



Forest
Service

Washington
Office

1400 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20250

File Code: 5100/5700

Date: August 16, 2012

Route To:

Subject: Helicopter Night Flying Operations Program (HNO)

To: Regional Foresters, Area Director, Regional Fire Directors, Regional Aviation Officers

Safety is a Forest Service core value. Firefighter and public safety are the highest priorities on all wildfires. One way to reduce the risk to firefighters, the public, and the wildland urban interface is to actively engage some wildland fires at night. The Helicopter Night Operations Study concluded helicopters can operate safely and effectively at night on wildfire suppression missions through proper mitigation of risk.

Following careful research and deliberation, I have made the decision to implement a HNO program using one contracted night flying-equipped helicopter. The decision to initiate a HNO program is based on extensive risk management, business, and operations analyses. Based on these analyses, the Forest Service has concluded a helicopter equipped for night operations can operate safely, effectively, and efficiently. The decision to implement HNO was not made until the agency determined it could align its core value of human safety with effective night flying suppression operations.

The HNO Program will be based in southern California, conducting only water and retardant dropping missions using a fixed tank with ground fill. The Forest Service will continue to utilize cooperator night flying helicopters on an as-needed basis. The Forest Service helicopter will support wildfire suppression on Forest Service-protected lands, including wildland urban interface areas within and adjacent to the Angeles, Cleveland, and San Bernardino National Forests, and the southern half of the Los Padres National Forest.

Sincerely,

/s/ Victoria C. Christiansen (for)

JAMES E. HUBBARD

Deputy Chief, State and Private Forestry

cc: Robert A Baird, Thomas A Cook, John A Nelson, Scott Fisher, Arthur W Hinaman, Ezequiel N Parrilla, Aaron L Schoolcraft, Tom Harbour

