The Forest Service may be a party to an NTSB investigation and must follow all instructions from the NTSB Investigator in Charge. To ensure a thorough investigation that complies with NTSB statute, the Forest Service Aviation Investigation Team utilizes the Aircraft Mishap Investigation Guide (AMIG) to conduct the agency safety investigation. The aviation investigation team completes an Aviation Mishap Investigation Report for the Branch Chief, Aviation Safety Management System. This report is briefed and vetted through aviation subject matter experts, and aviation safety improvement recommendations are developed. The Forest Service may also receive recommendations from the NTSB. The process for managing recommendations is prescribed in the AMIG.

4.5.4 Forest Service Strategic Risk Assessment Close-Out Process

Once the Strategic Risk Assessment (SRA) has been completed, the Assistant Director, Aviation will deliver the final product to the Director, Fire and Aviation Management. The Director will provide direction for the risk assessment report to be reviewed approximately one year after the SRA has been completed. The Strategic Risk Assessment Close-out Steering Committee (SRACO) will establish a Subject Matter Expert (SME) group of no more than five SMEs. The SME group will be given direction, parameters and timelines to review the report; identify mitigations that are one time effort and those that are on-going; assess individual mitigation's effectiveness and implementation cost and to develop a Quality Assurance (QA) checklist for long-range monitoring. The SME group will provide the Strategic Risk Assessment Close-out Steering Committee with these products in the established timelines. The Strategic Risk Assessment Close-out Steering Committee will review and either accepts the SME products or a back-and-forth coordination will begin to develop acceptable products. Once the Strategic Risk Assessment Close-out Steering Committee agrees on an acceptable QA checklist, the Strategic Risk Assessment Close-out Steering Committee will provide the Assistant Director, Aviation and Assistant Director, Risk Management with documentation on the completion of the project. The Assistant Directors will deliver the final product to the Director of Fire and Aviation for Deputy Chief, State, Private, and Tribal Forestry signature. Strategic Risk Assessments should be closed out and formally completed no later than one year from the date of tasking to the Strategic Risk Assessment Close-out Steering Committee.

4.5.5 Mission Aviation Safety Planning (MASP)

Accident prevention is paramount when planning individual aviation operations. MASPs are not required for incident aviation operations or administrative use flights.

Prior to commencing non-emergency aircraft operations, or aircraft operations outside the scope of an approved training program, the Regional Foresters, Forest Supervisors, and Station Directors shall develop and document a Project Aviation Plan including a MASP that will be reviewed by the RAO (FSM 5700). It is strongly recommended that an aviation safety officer be included in the review process. An appropriate line officer shall approve all Aviation Plans per direction in FSM 5700.

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4.6 Promotion

The organization must promote safety as a core value with practices that support a positive safety culture. Safety promotion can be accomplished through safety awards, education, and communication.

- Training
- Communication
- Safety Alerts, Bulletins, and Lessons Learned
- Lessons Learned Website
- Reporting and Feedback
- Safety and Mishap Information
- Safety Awards

The desired positive Safety Culture is informed, flexible, learning, just and is a reporting culture that captures employee operational knowledge and experience. The end result of this cultural shift is to achieve the status of a High Reliability Organization (HRO).

4.6.1 Human Factors

Human error is the single area, which if possible, to eliminate or reduce, would provide the greatest benefit in accident prevention. Human behavior is so complex that it is unrealistic to think that human error can be eliminated. When fully implemented, SMS provides and promotes a positive Safety Culture which can reduce the impact of human error.

4.6.2 Aviation Safety Awards Program

Aviation Safety Awards are a positive part of the aviation program and are provided to all levels with the Forest Service organization. National awards are given following the guidelines in FSM 5720 for pilots and employees.

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5.0 Aviation Operations

5.1 General

It is the responsibility of each employee, cooperator, and contractor to conduct aviation operations that have been approved by management, planned properly, utilizes the correct equipment, use qualified personnel, and ensure that the risk has been mitigated to an acceptable level.

Forest Service employees are often challenged by working in very high-risk and dynamic environments that are not always predictable. This responsibility can only be realized through participation of every employee.

Safety is the first priority and leadership at all levels must foster a culture that encourages employees to communicate unsafe conditions, policies, or acts that could lead to accidents without fear of reprisal.

The four components of SMS (Policy, Risk Management, Assurance, and Promotion) are critical to the success of safe operations.

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5.2 Manuals, Handbooks, and Guides

5.2.1 Manuals

Aeronautical Information Manual (AIM): Issued by the Federal Aviation Administration; copies are available from the Government Printing Office and commercial sources. Also available at: https://www.faa.gov/air_traffic/publications/

Rotorcraft Flight Manual (RFM): The original equipment manufacturer's manual is available in each aircraft operated by the agency.

Airplane Flight Manual (AFM): The original equipment manufacturer's manual is available in each aircraft operated by the agency.

Federal Aviation Administration Commercial Pilot Practical Testing Standards (PTS) Rotorcraft or Airplane as appropriate. Available at: https://www.faa.gov/training_testing/testing/test_standards/

5.2.2 Handbooks

FSH 5309.11 – Law Enforcement Handbook, Chapter 50 – Actions and Procedures. This handbook is available at: https://fs.usda.gov/FSI_Directives/5309.11_Ch. 50.doc.

FSH 5709.16 Aviation Management and Operations Handbook. Available at: https://www.fs.usda.gov/im/directives/fsh/5709.16/5709.16%20ch.30_mgfinal.docx

FSH 6709.11 Health and Safety Code Handbook: Available at: https://www.fs.usda.gov/t-d/pubs/ppt_html/htm06672C02/document/6709.12.pdf

Military Use Handbook: Available at: https://www.nifc.gov/sites/default/files/document-media/Military_Use_Handbook.pdf

5.2.3 Forest Service Guides

The most recent Forest Service approved version of the following guides supersedes all previous versions. Forest Service National Guides shall be approved in writing by the Deputy Chief, State, Private, and Tribal Forestry. Aviation Mishap Investigation Guide: This is available upon request from the WO ASMS Branch.

