

2011
SOUTHWEST AREA
INTERAGENCY SINGLE ENGINE AIRTANKER
(SEAT)
OPERATING PLAN



Photo: Temporary SEAT Base, Santa Fe, New Mexico 2006

**Southwest Area Interagency SEAT Operating Plan
Table of Contents**

- I. Purpose**
- II. Objectives**
- III. Authority**
- IV. Plan Revision Authority**
- V. Southwest Geographical Boundaries**
- VI. Participating Agencies**
- VII. Introduction**
- VIII. Key Safety Components:**
 - A. Standardized Policy Documents Utilized by all Agencies
 - B. Roles and Responsibilities Defined for the Using Agencies
 - C. SEAT Manager / SEAT Coordinator Qualifications
 - D. Standardization of SEAT Aircraft Utilized in the Southwest Area
 - E. Standardized Briefings Given to SEAT Managers
 - F. Standardized Information Given for Dispatching SEATs
 - G. Standardization of Retardant / Suppressant Materials Utilized
 - H. Key Elements Required for Safe and Effective SEAT Base Operations
 - I. Standardized Safety Reporting System Utilized by all Agencies
 - J. Central Point Established for Information Dissemination
 - K. Mechanism Established for a Feedback and Monitoring Loop
- IX. Higher Preparedness Levels**
- X. Example Southwest Interagency Delegation of Authority for SEAT Coordinator Reviews**
- XI. 2011 Approvals**

I. PURPOSE

The purpose of this plan is to provide guidance and establish policy to standardize interagency Single Engine Air Tanker (SEAT) operations in the Southwest Geographic Area (SWA). This plan promotes interagency cooperation to ensure that all agencies utilizing SEATs in the SWA conduct safe and effective SEAT operations.

This plan applies only to interagency SEAT operations. Agencies acting unilaterally within their own jurisdiction are strongly encouraged to follow this plan but are not required to do so.

II. OBJECTIVES

This plan will:

- Provide supplemental guidance to dispatchers, aviation staff, fire personnel, and contractor personnel involved in SEAT operations.
- Outline and standardize the roles and duties of agency personnel responsible for SEAT operations.
- Identify and standardize SEAT operational procedures.
- Identify key elements that ensure safe and effective SEAT operations that all agencies agree upon.
- Allow personnel participating in SEAT operations an avenue to provide feedback, evaluations and recommendations.
- Disseminate information to all personnel involved in SEAT operations.

III. AUTHORITY:

This plan is authorized and approved by the Southwest Area Coordinating Group (SWCG) based upon authority granted by the MOU that established that group. By signature, the SWCG accepts this document as Appendix 2 in the SWCG Handbook, which forms the basis for interagency cooperation in the SWA.

IV. PLAN REVISION AND SIGNING AUTHORITY:

This plan will be reviewed and updated annually by the SWA Aviation Committee. A copy of the plan will be signed as recommended by the current Chair of the SWA Aviation Committee, and approved by the current Chair of the SWCG, after reviewed by SWCG members.

V. SOUTHWEST GEOGRAPHIC AREA BOUNDARIES:

The SWA is depicted on a map located in the Southwest Area Mobilization Guide. The SWA includes the states of Arizona, New Mexico, and the federal lands in Texas and Oklahoma west of the 100th meridian.

VI. PARTICIPATING AGENCIES:

The federal and state agencies participating in this operating plan are: USDA Forest Service, USDI Bureau of Land Management, USDI National Park Service, USDI Bureau of Indian Affairs, USDI Fish and Wildlife Service, State of Arizona (Arizona State Forestry Division), State of New Mexico (Forestry Division) and the State of Texas (Texas Forest Service). Texas Forest Service participates under the direction of the Texas

State Wildland Fire Operating Plan and a dispatching relationship with the Southwest Coordination Center (SWCC).

VII. INTRODUCTION:

The SWA contains a wide variety of state and federal agencies with different missions, goals and objectives for managing their natural resources. The Southwest has one of the most diverse environments, with fuel types ranging from low-elevation desert grass lands to mixed conifer with significant elevation changes throughout the area. Combining the environmental factors with complex military airspace, international border operations, and extended fire seasons, the area has all the key components that contribute to a high risk environment for aviation operations.

With this in mind it is essential that efforts are made to unite all aspects of aviation operations planning, execution, monitoring, and procedures to ensure that all users work together to provide an environment that focuses on safe, efficient and effective SEAT operations.

VIII. KEY SAFETY COMPONENTS:

Below are components that have been identified by the participating agencies as key elements for safe and effective SEAT operations.

