

Subject: U.S. Forest Service - Region 5 Pre-Request Criteria for Utilization of Night Flying Helicopters

Purpose: To ensure the safe, effective, and justified use of night-flying helicopter resources during initial or extended attack on USFS lands.

Night Fire Suppression Criteria:

With the recent expansion of night aerial fire suppression statewide, the need for dedicated support personnel and specific training for fire line personnel has been identified.

NVG operations shall only be conducted by flight crews that are current and qualified. Prior to dispatching an NVG-capable aerial resource, ECCs shall confirm with the at-scene Incident Commander and/or aerial supervisor that one or more of the following criteria exist, this shall be documented in the IROC order:

- **Immediate threat to life**
- **Immediate threat to structures**
- **Immediate threat to critical infrastructure**
- **Threat of significant fire growth**

Mission Effectiveness, Environment, Incident Complexity: Does a high degree of success in achieving incident objectives exist without burdensome procedures or other external factors? Consider factors affecting the performance of personnel, equipment, and organization, including time of day, wind and other weather conditions, topography, temperature, and altitude. Evaluate specific factors such as narrow canyons, urban infrastructure, forest canopy, and site selection. These factors should be eyed with caution as the operational environment is very dynamic. Determine how many aircraft are involved. Understand that the longer one is exposed to a hazard, the greater the risks. The situation evaluation includes considering how long the environmental conditions will remain stable and a determination of the complexity of the work.

The following checklist will be utilized to ensure criteria is met prior to requesting night resources.

Checklist for Night Operations:

Requested By: _____

Night Criteria Met (check all that apply):

- o Immediate threat to life
- o Immediate threat to structures
- o Immediate threat to critical infrastructure
- o Threat of significant fire growth

Night Support Established:

- o ECC is staffed for night operations
- o Incident AOBD / ASGS (night established)
- o Ground crews briefed on night operations
- o Night helibase support established
- o Night dip site staffed

Forest DO Approval: _____

GACC Approval: _____

Date: _____

Note: _____

NIGHT FLYING GUIDES AND POLICY

[2023 FireScope ICS 800.pdf](#)

[2025 USFS Night Helicopter and Night Aerial Supervision Plan_Final.pdf](#)

****Requests for tactical night flying aviation resources shall be initiated by on scene incident commander and or on scene aerial supervisor. Forest duty chief or CIMT IC approval for the request must be obtained prior to placing the order to the GACC.**

****CAL FIRE Night EU Helicopter utilization on LRA/FRA fires is at the discretion of the Unit or Region Duty Chief as it would during the day for Agency or EU Helicopters.**

This document is a pre-request guide to help field and aviation personnel ensure conditions are aligned with USFS policy, safety standards, and interagency agreements before engaging night aerial operations

Position Contacts:

Regional Aviation Officer: Josh Mathiesen (530) 949-5294

Helicopter Program Manager: Kyle Tolosano (503) 605-7334

Regional Aviation Safety Officer: Lyndsay Johnson (661) 565-6843

Helicopter Operations Specialist: Matt Muller (916) 767-9787