- Aircraft Inspector Guide: Available from the Washington Office agency aviation staff. Available at: https://www.fs.usda.gov/sites/default/files/2020-12/18-278212_aig_final_pre_policy_rev_6_28_2018_spf_letter_reduced.pdf
- Air Card Guide: Available from the Washington Office agency aviation staff.
- Aviation Safety Management System Guide: <https://www.fs.usda.gov/managing-land/fire/aviation/publications>
- Federal Excess Personal Property (FEPP) Desk Reference Guide: <https://www.fs.usda.gov/managing-land/fire/fepp>

- Fire and Aviation Qualifications Guide: <http://www.fs.fed.us/fire/publications/fsfaqg/fsfaqg.pdf>.
- Helicopter Flight Evaluation Guide (HFEG): Available from the Washington Office agency aviation staff.
- National Rappel Operations Guide: <https://www.fs.usda.gov/managing-land/fire/aviation/publications>
- Professional Helicopter Pilot Guide: <https://www.fs.usda.gov/managing-land/fire/aviation/publications>
- Security Standard Requirements Guide: Available from aviation management staff, Washington Office, 1400 Independence Avenue SW, Washington, DC 20250.
- Special Mission Airworthiness Assurance Guide: [fs_special_mission_airworthiness_assurance_guide_revision2_1_1_6_2015.pdf \(usda.gov\)](https://www.fs.usda.gov/aviation/airworthiness/assurancespecialmission/1_6_2015.pdf)
- WCF Aircraft User Guide: <https://www.fs.usda.gov/managing-land/fire/aviation/publications>

5.2.4 Forest Service Aviation Operations Plans

The most recent Forest Service approved version of the following operational plans supersedes all previous versions.

- Emergency Medical Short-Haul Operations Plan
- Modular Airborne Firefighting System (MAFFS) Operating Plan
- National Night Air Operations Plan
- Water Scooper Aircraft Operating Plan
- Airtanker Operations Plan
- Aircraft Coordination Operations Plan
- Forest Service Standards for Uncrewed Aircraft Systems Operations
- Helicopter Operations Plan

5.2.5 Interagency Aviation Operational Guides

The most recent Forest Service approved version of the following guides supersedes all previous versions. Interagency Guides utilized by the Forest Service shall be approved in writing by the Deputy Chief, State, Private, and Tribal Forestry. For the following list of publications visit

<https://www.nwcg.gov/nwcg-publication-catalog>

- NWCG Standards for Interagency Cooperator Type 2 and 3 Helicopters
- NWCG Standards for Aerial Ignition
- NWCG Standards for Fire Unmanned Aircraft Systems Operations
- NWCG Standards for Aerial Supervision

- NWCG Standards for Airspace Coordination
- NWCG Standards for Airtanker Base Operations
- Interagency Aviation Life Support Equipment (ALSE) Handbook
- NWCG Aviation Mishap Response Guide
- Interagency Aviation Training Guide (IAT)
- NWCG Standards for Aviation Transport of Hazardous Materials Guide
- NWCG Standards for Helicopter Operations
- Interagency Helicopter Pilot Practical Test Standards:
- National Rappel Operations Guide (NROG)
- Interagency Smokejumper Pilots Operations Guide (ISPOG)
- Interagency Smokejumper Operations Guide (SMOG)
- Interagency Standards for Fire and Fire Aviation Operations | National Interagency Fire Center
- Incident Response Pocket Guide
- National Interagency Mobilization Guide
- NWCG Standards for Fire Unmanned Aircraft Systems Operations
- NWCG Standards for Aviation Risk Management

5.2.6 Other References

[UAS Desk Guide](#)

[NWCG Airtanker Base Directory PMS 503](#)

5.3 Public/Civil Aircraft Operations

Forest Service aviation activities include both “civil” and “public” operations. Civil aircraft operations shall comply with [FSM 5703.41](#). Public aircraft operations shall comply with [FSM 5703.42](#).

5.3.1 Civil Aircraft

All Forest Service aircraft operations are civil unless specifically declared public. All aircraft other than public aircraft are considered civil aircraft ([FAR1.1](#)).

5.3.2 Public Aircraft

The definition for Public Aircraft can be found in the [FSM 5705](#). The Forest Service will comply with all 14 Code of Federal Regulations (14 CFR) Federal Aviation Regulations in the operation and maintenance of public aircraft with the few exceptions outlined in [FSH 5709.16 Ch 30](#).

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5.4 Employees on Unapproved Aircraft

All agency employees will comply with Forest Service aviation policies when performing agency employment-related duties on board any organization's aircraft and/or aircraft operated under any other organization's operational control. Employees shall be mindful of policy and the appropriate approval level for any deviation from policy. These policies include but are not limited to: approved aircraft and pilot (carding or letter of approval), MASP, flight following, PPE, and appropriate management.

5.5 Aviation Emergency Response

In unusual circumstances, Forest Service personnel may perform a flight in non-approved aircraft with non-approved pilots (FSM 5704.1). The Regional Forester may authorize this flight based on advisement and recommendation from the Regional Aviation Officer and counsel from the Regional Aviation Safety Officer. Under emergency circumstances, where human life is immediately at risk by wildland fire on lands under Federal protection, a Federal Line Officer can approve the use of non-federally approved aircraft (FSH 5709.16, chapter 30.3). This exemption must only take place when sufficient federal firefighting aircraft are not readily available to meet the emergency need. Federal Line Officers are encouraged to consult with their agency aviation management personnel to aid in decision-making. The Interagency Standards for Fire and Fire Aviation Operations (Red Book) Chapter 16

provides guidance.

A Flight Risk Assessment Tool (FRAT) shall be completed and approved, if applicable, by the appropriate Line Officer prior to the flight(s). The General Assessment of Risk (GAR) Model Risk Assessment, outlined in PMS 530, is an example of an appropriate flight risk assessment tool to utilize in an aviation emergency response situation.

These flights shall be documented on form FS-5700-14, SAFECOM: Aviation Safety Communiqué.

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5.6 Flight Planning

Flight Planning Information is available in the [National Interagency Mobilization Guide](#).

5.7 Flight Following

Flight following guidance is available in the National Interagency Mobilization Guide. Chapter 50 and FSH 5709.16 Chapter 30.

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5.8 Radio Frequency Management/Communications

Do not use any frequency without proper authorization from the authorized radio frequency management personnel at the local, state, regional or national level.

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5.9 Latitude and Longitude Formats

The aviation standard for communicating latitude and longitude shall be: Degrees Decimal Minutes (also known as Degrees Minutes, Decimal Minutes, or Degrees Minutes Tenths) i.e., 48°36.12'N 114°08.12'W. Ground units must ensure their GPS is set to Degrees Decimal Minutes before providing coordinates to aircraft. The TFR Request form is found in <https://www.nifc.gov/sites/default/files/document-media/tfr.pdf>

Additional information is available in the NWCG Standards for Airspace Coordination, PMS 520. There is also a format specific to the Interagency National Mobilization Guide, for requesting TFRs, which is an exception to the above

formats. An example would be 483612N/1140812W (uses no punctuation at all with degrees, minutes and seconds).

5.10 Mishap Response

Forest Service local units shall establish procedures in an Emergency Response Plan to, FSM 5704:

- Coordinate and plan the response to aviation accidents and incidents; and should
- Conduct periodic exercises of mishap response plans.

The Emergency Response Plan is specific to each unit and shall be available in all dispatch offices. The Emergency Response Plan must be updated annually at a minimum. Regional / Program Aviation Safety Officer should be notified immediately of any aviation mishaps or NTSB reportable incident.