- A. Standardized policy documents utilized by all agencies
- B. Roles and responsibilities defined for the using agencies
- C. SEAT Manager / SEAT Coordinator qualifications defined
- D. Standardization of SEAT aircraft utilized in the Southwest Area
- E. Standardized briefings given to SEAT Managers
- F. Standardized information given for dispatching SEATs
- G. Standardization of retardant / suppressant materials utilized
- H. Key elements required for safe and effective SEAT base operations
- I. Standardized safety reporting system utilized by all agencies
- J. Central point established for information dissemination
- K. Mechanism established for a feedback and monitoring loop

COMPONENT A: Standardized Policy Document Utilized by all Agencies

All interagency SEAT operations conducted in the SWA will adhere to the guidelines established in the Interagency Single Engine Airtanker Guide (ISOG), and the appropriate SEAT contract.

Copies of the ISOG and the required forms can be found on the main page of the National SEAT website at:

<http://www.blm.gov/nifc/st/en/prog/fire/Aviation/Airops/seat.html>

Individual agencies may have additional policy documents that pertain to SEAT operations. These policies must not conflict with the ISOG or the SEAT contract. It is the

responsibility of the individual agency to provide additional guidance to the SEAT Managers during their initial briefing.

COMPONENT B: Agency Roles and Responsibilities Defined for Using Agencies

SWA Aviation Committee will:

- Annually review and recommend any changes to this plan, and present to SWCG with adequate time to review before the SWA fire season.
- Act as a focal point for the collection and analysis of evaluations, reviews, inspections, Safecomms, etc, generated for SEAT operations in the Southwest Area.
- Act as a central point to collect, consolidated and forward any recommendations to the BLM National SEAT Program Manager for possible ISOG revisions. Recommendations will also be communicated in advance, when possible, to the SWCG.
- Annually review and forward by January 10th each year any recommendations to the Southwest Area Coordinating Group for possible revisions regarding SEAT operations for the:
 - Southwest Area Mobilization Guide
 - Interagency Standards Fire and Fire Aviation Operations
 - Interagency Airtanker Base Operations Guide
- Provide technical operational advice to the Southwest Area MAC Group, and provide assistance in prioritization and allocation of SEAT resources, as requested.

Fire Manager or Agency Aviation Manager:

All interagency SEAT operations conducted with the SWA will be under the direction the ordering unit's Fire Management Officer, Agency Aviation Manager or their designee. The Fire or Aviation Manager is responsible for the following duties:

- Coordinates with dispatch personnel to order SEAT Managers and any other miscellaneous overhead that may be needed for SEAT operations.
- Ensures that appropriate retardant and adequate water supplies are available for SEAT operations.
- Verifies that the SEAT Manager has received an initial briefing for conducting SEAT operations. The initial briefing must cover the elements outlined in the "Initial Pilot / Manager Briefing" checklist, as required by the ISOG. The using agency may provide the SEAT Manager with additional briefing elements that are specific to their agency or aviation operations.
- Identifies or designates the primary points of contact for the SEAT Manager to work with on all aspects of their operations.
- Ensures that the SEAT Manager, pilot and support personnel have all the necessary information to conduct or receive a daily briefing.
- Coordinates with the SEAT Manager and dispatch personnel to provide any logistical support identified for the SEAT operation.

- Coordinates with the SEAT Manager, pilot(s), and support personnel on any safety issue or concerns, and ensure that steps have been taken to resolve and monitor safety concerns or issues.
- Monitors the effectiveness of SEAT drops. Encourages the SEAT pilot and ground resources to work together to enhance the effectiveness and safety of SEAT operations.
- Ensures that SEAT operations are coordinated with other aviation activities.
- Verifies that the SEAT Manager conducts a close out with the using agency at the end of their assignment.

COMPONENT C: SEAT Managers and SEAT Coordinator Qualifications

SEAT Manager (SEMG):

All SEAT Managers and trainees will meet the training and experience requirements established in the ISOG, and in the Wildland Fire Qualifications System Guide (PMS 310-1). Individual agencies are responsible for ensuring their employees meet the minimum qualifications outlined in PMS 310-1 and that these are appropriately recorded in the agency's fire qualifications database.

Individual agencies may have additional requirements for their SEAT Managers but they may not establish lesser requirements than those outlined in the ISOG and PMS 310-1. SEAT Manager duties are established in the ISOG. Additional duties or tasks pertinent to SEAT operations may be identified by the using agency during their initial briefing. Any additional duties or tasks identified for the SEAT Manager must not interfere with their ability to perform the tasks outlined in the ISOG.

