

# **2025 Region 5 Night Air Operations Mobilization and Notification Procedures**

Updated August 2025

## **Background**

The Forest Service Night Air Operations (NAO) program will support wildfire suppression efforts on Forest Service-protected lands statewide. NAO aircraft are available for night aerial firefighting operations, including missions in wildland-urban interface (WUI) areas, throughout the Region. Night operations will typically be conducted within one (1) hour flight time from the aircraft's primary host base. For planning purposes, exceptions involving missions exceeding this range may be considered with appropriate coordination.

Aircraft hosting units and receiving incident units conducting NAO will only be conducted with adequately staffed ECCs (see below). Dispatch and mobilization of night flying aircraft are predicated on two possible scenarios:

- The host unit and incident Geographic Area Coordination Center (GACC) is staffed overnight.
- The host unit and receiving incident's GACC is not staffed overnight.

## **Hosting**

NAO aircraft will be hosted within a Geographic Area (GA) that demonstrates a need for night operations based on current or forecasted fire severity. Within each GA, a designated national forest will be responsible for hosting and supporting these assets. That forest must ensure the availability of operational, logistical, and personnel necessary to sustain safe and effective nighttime operations. The host unit must confirm adequate dispatch staffing is in place before aircraft are positioned. Prior approval is required to utilize NAO resources outside of the designated locations. Authorization must be obtained from the GACC Duty Chief who will coordinate with appropriate personnel. Approval or denial will be documented on the resource order by the GACC.

## **Dispatching**

All NAO aircraft must be dispatched by a qualified Aircraft Dispatcher (ACDP) or under their direct supervision. If a qualified ACDP is not immediately available, a qualified Initial Attack Dispatcher (IADP) may dispatch aircraft for night operations, conduct flight following, and manage emergency procedures.

## **Status Updates**

For ECC's within GACCs which are staffed overnight, NAO aircraft status updates should be communicated to the GACC aircraft desk as they would during the day.

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In areas where the host GACC is not staffed overnight, the host ECC will notify the GACC Aviation Duty Officer via cell phone anytime there is a status change with NAO aircraft.

### **Mobilization to Incidents**

Once the ECC has been notified that the pre-request criteria for utilization of night flying helicopters has been met, the requesting ECC will provide the required information pursuant to e-FC-106 California Interagency Aircraft Dispatch (CIAD). This will be followed up by a resource order.

Night-flying aircraft should be released at the end of each shift. Next evening assignments should be reevaluated daily.

For ECC's within GACCs which are staffed overnight, aircraft will be requested and dispatched at night, as they are during the day, utilizing the appropriate intercom. Immediately after making the request for night flying aircraft, the requesting ECC will follow up with the resource request to the GACC. The GACC will place the request to the NAO Aircraft host unit ECC.

Incident aircraft updates (releases, etc.) should be communicated to the GACC accordingly.

The GACC should send a text notification to the NAO Update list using their pre-identified GACC process (off base assigned and back on base status).

In Geographic Areas where the GACC is not staffed overnight, the requesting ECC will complete the required FC 106 and call the on-call ACOR to notify of a pending request. The ACOR should immediately place the request to the host dispatch.

When night flying aircraft are canceled or back on base, the hosting ECC will notify the GACC Federal Aviation Duty Officer(ACOR). The GACC should send a text notification to the NAO Update list using their pre-identified GACC process (off base assigned and back on base status).

For all planned need mapping missions for the NAO Air Attack, the host ECC will ensure that there is an incident contact name and phone number included in the resource order. This will allow the ATGS to contact the incident directly to determine and discuss incident needs.

When a Mishap Plan is initiated, the GACC Federal Aviation Duty Officer (ACOR) will be notified by the ECC (see contact list for phone number).

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### GACC Responsibilities

The GACC Federal Aviation Duty Officer will be the contact for all night flying mobilization. The GACC Federal Aviation Duty Officer will ensure the appropriate dispatch organization is in place before the NAO aircraft launches to the incident. The GACC aircraft desk will deconflict the airspace with the military and relay the status of Military Training Routes (MTR) traffic to the sending and receiving ECCs.

If a TFR or additional frequencies are needed, they will be requested through the GACC aircraft desk and will be followed up with the resource order request to the GACC.

For all planned need mapping missions for the IAA Aircraft, the host ECC and GACC will ensure that there is an incident contact name and phone number included in the resource order. The requesting ECC will place all planned need mapping orders in the resource ordering system, corresponding FC-106, [Incident Awareness and Assessment Hub](#) and incident priorities to hosting ECC so they can relay the information to the IAA Aircraft.

NOTE: If multiple initial attack requests for the night flying aircraft occur at the same time the GACC Federal Aviation Duty Officer will determine which incident will receive the aircraft based on the following Risk Assessment Prioritization and the incident report of conditions.

What are the critical values at risk?

1. Lives are or will be threatened.
2. Structures are or will be threatened.
3. Resources of significant value are or will be threatened.
4. Excessively high suppression costs will be prevented.

What is the chance the critical values will be impacted?

What is the relative probability of success associated with the alternatives being considered?