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5.11 Passengers

A passenger is any person aboard an aircraft, when traveling on official Forest Service business, who does not perform the function of a flight crewmember, air crewmember, or non-crewmember.

Passengers will:

- Use appropriate personal protective equipment for the type of flights being conducted
- Report aviation incidents, operations deviating from policy, potential incidents
- Ensure personal safety as well as safety for others involved in the flight.

5.11.1 Agency Employees off Duty

Federal employees cannot utilize annual leave/Leave without Pay (LWOP) or “volunteer” in order to circumvent agency policy. If any aspect of the employee’s activity is related to their official duties, they are conducting agency business, regardless of their pay or leave status. Refer to the regulations regarding off-duty activities in accordance with the Standards of Ethical Conduct for Employees of the Executive Branch ([5 CFR Part 2635.802-803](#)).

5.11.2 Volunteers

Volunteers when traveling on official business are official passengers, within the terms of [FSH 6509.33, Federal Travel Regulations 301-1](#). A [Day Trip Authorization \(FS-5700-12\)](#) shall be filled out for each flight listing each volunteer. During fire mission flights, the Incident Commander with Delegation of Authority from the unit line officer or the local line officer is the appropriate level of approval.

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5.12 Transportation of Hazardous Materials

Transportation of hazardous materials aboard agency contracted aircraft must meet the requirements set forth in the NWCG Standards for Aviation Transport of Hazardous Materials Guide.

Hazardous materials transported aboard commercial aircraft fall under [49 CFR Part 175](#).

When hazardous materials are transported on agency aircraft, the most current special permit authorization issued by the Department of Transportation directly to the USDA Forest Service ([DOT SP-9198](#)) shall be onboard each aircraft.

5.13 Invasive Species Control

In order to prevent the spread of aquatic invasive species, it is important that aviation personnel recognize how aviation operations can prevent the transport of these species. The NWCG Guide to Preventing Aquatic Invasive Species Transport by Wildland Fire Operations <http://www.nwcg.gov/publications> provides operational guidelines, best management practices, and equipment cleaning guidance to minimize the spread of aquatic invasive species.

5.14 Fire Chemicals and Aerial Application Policy for Areas Near Waterways

For operational guidelines on use of fire chemicals, refer to [Implementation Guide for Aerial Application of Fire Retardants](#). For aerial application of pesticides near “waters of the United States”, refer to Environmental Protection Agency’s National Pesticide Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) [National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System \(NPDES\) | US EPA](#) consult your USFS Regional Pesticide Coordinator for NPDES permitting information.

Interagency policy only allows the use of a product that is qualified and approved for intended use. A Qualified Products List (QPL) is published for each wildland fire chemical type and maintained on the Wildland Fire Chemical Systems (WFCS) web site.: [Wildland Fire Chemical Systems | US Forest Service \(usda.gov\)](#).

Personnel involved in handling, mixing, and applying chemicals or solutions shall be trained in proper safe handling procedures and use the personal protective equipment recommend on the product label and Safety Data Sheet (SDS). The SDSs for all approved fire chemicals can be found on

the WFSC web site. SDSs for pesticides or other materials must be available on site for duration of project. One resource for searching SDSs is <http://www.msdsonline.com/msds-search/>.

Airtanker bases shall have appropriate spill containment facilities (and equipment) in place.

Products must be blended or mixed at the proper ratio by approved methods prior to being loaded into the aircraft. Inaccurate mixing of fire chemicals may negate the suppressant or retarding properties, which is not cost effective and may be a safety factor.

Avoid aerial application of wildland fire chemicals within 300 feet of waterways. Report all retardant misapplications using the report tools located on the USFS Retardant Environment Impact Statement (EIS) website: [Aerial Application of Fire Retardant](#).

5.14.1 Retardant Avoidance Areas

Aerial retardant drops are not allowed in mapped avoidance areas for certain threatened, endangered, proposed, candidate or sensitive (TEPCS) species or in waterways. This national direction is mandatory and would be implemented except in cases where human life or public safety is threatened and retardant use within avoidance areas could be reasonably expected to alleviate that threat ([Implementation Guide for Aerial Application of Fire Retardant](#)).

5.15 Search and Rescue (SAR)

Refer to the [FSH 5709.16 Ch 30](#) and [FSM 1590](#) regarding search and rescue. Search and rescue operations could lead to actions in conflict with policy. Refer to section 5.5 in this Plan for Aviation Emergency Response.

5.16 Airtanker Operations

Airtankers are a national resource and their primary mission is initial attack. Geographic Areas will make them available for wildland fire assignments when ordered by the National Interagency Coordination Center. In addition to federally contracted airtankers, MAFFS (military) and cooperator aircraft may be utilized to supplement the federal fleet through established agreements.

5.17 Airtanker Bases

Airtanker bases will be staffed, and procedures and operations will be executed, in accordance with the [NWCG Standards for Airtanker Base Operations](#).

5.18 Aerial Supervision Operations

Lead planes (LP) and Aerial Supervision Modules (ASM) are national resources as defined by the National Interagency Mobilization Guide.

Air Tactical Group Supervisor (ATGS) aircraft, LPs, ASMs and Helicopter Coordinators (HLCO) conduct operations in accordance with the NWCG Standards for Aerial Supervision and the policies and procedures prescribed in the Interagency Standards for Fire and Fire Aviation Operations Handbook. Dispatch and ordering are accomplished in accordance with the Geographic Area and National Mobilization Guides. Personnel shall be fully qualified as an ATGS to perform air tactical supervision.

Lead planes and ASM will be considered interchangeable in terms of the lead plane mission. An ATGS should be ordered if there is a need for incident air tactical supervision.

Lead plane pilot trainees will be given priority over all ASM flights/ missions.

The Aerial Supervision Program is managed by the WO Aerial Supervision Program Manager.

5.18.1 Aerial Supervision Personnel

Roles and responsibilities of Aerial Supervision Personnel can be found in [NWCG Standards of Aerial Supervision, PMS 505](#).

5.18.2 ASM

ASM roles and responsibilities can be found in NWCG Standards of Aerial Supervision.

5.18.3 Lead Plane

Lead plane roles and responsibilities can be found in NWCG Standards of Aerial Supervision.

5.18.4 HLCO

The HLCO roles and responsibilities can be found in NWCG Standards of Aerial Supervision.

5.19 Helicopter Operations

All helicopter operations shall be accomplished in accordance with the NWCG Standards for Helicopter Operations, Forest Service Standards for Helicopter Operations, the NWCG Standards for Aerial Ignition and other applicable Forest Service or interagency helicopter operations plans, standards and guides, and the aircraft contract.

5.20 Aerial Ignition Operations

Aerial Ignition operations shall be accomplished in accordance with the NWCG Standards for Aerial Ignition.