SEAT Coordinator (SECO):

All SEAT Coordinators (SECO) and trainees will meet the training and experience requirements outlined in the ISOG. All SECO assignments in the SWA will adhere to the procedures outlined in the ISOG and the SWA Mobilization Guide.

Agency Specific Guidelines for the Southwest Area:

State agencies may internally mobilize personnel to oversee and coordinate their SEAT operations for planning and logistical support.

COMPONENT D: Standardized Aircraft Utilized in the Southwest Area

National Resources:

SEATs ordered by Federal agencies are National Resources and are managed at both the Geographic Area and national levels.

A National SEAT Coordinator position was developed to help facilitate the ordering and movement of SEAT aircraft and SEAT Managers. The National SEAT Coordinator works directly with the National Interagency Coordination Center (NICC) on a daily basis during fire season.

SEAT aircraft ordered and managed by the States of Arizona and New Mexico are not considered National Resources and are managed solely by the hiring State and not at the Geographic Area or national level.

Types of SEAT Contracts:

SEATs contracted and utilized on interagency fires will be procured through one of the following types of contracts:

- On-Call SEAT Contract
- Exclusive Use Contract

Both types of SEAT of contracts are administered by the Department of the Interior’s Aviation Management Directorate (DOI-AM). DOI-AM publishes a source list for the On-Call SEAT Contract which displays information on the aircraft that are available under this contract. This source list and contract are available on the DOI-AM web site. Information about the individual Exclusive Use Contracts based in the SWA can be found in the SWA Mobilization Guide.

The States may work with DOI-AM to contract SEATs under other types of contracts. Regardless of the type of contract, all SEATs used on interagency fires, as well as their pilots and support vehicles, must meet interagency standards and adhere to the procedures established by the ISOG and other interagency policies.

Note: The “variable term” contract will not be available during the 2011 fire season.

- **Ordering aircraft from the On-Call SEAT Contract:**

The 2011 On-Call SEAT Contract source list displays vendors under the Geographic Area in which their home base is located.

Local dispatch centers may order a SEAT directly from a vendor who is listed in their Geographic Area. The local dispatch center must coordinate with the aircraft desk at SWCC to ensure the proper procedures are followed up in the Resource Ordering and Status System (ROSS).

If there are no SEATs available within the SWA, orders for additional SEATs must be processed through the established dispatch channels, i.e. from SWCC to NICC.

- **Ordering an Exclusive Use SEAT:**

Orders for an Exclusive Use SEAT will be placed through the established dispatch channels.

COMPONENT E: Standardized Briefing Elements

In order to ensure that SEAT Managers, pilots and support personnel receive consistent and critical information to safely perform their jobs, two types of briefings have been identified and will be utilized on interagency incidents:

Initial Pilot/Manager Briefing:

The initial briefing must cover the elements outlined in the “Initial Pilot / Manager Briefing” checklist, as required by the ISOG. The checklist can be found on the main page of the BLM National SEAT web site at:

<http://www.blm.gov/nifc/st/en/prog/fire/Aviation/Airops/seat.html>

The using agency may provide the SEAT Manager with additional briefing elements that are specific to their agency or aviation operations.

Daily Briefing:

The using agency must ensure that the SEAT Manager, pilot and support personnel receive a briefing each day. The agency can provide personnel to conduct a briefing, or supply the SEAT Manager with the necessary information to conduct their own. The minimum elements of the daily briefing must consist of:

- **Daily Intelligence:** *(Review the fire weather, planning levels, situation reports, and updates on the current fire status.)*
- **Airspace Deconfliction:** *(Updates on any new or existing Temporary Flight Restrictions, TFR’s in the area and any changes to the aerial hazard map)*
- **Communications:** *(Updates on any changes or additional frequencies)*
- **Operations:** *(Updates on changes with additional aircraft or aviation overhead, and a review on any planned aerial or ground mission that may affect SEATs.)*
- **Safety:** *(Relay any safety messages generated for the fire and aviation operations.)*

COMPONENT F: Standardize Information Given for Dispatching SEATs:

All dispatch orders for SEAT aircraft will be passed through the SEAT Manager that has been assigned operational control of the SEAT. SEAT Managers are required by the ISOG to ensure that the pilot receives a complete mission briefing prior to departure. The Aircraft Dispatch Form (NFES #2657) was designed for SEAT operations, and contains all the pertinent information that the SEAT Manager or Airtanker Base Manager need to conduct mission briefings. It is recommended that all agencies use this form to help standardize the critical information needed for dispatching SEATs. Airtanker Base Managers are authorized to oversee SEAT operations without the presence of the SEAT Manager, when a SEAT is assigned to work out of their base. Dispatch orders can be passed through the Airtanker Base Manager provided they have coordinated with the assigned SEAT Manager.

