



**NATIONAL INTERAGENCY FIRE CENTER**  
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**Memorandum**

Date: 4/13/2016

**To:** Geographic Area Center Managers

**From:** Communications Duty Officer (CDO) Coordinator, National Interagency Fire Center (NIFC), National Interagency Incident Communications Division (NIICD)

**Subject:** Initial Attack/Extended Attack/All Risk Management Zones (IA/EA/ARMZ) Air-to-Air AM Frequency Assignments in the Great Basin GACC for 2016 Fire Season.

**General Information:**

The Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) Spectrum Engineering group supports NIFC by engineering and providing coordination for the use of specific Very High Frequency (VHF), Air Traffic Control (ATC) AM frequencies. The coordination provided to NIFC NIICD CDO is to support the aeronautical spectrum requirements for federal agencies that use aircraft in support of wildfire and all-risk emergencies across the country.

NIFC through coordination with the GACC's divides the country into geographical communications zones that are similar to Tailored Service Volumes (TSV). Depending on the predicted incidence of fires, the FAA coordinates a number of VHF ATC frequencies per zone. Every year NIFC publishes maps "IA/EA/ARMZ Air-to-Air AM frequency" with these geographical zones and corresponding frequencies for their field units (dispatch center).

All IA/EA/ARMZ AM frequencies are validated on a yearly basis and reserved for that entire year. The FAA provides the required pre-coordination for frequencies in the aeronautical frequency bands and maintains those frequencies and associated technical parameters in the FAA's database for engineering purposes.

The FAA has the right to terminate or modify the transmit authorization on frequencies coordinated for firefighting at any time if needed to support an ATC requirement that cannot be met by any other means.

Only the CDO from the NIFC NIICD will request frequencies from the FAA. It is critical that these frequencies are used only at the location, service volume and function authorized.

**(The tailored service volume for an IA/EA/ARMZ A/A AM frequency is 5000 ft AGL within the IA/EA/ARMZ zone).** It is the responsibility of NIFC NIICD CDO and the dispatch offices to ensure compliance with this requirement. Frequencies engineered for firefighting responses, can also be used in other emergency situations such as All-Risk Incidents, Search and Rescue, etc. as long as they are properly coordinated with the NIFC CDO.

**Initial Attack Air-to-Air AM Assignments:**

Initial Attack (IA) frequencies are assigned for firefighting aircraft's immediate response within a zone. The number of frequencies that the FAA coordinates per zone depends on the predicted incidence of fires and the availability of frequencies. When more than one frequency is coordinated per zone, the secondary (and in some cases the tertiary) frequency will be used for additional fire emergencies in the zone. When no frequencies are assigned for a zone and a fire occurs, a frequency will be requested by the NIFC CDO and provided by the FAA in real time ("on demand").

By agreement with the FAA the primary, secondary and tertiary assignment are shown on the annual initial attack map and made available for official use only for the fire season.