5.21 Multi-Engine Water Scooper Operations

Multi-engine (ME) Water scoopers are a national resource and should be managed and used much like heavy helicopters. Operations will be in compliance with the NWCG Standards for Water Scooping Operations.

5.22 Smokejumper Operations

Smokejumper dispatch and ordering are accomplished in accordance with the Interagency Smokejumper Operations Guide, Geographic and National Mobilization Guides and Interagency Smokejumper Operations Guide (ISMOG).

5.22.1 Smokejumper Personnel

Smokejumpers: Smokejumper operations are performed according to the and the policies and procedures prescribed in the Interagency Standards for Fire and Aviation Operations Handbook and Interagency Smokejumper Pilot Operations Guide (ISPOG).

Smokejumper Parachute System: Forest Service parachute operations are currently transitioning to a ram-air parachute system. Forest Service ram-air parachute operations will be performed in accordance with the Ram Air Parachute System Change Management and Implementation Plan (CMIP).

5.22.2 Smokejumper Aircraft

Smokejumper aircraft are evaluated and approved by the Smokejumper Aircraft Screening and Evaluation Subcommittee (SASES). The SASES will provide guidance for standardization when evaluating new smokejumper aircraft and related accessories.

5.23 Law Enforcement and Investigations (LEI) Aviation Activities.

The LEI personnel shall follow the FSH 5309.11, Chapter 50, FSM 5700, and FSH 5709.16 for all aviation operations.

Local LEI personnel that are required to utilize aircraft to support aviation operations should discuss all aspects of the operation with the FAO or UAO well in advance of operations.

All transport of hazardous materials during LEI operations shall follow the NWCG Standards for Aviation Transport of Hazardous Material.

5.23.1 Special Law Enforcement Aviation Projects

Occasionally there are “special” law enforcement aviation missions that are not covered in a standard MASP. If any proposed flights are not covered by an appropriately established aviation plan, then a MASP will be prepared. This includes the use of aviation resources for Flight Service Contracts. The responsible individual will prepare a MASP and submit the plan for review and approval. All LEI operations will have a MASP prior to commencing operations. Line officers shall be informed of law enforcement and investigator non-covert aviation activities within their area of responsibility.

5.23.2 LEI Training

LEI personnel involved with aviation activities shall receive and be current in required aviation training (NWCG and/or IAT) commensurate with the aviation position they will fill, prior to any aviation operations.

5.23.3 Civil Air Patrol (CAP)

A new Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) is being developed between the USFS and CAP. It will restrict use of CAP to LEI only and limit the make and model of aircraft that can be used. Regions will approve CAP pilots and aircraft based on the MOA. LEI personnel will utilize aircraft and pilots that have been approved for use by a letter of approval from the Regional Aviation officer.

Not all CAP pilots and/or aircraft will be approved for use. Aircraft contracted for fire/resource operations are not mandated to participate in LEI operations. Aircraft companies must agree to participate in LEI operations. Missions outside of the scope of the contract require a contract modification.

Certain LEI operations could lead to actions in conflict with Forest Service policy; reference Section 5.5 Aviation Emergency Response.

5.23.4 Department of Homeland Security (DHS)

The Chief has issued a letter of Authorization for Law Enforcement and Investigations Employees to Fly on Department of Justice (DOJ) and Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Aircraft while performing joint law enforcement operations and missions coordinated with DHS agencies.

5.23.5 LEI Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) During Tactical Operations

Follow the direction on the use of personal protective equipment (PPE) described in the NWCG Standards for Helicopter Operations. Approved PPE must be prescribed by the incident commander, operations supervisor, or their designee per FSM 5300. Law enforcement personnel are authorized to wear the following for special tactical operations, for emergency flights, or on flights that are short in duration:

- Battlefield dress uniform (BDU),
- Forest Service uniform, or
- Approved utility uniform.

5.23.6 Emergency Operations

The LEI personnel shall follow the FSH 5309.11, Chapter 52.15 – Emergency Operations

5.24 (UAS)

All utilization of UAS must follow the requirements listed within the Forest Service Standards for UAS Operations. UAS operating in the national airspace system are considered by the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) as aircraft, regardless of size; therefore, UAS executing FS missions are required to adhere to FAA requirements and Forest Service policy. These requirements are similar to manned aircraft in terms of pilot training, currency and certification, airworthiness approval, avionics, and operational restrictions.

Forest Service UAS Operations and training will comply with the Forest Service Standards for UAS Operations and the NWCG Standards for Fire UAS Operations.

Forest Service requests to the FAA for UAS Certificates of Waiver or Authorization (COA) will be coordinated through the Washington Office, Fire and Aviation Management UAS Program Manager.

Other agencies that have received a COA from the FAA can be considered Cooperator aircraft (FSH 5709.16 Ch 30). UAS operated by cooperators (including the military) in support of Forest Service missions are subject to the approval requirements in FSM 5700 and shall meet additional requirements established in the Forest Service Standards for UAS Operations.

5.25 Forest Health Protection (FHP) Aviation Activities

FHP utilizes light fixed and rotor wing aircraft to conduct aerial reconnaissance, aerial photography and aerial application. The purpose of these operations is to gather information regarding forest health conditions and manage pests in accordance with [FSM 2100](#).

All FHP aviation operations shall be coordinated with the appropriate Regional Aviation Officer. Dispatch, ordering, and operations are accomplished in accordance with the local geographic area and National Mobilization Guide and the NWCG Standards for Helicopter Operations. For all non-fire flights, the Interagency Aviation Training Guide provides minimum training standards for fixed-wing flight managers (FWFM) in charge of FWFM Special-Use mission flights. Additional training required by FHP and the FWFM Special-Use Aerial Survey Observer Task Book are available at: Aerial Survey Observer and Fixed Wing Manager – Special Use (USDA.GOV). All aerial reconnaissance and photography mission flights shall utilize a qualified FWFM Special-Use for fixed wing and qualified Helicopter Manager for rotor wing. Agency personnel are not permitted on board restricted category aerial application aircraft and full PPE is required for aerial application pilots operating low level.

6.0 Aviation Training

6.1 Aviation Training for All Flight Activities and Positions

Aviation training is essential to aircraft pilots (both contract and employee), aviation users, supervisors, and managers to ensure that they are knowledgeable of the inherent hazards of aviation operations. The Forest Service Aviation Training Program is a “fire” and “non-fire” system. The NWCG Standards for Wildland Fire Position Qualifications, and Forest Service Fire and Aviation Qualifications Guide directs the fire qualifications, while the Interagency Aviation Training Guide regulates the “non- fire” qualifications.

Personnel serving in NWCG positions need only meet the qualification and currency requirements required in Forest Service Fire and Aviation Qualifications Guide / NWCG Standards for Wildland Fire Position Qualifications, PMS 310-1 or other interagency guidance as appropriate (NWCG Standards for Aerial Supervision, etc.).