SEATs are required by contract to be ready for takeoff/dispatch within 15 minutes or longer if authorized by the government. The 15 minutes response time requirement begins after the SEAT pilot receives the dispatch and the complete mission briefing.

Note: Care should be taken by all personnel involved in dispatching aircraft to place emphasis on ensuring the pilot receives and clearly understands all components of the mission briefing rather than the response time requirements.

SEAT dispatches should include the following *minimum* information:

- Fire name and number
- Lat/Long (*degrees, decimal minutes*) and / or VOR radial and distance to fire.
- Elevation of the fire.

- Air-to-Air contact and frequency
- Air-to-Ground contact and frequency
- Other aviation resources order, inbound or over the fire.
- Any known aerial hazards
- Airspace deconfliction information (military training routes, TFRs, etc)
- Reload base information.

COMPONENT G: Standardized Retardant / Suppressant Materials Utilized

Only National Retardant Contract listed and approved retardants and/or suppression products will be used during SEAT operations. All agencies utilizing these products will participate in the Lot Acceptance / Quality Assurance (LA/QA) Program, as required by the National Retardant Contract. A list of approved products can be found on the Forest Service web site: Wildland Fire Chemical System (WFCS) <http://www.fs.fed.us/rm/fire/>

COMPONENT H: Key Elements Required for Safe and Effective SEAT Base Operations

SEATs can be operated from a variety of locations throughout the Southwest. Locations can vary greatly from well established air tanker bases to undeveloped isolated airstrips. No matter what type of base or locations SEATs are working from, minimum standards have been established to help ensure safe and effective operations:

- All runways and ramp areas will be used at the SEAT pilot's discretion.
- All locations must establish and maintain radio communications as required by the ISOG, the incident communications plan, the SWA Mobilization Guide, and the aircraft contract.
- The using agency must ensure that the appropriate arrangements have been made for use of the respective location.
- The SEAT Manager must be provided a briefing about the location by agency personnel prior to air operations.
- A crash/rescue plan must be established or under development for the site.
- A hazmat plan must be established or under development for the site.
- A Risk Management Worksheet (RMW) or Job Hazard Analysis (JHA) must be Available for the SEAT Manager to review and use at established SEAT bases.
- Adequate facilities and logistical support must be in place to ensure the welfare and safety of all personnel that are assigned to the SEAT operation.
- An assessment of security concerns or issues must be made by the using agency.

A SEAT Base Operating Plan (SEAT-Plan-001) must be developed for each site. The plan must be available to all personnel at the base. The SEAT Manager will ensure the operating plan is updated during the time frame they are assigned to the base. A blank SEAT-Plan-001 form can be found on the main page of the BLM National SEAT Web Site at: <http://www.blm.gov/nifc/st/en/prog/fire/Aviation/Airops/seat.html>

<i>Agency specific guidelines have been established by the following agency to help them meet their objectives and needs:</i>	
Agency	Agency Specific Guidelines for the Southwest Area
Region-3 U.S. Forest Service	Forest Service units will not operate SEAT aircraft from roads or highways.
Texas Forest Service	SEAT operations will be conducted at an approved airport or under the guidelines for off airport use with the approval of the AMO.
National Park Service	SEAT operations from other than an established airstrip require advance approval by the IMR Aviation Manager

COMPONENT I: Standardized Safety Reporting System Utilized by all Agencies

The safety and welfare of personnel is of the utmost importance in any aviation operation. An active program of hazard identification and reporting is critical for accident prevention and trend analysis.

Employees and contractors are responsible for continually monitoring all aspects of the SEAT operation for existing or potential hazards, and reporting them through the Safecom system. A Safecom is an aviation communiqué that is used to report any condition, act, observation or maintenance problem that may have the potential to cause an aviation related mishap.

COMPONENT J: Central Point Established for Information Dissemination

One of the key factors that helps unite multiple agencies located in a large geographic area is to establish a central point for information to be disseminated. Sharing information and having procedures/methods in place to effectively notify all personnel over a large geographical area of any safety concerns, issues or notices is an invaluable tool.