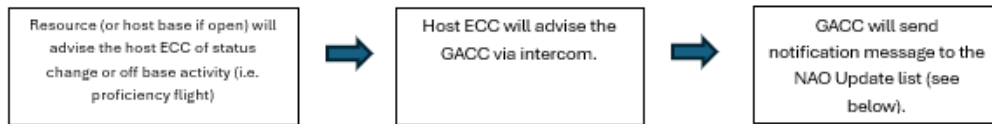
The GACC Federal Aviation Duty Officer is responsible for Regional notifications to the pre-determined contact list of the NAO aircraft status and missions. (see table 1)

- OSC Aviation Duty Officer: (951)320-2093
- ONC Aviation Duty Officer: See North Ops Morning Lineup (email)
- If the GACC Aviation Duty Officer does, contact the GACC Duty Chief
  - OSC: 951-276-6725
  - ONC: 530-226-2873

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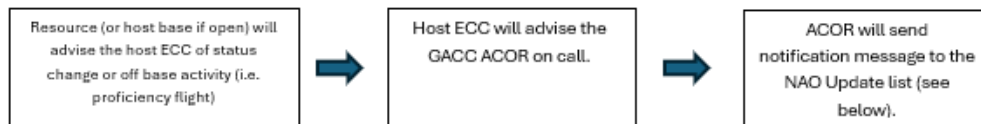
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*Figure 1: Status updates for ECCs within GACCs which are staffed overnight*

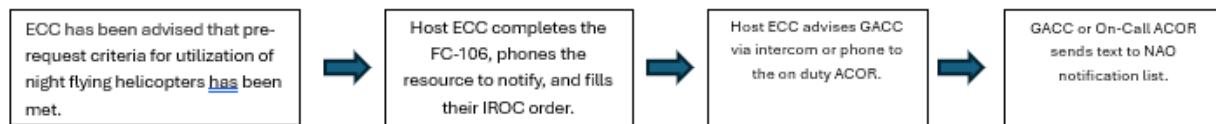


In areas where the host GACC is not staffed overnight, the host ECC will notify the GACC Aviation Duty Officer via cell phone anytime there is a status change with NAO aircraft.

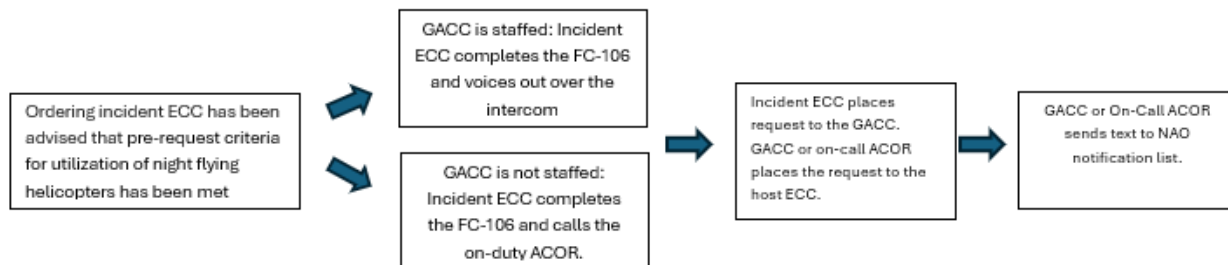
*Figure 2. Status updates for ECCs within GACCs which are not staffed overnight*



*Figure 3. Dispatch to an on-forest incident*



*Figure 4: Dispatch to another forest or cooperator incident*



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*Table 1: USFS R5 NAO Notification List*

NAME	POSITION	CELL NUMBER	E-MAIL
Vacant	Deputy Director		
Josh Mathiesen	RAO	530-515-9272	<a href="mailto:joshua.mathiesen@usda.gov">joshua.mathiesen@usda.gov</a>
Lyndsay Johnson	ASO	661-565-6843	<a href="mailto:Lyndsay.Johnson@usda.gov">Lyndsay.Johnson@usda.gov</a>
Kyle Tolosano	Heli Prog. Mgr.	530-605-7334	<a href="mailto:Kyle.tolosano@usda.gov">Kyle.tolosano@usda.gov</a>
D. Scott Smith	Fixed Wing Prog. Mgr	530-307-9171	<a href="mailto:David.s.Smith@usda.gov">David.s.Smith@usda.gov</a>
Matt Muller	HOS	916-767-9787	<a href="mailto:matthew.p.muller@usda.gov">matthew.p.muller@usda.gov</a>
Josh Hutchison	HOS	916-709-6747	<a href="mailto:Joshua.Hutchison@usda.gov">Joshua.Hutchison@usda.gov</a>
Casey Jones	HOS	559-696-3878	<a href="mailto:casey.jones6@usda.gov">casey.jones6@usda.gov</a>
Anthony Herbert	NAO Prog. Mgr	503-521-4854	<a href="mailto:anthony.herbert@usda.gov">anthony.herbert@usda.gov</a>
Jerry Spence	AS Prog. Mgr.	530-262-4733	<a href="mailto:gerald.spence@usda.gov">gerald.spence@usda.gov</a>