The objectives of selection, recruitment, development and training are to improve safety, quality and efficiency by placing employees in jobs to which they are suited and qualified. Although this concept is obvious, it is fundamental at all levels within an agency and worthy of emphasis. The appropriate experience and training requirements for safety-related posts must be defined, monitored and recorded.

6.2 Responsibility

The Washington Office, Branch Chief, Aviation Safety Management Systems is responsible for national oversight of the aviation safety education program and aviation accident prevention efforts (FSM 5700.45). The Washington Office, Branch Chief, Aviation Strategic Planning is responsible for national oversight of the aviation training program. Washington Office Branch Chiefs will provide oversight over training in their area of expertise.

It is management’s responsibility to provide training and career development opportunities to

personnel under its control, to expand, improve, correct deficiencies, or meet job performance requirements.

It is every employee's responsibility to take advantage of aviation training opportunities and to notify their supervisor of any aviation training they believe they require for accomplishing their jobs safely and efficiently.

6.3 Instructor Standards

Aviation training instructors provide specialized training in many aviation job skills, e.g., helitack, aerial attack, SEAT management, air tanker base management, aerial ignition, rappel, and helicopter management. For those individuals who serve as an Interagency Aviation Training (IAT) instructor shall follow the IAT Guide, Part 3 – Interagency Aviation Training Instructor Certification.

Personnel serving in NWCG instructor positions need to meet the qualification and currency requirements in Forest Service Fire and Aviation Qualifications Guide and the NWCG Standards for Course Delivery.

6.4 Records Management

All employee training records shall meet the requirements stated in the Forest Service Fire and Aviation Qualifications Guide for all NWCG qualifications. All training records for non-fire qualifications (IAT) shall either reside with the Training Officer or the Forest/Unit Aviation Officer. Each operating unit needs to develop and implement plans for the identification of initial and recurrent aviation training needs specific to its missions.

Areas of aviation training are:

- Orientation and basic aviation safety for all users
- Flight Manager Training
- Dispatching and flight-following procedures
- Management of aviation operations and equipment
- Planning, risk assessment and execution of projects using aviation resources
- Proficiency and special mission training for pilots
- Technical training on aviation equipment and aircraft maintenance
- Advanced safety management systems (SMS) and quality assurance for aviation professionals and specialists

6.5 Tuition and Travel

Forest Service management is dedicated to conducting or providing for professional and technical training of employee or contract personnel at all levels of the organization that use and/or influence the use of aviation resources. Supervisors are to provide adequate levels of funding for the tuition and travel to attend training that will maintain aviation personnel currency and advance their skills.

6.6 Development

The Forest Service encourages development of interested personnel who desire to pursue an aviation career path. Developmental positions (e.g., Regional Aviation Management Specialists) and all positions that have aviation operations responsibility are encouraged to attend Aviation Safety Management Systems related training.

6.7 One-Way NWCG to IAT Equivalency Matrixes

The One-Way S course to A course IAT equivalency Matrix; and One-Way NWCG Position to IAT

Position Crosswalk is available in IAT.org. <https://www.iat.gov/> and found in the IAT guide.

Some positions listed in the NWCG / Forest Service Fire and Aviation Qualifications Guide Qualifications column will crosswalk into the non-fire IAT Resource Qualifications. As well as some courses listed in NWCG /Forest Service Fire and Aviation Qualifications Guide will grant equivalency for IAT A courses.

If individuals do not meet the NWCG / Forest Service Fire and Aviation Qualifications Guide Qualifications (above), they shall follow the training requirements found in the IAT Guide in order to conduct/oversee non- fire resource aviation operations. Additional information on IAT/NWCG training can be found on FSH 5709.16 chapters 30 and 60.

6.8 Aviation Contracting Officer Representative (COR) Requirements

Aviation COR's must meet initial training and maintenance requirements as stipulated in the USDA Contracting Desk Book.

6.9 Crew Resource Management (CRM) Training

For CRM, the Forest Service requires N9059-Crew Resource Management 7 Skills Training. Refer to the NWCG Standards for Wildland Fire Position Qualifications, PMS 310-1, Forest Service Fire & Aviation Qualification Guide (FSFAQG) and Interagency Aviation Training (IAT Guide in order to determine which positions require N9059-Crew Resource Management 7-Skills training.

7.0 Interagency Airspace Coordination

Interagency airspace coordination is accomplished through the Interagency Airspace Subcommittee (IASC) chartered under the National Interagency Aviation Council (NIAC). Guidance and education is provided through the [NWCG Standards for Airspace Coordination](#).

7.1 Fire Traffic Area (FTA)

FTA Information is available in NWCG Standards for Airspace Coordination.

7.2 Temporary Flight Restriction (TFR)

In order to enhance safety during an incident, the FAA may be requested to issue a TFR that closes the airspace to non-participating aircraft (with some exceptions). While there are currently nine different types of TFR's, the most commonly issued TFR for wildfire is [14 CFR 91,137 \(a\) 2](#) which is explicit as to what operations are prohibited, restricted, or allowed. Aviation Managers requesting a TFR should be familiar with the ordering procedures, coordination protocol and exceptions that are outlined in the NWCG Standards for Airspace Coordination, PMS 520.

7.3 Aircraft Transponder Code (Firefighting)

The FAA has provided the 1255 Transponder code as the national designation for firefighting aircraft. It is not agency specific. The code should be utilized by aircraft responding to and operating over fire incidents supporting suppression operations (unless otherwise directed by Air Traffic Control (ATC). It is not to be used for repositioning or during cross-country flights. Information is available in NWCG Standards for Airspace Coordination and NWCG Standards for Aerial Supervision.

7.4 Airspace Boundary Plan

When resources are dispatched by more than one unit to an incident that shares a common boundary, care should be taken to ensure safe separation and communication of responding aircraft. Boundary Plans should be prepared that focus on a 10 NM wide "neutral airspace" corridor for mutual or

7.4.1 International Airspace Boundary – Mexico

Aircraft entering Mexican airspace must follow established protocols and communicate mission details to the appropriate Interagency Dispatch Center. Aircraft must not enter Mexican airspace without consent from the coordinating authorities and concurrence from the identified aerial supervision. Permission must be received from National Forestry Commission of Mexico (CONAFOR) prior to entering Mexican airspace.

7.4.2 International Airspace Boundary – Canada

Aviation operations across the U.S.A./Canada border must be conducted in accordance with The Canada/United States Reciprocal Forest Fire Fighting Arrangement (NMG chapter 40) or the normal US Customs and Border Protection procedures. Flights must follow protocol established by the respective coordinating authorities and involve the appropriate Dispatch Center. Such flights usually require prior notification, special tracking procedures and an understanding of the mutually agreed upon operating parameters.