The SWA Aviation Committee will sponsor a site on the Southwest Area web site, at: http://gacc.nifc.gov/swcc/dispatch_logistics/aviation/aviation.htm

Posting information to the web site will be done through a designated member of the SWA Aviation Committee. The minimum SEAT information that will be displayed on the web site is:

- Direct link to the BLM National SEAT website and to the Aviation Management Directorate website
- Copy of the Southwest Area Interagency SEAT Operating Plan
- Copy of the SEAT Base Operating Plan (SEAT-Plan-001)
- Copies of RWA or JHA for SEAT Manager and SEAT Base Operations

Another good source of information related to SEAT safety and operations is the Aviation Lessons Learned web site:

<http://www.wildfirelessons.net/Additional.aspx?Page=177>

COMPONENT K: Mechanism Establish for a Feedback and Monitoring Loop

(Reserved for future development)

IX. HIGHER PREPAREDNESS LEVELS:

The Southwest Area Multi-Agency Coordinating (MAC) group is responsible for establishing area wide priorities and allocating scarce resources, including SEATs, at PL-3 to 5. The SWA Aviation Committee will provide the MAC Group with technical advice regarding SEAT use and potential priorities as requested by the MAC Group.

X. Example Southwest Interagency Delegation of Authority for SEAT Coordinator reviews

LETTERHEAD

Date:

Delegation From: Chair, Southwest Coordinating Group

Delegated To: XXXXXXXX

Authority is hereby given to XXXXXX to review all SEAT operations in the Southwest Geographic Area as a SEAT Coordinator (SECO). The SEAT Coordinator will comply with the guidelines established in the Interagency Single Engine Air Tanker (ISOG) for the SECO position.

In addition to the duties outlined in the ISOG, the following objectives have been identified for this assignment:

- Objective 1: Ensure all Geographic Area SEAT Operations are conducted in compliance with the ISOG.**
- Objective 2: Develop communications with local area aviation staff prior to SEAT base reviews, and close out with the local staff after reviews are completed.**
- Objective 3: Develop written report for Southwest Coordinating Group with any issues or recommendations.**
- Objective 4: Work with appropriate level aviation staff to immediately mitigate any significant safety issues.**
- Objective 5: Make recommendations and assessment of the best airports to base SW SEAT Operations in the SW. Include this list in the final written report.**

All signatory agencies to the Memorandum of Understanding for the Operations of the Southwest Coordinating Group (SWCG) have agreed to allow the SECO to review their SEAT operations, offer assistance as requested and help coordinate safe and efficient SEAT operations for the area. The primary agency contacts are:

NPS	Jeremy Lusher	928-638-7921
BLM, NM	John Selkirk	505-954-2192
USFS	Rance Irwin	505-842-3112
BIA	Dave Underwood	505-842-3866
BLM, AZ	Darren Mathis	602-417-9308
AZ State	Dale Brown	623-445-0274 ex 224
FWS	Julian Affuso	575-835-0040
NM State	Donald Griego	505-476-3349

The primary point of contact for the SECO will be YYYYYYYYY. The primary point of contact will be responsible for conducting an initial briefing to:

- Review the assignment objectives.
- Provide the SECO with contact names and phone numbers for each of the agencies listed above.
- Identify travel routes, time frames, check-in schedules, and priorities.

You are authorized to utilize a rental car and make additional travel arrangements as needed on this assignment. The expectation is that the inbrief will be in Phoenix, at ADC, at 1500 on 6-29-10. Please verify these arrangements with SWCC and YYYYYYYY to finalize. Some SWCG agency representatives may attend the inbrief. A conference call line should be set up so that out of state aviation reps may join the inbrief if available.

The SECO will conduct pre/post interviews with each agency identified, and provide the participating agencies with copies of the base evaluation forms and a formal report at the end of their assignment. A preliminary draft report should be completed within 5 days of the end of the physical reviews; the final report will be provided within 10 days to the chair of the SWCG to circulate to all SWCG agency reps.

The SECO will resource track through ZZZZZZZZ, (SWCC), and will be responsible for providing SWCC with emergency information, daily check-ins and planned itinerary routes. SWCC may also provide useful information on the past and current deployment of SEAT's in the Southwest.

This delegation of authority will run from June 29, 2010 through approximately July 7, 2010 and as needed to complete your mission requirements. It may be modified through arrangements with YYYYYYYYYY as the need arises.

Signed: Date:
Chair, Southwest Coordinating Group

XI. 2011 APPROVALS

Recommended: /s/ *John Selkirk* 4/22/2011
John Selkirk Date
Chair, Southwest Area Aviation committee

Approved: /s/ *Leon W. Ben, Jr* 4/27/11
Leon W. Ben, Jr. Date
Chair, Southwest Coordinating Group