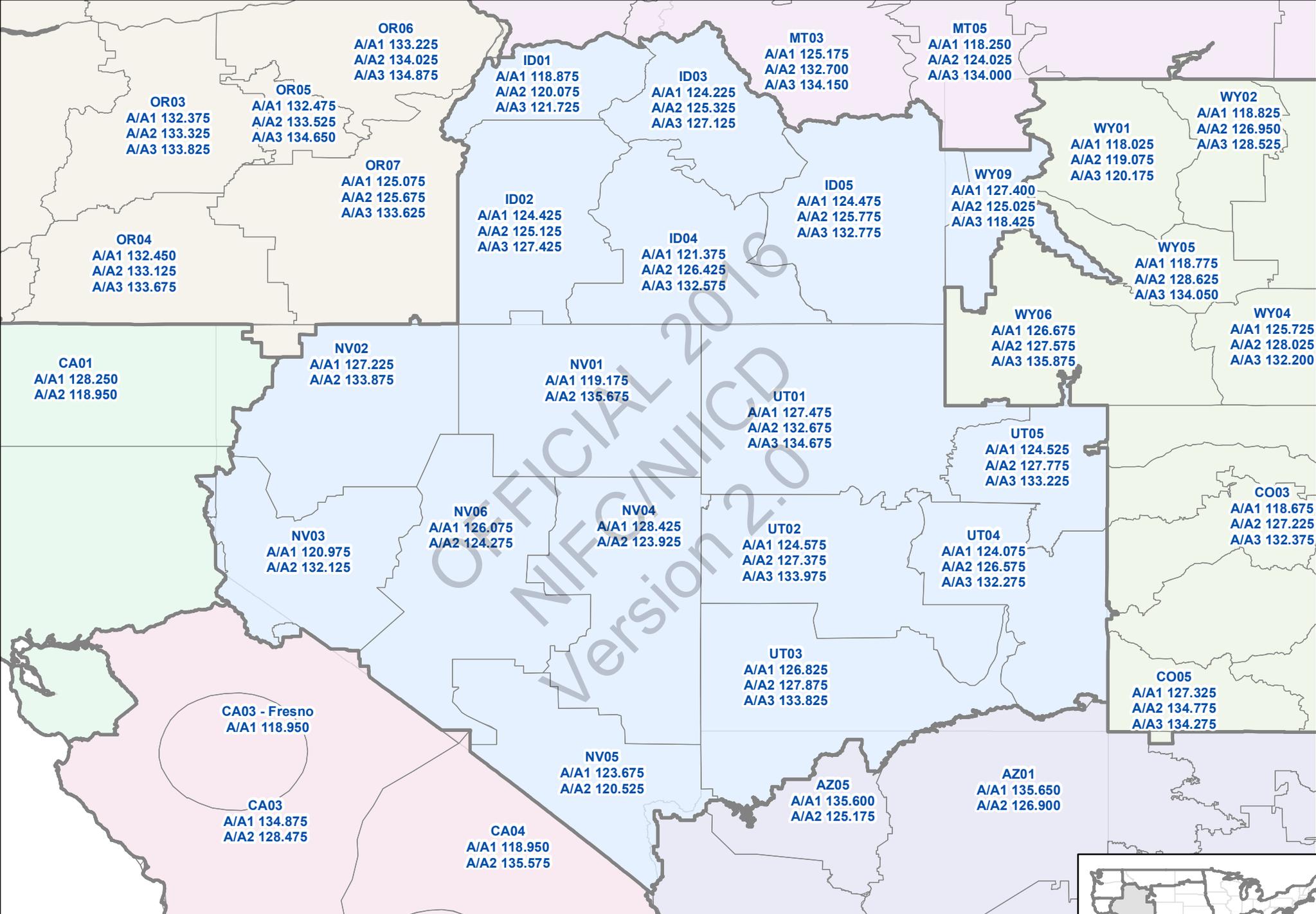
**Initial Attack Zone Boundaries:**

When changes to initial attack zone boundaries are planned, please notify your NIICD GACC representative as soon as possible. Your NIICD representative will be available to assist GACC managers with coordination of frequency requirements in order to facilitate a timely transition. This Coordination **will take up to one year to complete** due to the coordination needed with agency frequency managers and FAA frequency managers to insure aviation safety.

**Sensitive But Unclassified:**

Under the authority of the National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA), Department of Interior and Department of Agriculture have designated specific frequencies nationwide for assignment and use by NIFC to support their all-risk management missions. These radio frequency assignments are Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) release exempt and are to be protected as Sensitive But Unclassified (SBU) data.

# FAA Approved A/A AM Frequencies by Initial Attack Zone: Great Basin - GBCC



The frequencies on this map are Unclassified but Sensitive and are not releasable under the Freedom of Information Act



## Initial Attack Frequency Zone Management Plan

### Overview:

As fire severity levels increase and multiple initial attack responses occur, air operations also become increasingly more complex. The need to coordinate communications for Air-to-Air (A/A) and Air-to-Ground (A/G) becomes paramount for conducting safe and effective fire suppression responses. This Supplemental Interagency Communications Plan is intended to help provide guidance for more effective A/A and A/G communications between aircraft and local, state, and federal fire agencies during air operations for initial attack and extended initial attack situations.

### Air-to-Air:

Initial attack zones have AM frequencies pre-engineered by the FAA which must be recertified annually by NIICD. The re-certification will be documented by the CDO through an annual letter accompanied by updated zone maps distributed to agency Frequency Managers and the Geographic Area Center Manager. These maps will be shared by the GACC aviation dispatchers with all state and local cooperators.

This Communications Plan will be activated April 1st of each year, or earlier if conditions warrant. Upon activation the Geographic Area Center Manager, or designate, will receive approval for the use of IA/EA/ARMZ AM frequencies, in accordance with this plan, from the NIFC/NIICD/CDO. The authorization for use of AM frequencies will terminate on November 1st. However if conditions should warrant, extended use of these frequencies may be requested and must be coordinated through the NIFC CDO.

This plan establishes specific guidelines and a baseline reference for maintaining communications during IA/EA aviation operations. The plan has identified levels of communications support that correspond to the increased activity levels that can occur within a Zone(s) at any given time.

**VHF AM (Victor) Initial Attack/Extended Attack/All Risk Management Zones Aircraft Frequencies:** The operating conditions outlined below are intended to promote aircraft safety and provide for efficient use of the radio frequency spectrum.

### Frequency Management Plan:

The primary AM assignment is published at the beginning of the fire season. The secondary and tertiary assignment for the zone, if pre-engineered, will reside under the control of the GACC. The secondary and tertiary assignment can be quickly authorized for use by the zone as determined by the GACC. The CDO must be informed if the GACC determines to utilize the tertiary assignment.

VHF AM assignments are used for Air-to-Air communications and are authorized only within the assigned zone. **IA zone frequency assignments are not to be dedicated to project fires.**

**Primary Air-to-Air:**

- Published on zone map.
- Frequency issued by the GACC through ROSS to each zone with recertification by the CDO no later than April 1st.
- Availability for use upon issue as needed by the zone.

**Secondary Air-to-Air:**

- Published on zone map.
- Frequency held at GACC, ordered through ROSS, and issued based upon the activity occurring within the zone (Zone request to GACC).
- Availability: To IA zone under following conditions from GACC; Multiple tactical aircraft operating within the same zone requiring multiple frequencies for aviation safety.

**Tertiary Air-to-Air:**

- Published on zone map.
- Held by GACC (The CDO must be notified of usage)
- Availability: Conditional with coordination of the CDO by request of GACC.

**ROSS Ordering Process:**

- GACC will assign home dispatch to each zone (dispatch center) for primary initial attack air frequency.
- GACC will assign, via request in ROSS, all secondary and tertiary frequencies.

**ROSS Frequency Catalog Items:**

The following catalog items are the only items used to order aircraft frequencies:

- Air-to-Air AM
- Air-to-Air FM (for use in CA only)
- Air-to-Ground FM Logistics
- \*Tactical

\*Catalog item "Tactical" will remain in ROSS since Cal-Fire uses ROSS to assign ground tactical frequencies to Cal-Fire incidents.

**Any questions or comments may be directed to the On-Duty CDO:**

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