7.5 Airspace De-confliction

Airspace de-confliction should occur for both emergency response and non-emergency aviation activities. De-confliction should be accomplished through the following measures:

- Pilots must obtain all information pertinent to flight before flying. This is accomplished by obtaining a briefing from the FAA through the Flight Service Stations. This is the official source of NOTAM information.
- Dispatching units should obtain scheduling information from DOD units that have Special Use Airspace or Military Training Routes and share this information as “Aircraft Hazards” information on the NWCG Aircraft Dispatch Form, PMS 250 when the aircraft is dispatched. For non-emergency flights, information should be shared through common communication protocol.
- Aviation Internet websites are prolific on the internet. When used for obtaining airspace information, the user must be aware of any disclaimers regarding the timeliness of the information posted. The FAA’s US NOTAM office provides current TFR information through DINS (DOD Internet NOTAM Service) at <https://www.notams.faa.gov>.

7.6 Airspace Conflicts

Aviation personnel have a responsibility to identify and notify the Air Route Traffic Control Center (ARTCC) and report conflicts and incidents through the Interagency SAFECOM (Safety Communication) System to assist in the resolution of airspace conflicts. Notification to the ARTCC should be timely. When a conflict or incident occurs, it may indicate a significant aviation safety hazard. Conflicts may include Near Mid Air Collisions (NMAC), TFR intrusions, and FTA communication non-compliance. Further guidance is available in the NWCG Standards for Airspace Coordination.

7.7 Airspace Agreements – Memorandums of Understanding

When Special Use Airspace (SUA’s), Military Training Routes (MTR’s), Slow Routes (SR’s), or Aerial Refueling Routes (AR’s) are located over lands within an agency’s jurisdiction or within their

area of normal flight operations (fire or non-fire), the agency should consider instituting an agreement with the appropriate DoD entity that schedules the airspace. Airspace agreements establish protocol for emergency and non-emergency contacts. They provide local level leadership a tool that defines protocols to address recurring activities, coordination of time critical responses, deconfliction and resolving issues in a timely manner.

Initiation of an agreement can begin by contacting the Military Representative to the FAA located at FAA Service Centers, Air Force Representative, Navy Representative, and Department of Army Representative. A template and sample format is provided in Chapter 12 of the NWCG Standards for Airspace Coordination, PMS 520.

8.0 Aviation Security

The policies and procedures in this chapter when implemented are intended to make the theft of FS aircraft more difficult and time consuming and therefore reduce the threat to our facilities from criminal elements. The FS will provide an aviation security program that will include:

- Aviation facilities and aircraft security standards
- Aviation security measures that respond to alerts of the Homeland Security National Terrorism Advisory System (NTAS)
- Quick response emergency procedures

8.1 FS Facilities Security Self Assessments

Each Forest Service aviation facility must complete a security self-assessment on a timeline based on its Facility Security Level (FSL) to determine the security standard. The FSL can be determined using the document Facility Security Level Determinations for Federal Facilities, An Interagency Security Committee Standard.

The self-assessment must include an analysis of:

- The vulnerability level of the facility, which is any weakness in the design or operation of a facility that can be exploited by an adversary.
- The probability of threat, or the likelihood of an undesirable event occurring over time.
- The severity of event consequences, which is the level, duration, and nature of the loss resulting from an undesirable event.

Reference the FSH 5709.16 Chapter 30 for the FS Security Self-Assessment.

8.2 FS Security Response Actions

The objective is to ensure that the FS is prepared to increase security standards at agency aviation facilities in response to an alert of the Homeland Security National Terrorism Advisory System. It is FS policy to immediately adjust the level of aviation security any time an NTAS Alert is issued for the facility. Review FSH 5709.16 Chapter 30 for security response actions.

8.3 Aircraft Security Information (Cooperators)

The security of cooperator provided aircraft and equipment is the responsibility of the cooperator.

8.4 TSA Commercial Airport Security

Commercial airport security requirements can be found at the [Transportation Security Administration \(TSA\)](https://www.tsa.gov/) web site.

9.0 Aviation Facilities

All facilities managers are responsible for providing aviation facilities, within their respective area, that are safe, adequate, and follow applicable Forest Service regulations.

9.1 Permanent Aviation Facilities

These facilities (helibases, retardant bases, and airport facilities) are permanent installations (owned and leased) and are used on a continuous or seasonal basis for aviation operations. These include aviation facilities on Forest Service property and facilities on non-Forest Service land where Forest Service has primary responsibility for operations, maintenance, and oversight. Facility base reviews shall be conducted in accordance with Appendix E of the NWCG Standards for Helicopter Operations; the NWCG Standards for Airtanker Base Operations and Chapter 8 of the Interagency Standards for Fire and Fire Aviation Operations.

9.2 Temporary Aviation Facilities

Temporary bases are sites that are used on a temporary or intermittent basis (helispots and remote airstrips). Sites not located on Forest Service land must be pre-approved and use shall be documented in an Agreement. Each site should be cataloged as to location, description, local hazards, use procedures, agreements, and contacts. Preseason inspection and maintenance should be completed as necessary to meet agency safety requirements.

9.3 Safety

Aviation facilities must comply with safety regulations outlined in Forest Service manuals, guides, handbooks, and the Occupational Safety and Health Act (OSHA).

9.4 Agency Owned/ Operated Facilities

Refer to the [Building and Facilities Related Handbook FSH 7309.11](#) for information regarding:

- Planning
- Development
- Management
- Special-Use Facilities
- Records and Reports

9.5 Leasing

Leased facility needs can be met through the Acquisition Management (AQM) organization, either via lease or grants and agreements. These are more fully described on the AQM website: <http://fsweb.wo.fs.fed.us/aqm/>. Facilities can also be acquired on Government-owned land by means of land exchanges.

9.6 Land Use Agreements

Simplified acquisition procedures should be used to acquire the use of property or facilities for emergency incidents. Emergency incident agreements do not require special leasing authority. Procurement officials with warrant authority may enter into these agreements. More detailed information is available in Chapter 20 of the NWCG Standards for Interagency Incident Business Management.

9.7 Facilities Security

All sites will be provided with appropriate physical security measures commensurate with the risk of loss

of operating capability, irreplaceable data, or expensive property (FSH 7309.11, 41.2).

- Equip all buildings with locks. The keys shall be managed by the facility manager or other individual designated by the line officer. Where emergency access by non-unit personnel is necessary for fire management and other common occurrences, use master locks.
- Install signs and fences and/or provide other physical deterrents to warn and retard entry to all remote sites containing vulnerable operations such as telecommunications and research projects. Consider maintainability in the design of fences in areas subject to heavy snow, ice, and wind conditions.
- Restrict entry of unauthorized personnel into operations such as flammable, chemical and pesticide storage rooms or buildings, explosive storage facilities, computer rooms, biologically sensitive and controlled-environment areas, and others as the facility manager and policy deem necessary.

Refer to Chapter 8 of this document and FSM 5709.16 Chapter 30 (Aviation Security) for additional facilities security.

10.0 Appendix

10.1 Sample Pre-Season Cooperator letter

File Code:5700

Date: January 19, 2022

XXXXXX

Undersheriff, Bernalillo County Sheriff's Office
400 Roma NW
Albuquerque, NM 87102

Dear XXXXX,

The USDA Forest Service (FS) and the Department of Interior's Office of Aviation Services (DOI/OAS) recognize and appreciate the partnership with our Cooperators in wildland fire suppression. We recognize the vital role that Cooperator aviation resources play in this effort and the importance of the partnership in contributing to the success of each agency.

If there is no intention of offering Cooperator owned resources for utilization on federally protected lands, or to transport federal firefighters in 2022 feel free to disregard this letter.

Non-Federally approved Cooperator aircraft may continue to be utilized on federal lands when and where the Cooperator is the protecting agency in a reciprocal or off-set agreement.

To aid in the proactive completion of this process, this letter serves as a guide for requesting the FS or DOI/OAS to review documentation, inspection of pilots and aircraft (fixed-wing and rotor-wing) for Cooperator owned resources.

Please submit in writing by March 15, your request for inspection and potential approval of all Cooperator equipment and personnel to the signatory FS Regional Aviation Officer and DOI/OAS Regional Director. The request should also include the required documentation listed below. Each request will be reviewed and prioritized based on FS and DOI operational needs. If aircraft offered for inspection do not meet requirements within the federal contracts for that category and type of aircraft, no inspection will be scheduled. In instances where no federal contract exists for a specific category or class of aircraft; inspections may be scheduled based on operational needs of the federal agencies. All necessary inspections are required, and discrepancies corrected prior to an approval letter being issued. A Letter of Approval (LOA) must be issued for the aircraft, equipment, and personnel to be offered for use on federal lands. Each LOA will include specific maintenance, pilot standards, operational and safety requirements while operating under this approval on federal lands.

Aircraft and pilots under a Cooperator contract/agreement that are on a federal aircraft service contract/agreement and hold a current FS/DOI approval card will be verified prior to approval by submitting the Interagency aircraft and pilot cards to the Forest Service Regional Aviation Officer and OAS Regional Director signatories to this letter. Aircraft or personnel already carded by either FS or DOI/OAS, may be approved upon request with no further inspection required. In either case, documentation must be provided so that it can be reflected in the LOA.

Aircraft on a Cooperator contract/agreement that are not on a FS or DOI/OAS aircraft service contract/agreement may be considered based on federal operational need.

Cooperator owned or FEPP aircraft must meet the equivalent standards in the appropriate federal aircraft service contract/agreement (airtanker, SEAT, helicopter, water scooper, light fixed-wing, or fixed-wing aerial supervision) or if covered in the 2010 NASF Cooperators Aviation Standards for Interagency Fire. Cooperator owned and FEPP aircraft will be approved by a separate FS and DOI/OAS letter of approval.

Requests made after March 15th may not be able to be accomplished and follow up inspections may not occur due to unavailability of FS or DOI/OAS inspectors or lack of federal operational need.

Cooperators can order helicopters, SEATs, and light fixed-wing aircraft through IROC using existing federal contracts only when valid reimbursable agreements exist between the contracting authority and the cooperator. It is important that Cooperators ensure that appropriate reimbursable agreements are in place prior to placing orders in IROC.

To aid in the timeliness of this process the following Items must be provided prior to inspection.

- Cooperator primary point of contact for obtaining personnel, equipment, and aircraft information.
- Pilot records (if not federally carded) verifying certification, qualifications, and flight time. Please supply copies of the following:
 - Copy of Pilot Certificate
 - Medical Certificate
 - Any prior federal approval
 - Completion of IAT Aviation Firefighting courses applicable to the mission
 - A-110 Hazardous Materials completion certificate – Required every three years.
 - COMPLETED FS 5700 20a or OAS 64B (helicopter), FS5700 20 or OAS 64A (fixed wing). OAS - <https://www.doi.gov/aviation/library/forms>
 - Signed copy of Page 26, of the USFS Operations and Safety Procedures Guide for Helicopters Pilots.
- Aircraft make, model, S/N #, registration number, and Type. (Standard or Restricted Category or FEPP).
 - Copies of current aircraft, fuel service vehicle and mechanic cards for each aircraft offered.
- Your agency's maintenance, pilot standards, safety, and operational standards and/or policy (this may include interagency standards or policy when accepted by your agency. This includes, all maintenance, pilot standards, safety, and operational standards for aerial supervision, airtanker operations, scooper operations, helicopter operations, UAS operations and maintenance processes and procedures.

Cooperator aircraft that are on a LOA will need to be entered and ordered in IROC for mobilizations in support of activities on federal lands.

A minimum of 30 days is normally required for inspectors to schedule and perform necessary inspections, based on federal operational needs. Although inspectors will endeavor to complete inspections in a timely and efficient manner to meet the requested approval date, the inspectors' workload; unavailability of aircraft, equipment, and personnel; or deficiencies found during

National Aviation Safety Management Plan 2024 – 2025
inspections may delay approval.

Send the requested documents to XXXXX, at XXXX@usda.gov.

As always, your prompt attention to this matter is greatly appreciated. If there are any questions or concerns with the scheduling or the review, please contact XXXXX, USFS Regional Aviation Officer at (XXX) XXX XXXX [email XX@usda.gov](mailto:XX@usda.gov) or XXXXX, DOI/OAS Western Regional Director at (XXX) XXX-XXXX email XXXXXr@ios.doi.gov.

Sincerely,

Western Regional Director,
US Department of the Interior
Office of Aviation Services

Regional Aviation Officer

10.2 Sample Letter of Cooperator Approval

Date:

Subject: **Approval of XXX Cooperator Contracted Fixed-Wing and Pilots**

To: Chief Pilot or other Representative

XXX Cooperator contracted fixed-wing and pilots are approved for use on federal lands if they are carded on a federal fixed-wing contract. Approval is based on the appropriate federal fixed-wing Call-When-Needed contract as referenced in the XXX Cooperator procurement document.

Aircraft and pilots under the Cooperator contract that hold a current Forest Service (FS)/Department of Interior (DOI) card will be verified prior to approval and do not need to be re-inspected. Refer to Appendix A and B for the list of approved XXX Cooperator contracted fixed-wing and pilots.

All contracted aircraft must have a contract of 90 consecutive days or more, to qualify as a Public Aircraft. [Federal Aviation Administration Advisory Circular AC00.1-1B and 49 U.S.C. §40102 (a)(41)(D)]

Whenever the XXX Cooperator contract aircraft are operating on federal lands for the federal agency having jurisdiction, the following requirements shall be met:

- Aircraft and pilots are restricted to the missions as authorized on their Interagency aircraft data card or Interagency pilot qualification card.
- Aviation operations shall comply with the requirements in the applicable interagency guides and standards as listed below. (State/local requirements or standards that are more restrictive than federal requirements and standards may be allowed with prior approval.)
- The state contract shall be equivalent to a federal Call-When-Needed fixed-wing contract.
 - NWCG Standards for Airtanker Base Operations Guide
 - NWCG Aquatic Invasive Species Guide PMS 444
 - NWCG Standards for Aerial Supervision
 - Interagency Standards for Fire and Fire Aviation Operations (Red Book)
 - National Interagency Mobilization Guide
 - XXX GACC Interagency Mobilization Guide.
- Only mission essential aircrew or pilot inspectors are allowed onboard fixed-wing aircraft under this approval.
- Fixed-wing managers shall verify that a copy of the approval letter is on the aircraft.
- The aircraft and/or pilot cards supersede the approval letter.
- FS/DOI fixed-wing managers for state owned or contracted fixed-wing shall be ordered and mobilized through Interagency Resource Ordering Capability (IROC).
- An Aviation Safety Communique (SAFECOM) shall be submitted to report any hazard, incident, observation, maintenance problem, or other circumstance with personnel or aircraft that has the potential to cause an aviation related mishap.
- A FS/DOI Airworthiness Inspector shall be notified on the occurrence of any unscheduled maintenance, failure of a major or minor component, and following overhaul, repair, and/or replacement of any engine, power train, rotor system, and replacement or adjustment of any flight control component or system.
- Aircraft may only receive fuel from the approved service vehicles and/or airport fixed base operators (FBO).
- If equipped, Automated Telemetry Unit (ATU) data when used on federally protected lands shall be

available to the Forest Service if requested.

- The FS/DOI may conduct quality assurance reviews of these resources when assigned to fires on federal lands.

A copy of this Letter of Approval and the federal aircraft and pilot cards shall be maintained within each aircraft and with the pilot and made available for inspection upon request.

If requested and approved by the state/local Cooperator, these aircraft, pilots and mechanics may be available for use in other states through state-to-state agreements. The receiving state and FS/DOI regions shall consider these resources pre-approved and not subject to a new approval.

This letter of approval is contingent on all the above listed requirements being met and supersedes all previous Letters of Approval, and will expire on November, 2022.

XX Regional Aviation Officer *XX OAS Regional Director*

The State of XX agrees to the expectations in this letter

XX State Aviation Officer/Manager

10.3 Initial Aviation Proposal Template

Initial Aviation Proposal Template

Proposal Title:

Forest/Region/WO:

Communication/Briefing Expectation: *At each level of the concurrence or approval the proposal will be shared with their subject matter experts.*

Select Option:

Modification to Program Additional Operational Capability Other:

New Program Policy Waiver

Requested By (Council Name):			Committee Chair Name			Date:		
Initial Aviation Proposal Title:								
Requestor Contact Information:								

<p>Policy: List the applicable policy and or policy to be created. Consider both Interagency and USFS</p>
<p>Background: Provide information pertaining to the program to which the proposal will be applied. Include any historic information applicable to past practices, any known challenges and/or successes that would apply to this proposal.</p>
<p>Objectives: Identify specific and measurable criteria as well as any anticipated changes to the current system or Forest Service.</p>
<p>Justification: Identify why the aviation operation cannot comply with current policy or how it will be improved. Identify any benefits to the Forest Service.</p>
<p>Risk Assessment and Quality Assurance: Describe the potential risk and mitigations associated with the proposal. Describe the Quality Assurance process that would be used to provide oversight of the program. Consider attaching the appropriate programmatic risk assessment for operational missions.</p>

Limitations and Controls: Provide a description of any barriers that would affect this proposal or program and any mitigations that would be enacted to control those limitations. (e.g. facilities, staffing, fleet, policy)

Budget: Describe the anticipated financial cost required to successfully implement the proposal. Consider both the short- and long-term obligation(s).

Contracting: Describe any contract procurement or modification that would be needed.

Training and Support Provisions: Describe the training and support needs applicable to the proposal and how these would be satisfied.

Implementation Plan and Timeline (Include Reply Needed By Date): Describe the methodology for implementation.

APPROVALS			
Requested By (Council Name):	Committee Chair Name:	Date:	Signature
HOSC (If Applicable)	Support <input type="checkbox"/> N/A <input type="checkbox"/>	Does Not Support <input type="checkbox"/>	
FWPM (If Applicable)	Support <input type="checkbox"/> N/A <input type="checkbox"/>	Does Not Support <input type="checkbox"/>	
NAOC	Support <input type="checkbox"/>	Does Not Support <input type="checkbox"/>	
W.O. Assistant Director Aviation	Support <input type="checkbox"/>	Does Not Support <input type="checkbox"/>	
W.O. Fire Director	Approve <input type="checkbox"/>	Disapprove <input type="checkbox"/>	
*A signature indicates that the proposal has been shared with subject matter experts at that level and has received majority support.			

Form Process:

Step 1: Prepare the initial proposal application and supporting documentation (i.e., Risk Assessment, Implementation Plan, etc.)

Who: Any one can request an initial proposal. A proposal can be initiated at any level within the concurrence or approval levels.

Step 2: Requester sends the initial proposal package to the appropriate hosting group for concurrence or approval as indicated in

the signature blocks above. (i.e., *Short Haul group request sends to HOSC for concurrence and forwarding to NAOC*).

Expectation & Approvals: At each level of the concurrence or approval the proposal will be shared with their subject matter experts. WO AD-Aviation signature is the approval for Modification to Program and Additional Operational Capability proposals, however is concurrence for New Program and Policy Waiver proposals. WO Fire Director signature is the approval for New Program and Policy Waiver proposals.

Step 3: A formal letter of approval or disapproval will be created and returned to the requester through appropriate channels by the reply due date indicated in the Implementation and Timeline/ Reply Needed By Date box. This letter would address any necessary changes to future potential approval, or a detailed description for disapproval.

Definitions and Examples:

Modification to Program: Changing or modifying a current Agency program: *Night Flying, Short-haul Insertion for firefighting, etc.*

Additional Operational Capability: Adding a technique or capability to a program or an individual location: *Single-skid, Toe-in, and Hover Exit/Entry Procedures (STEP), Rappel, UAS, etc.*

New Program: A new program is one that the Agency does not currently have or perform: *Hoist, Fixed-wing ISR, etc.*

Policy Waiver: A change to policy for a specific reason or mitigation: *Cold weather clothing for appropriate environments in lieu of ALSE requirements, etc.*

