

Chapter 50

Aircraft Operations

AIRCRAFT OPERATIONS Refer to RMG Ch. 50 (Pg. 85)

Mobilization

Between the hours of 2200 and 0500 charter pilots shall not be dispatched. Orders for charter aircraft should not be placed with vendors between these hours unless the vendors have a separate dispatcher available. Operators should be queried to ensure duty limitations are being met.

Ordering Procedures

Aerial Fire Detection

All requests for aerial detection within the Casper Interagency Dispatch area for ongoing incidents or after thunderstorms, should originate from the Zone/District FMOs/FOSs and be placed through the Dispatch Center. Coordination and prioritization will occur if more than one unit requests a flight. The dispatcher will initiate procedures to acquire the appropriate aircraft from either Forest Service agreements or OAS source lists. The Dispatch Center will establish the flight following process in accordance with the Interagency Standards for Fire and Fire Aviation Operations (Red Book).

Air Tankers and Lead Planes

All air tanker, lead plane and smokejumper requests will be placed through the Dispatch Center. The acquisition of aircraft will follow agency guidelines. All requests for tactical aircraft will be filled on a first come, first served basis unless multiple incidents require the establishment of priorities. In such an instance, the Dispatch Center Manager will consult with the local Multi-Agency Coordination Group. Until that meeting can occur, priorities will be established in accordance with policies and procedures set forth in the National Mobilization Guide. Aerial retardant drops will be used only when authorized by the agency with jurisdictional responsibility.

Helicopters

All requests for helicopters and helitack crews will be placed through the Dispatch Center with dispatching done according to agency guidelines. Flight following will be conducted through the Dispatch Center.

Prioritizing Incidents Refer to RMG Ch. 50 (Pg. 88) [Pg 86](#)

Aircraft Demobilization Refer to RMG Ch. 50 (Pg. 88) [Pg 86](#)

Flight Management Procedures Refer to specific Unit Aviation Plans, ISRM Ch. 50 (Pg. 63)

Unless exempted by 351 DM 1.4, all flights will be conducted with an approved flight plan.

Point-to-Point: Flights will be tracked by a FAA - visual flight rules (VFR) or instrument flight rules (IFR) flight plan or on an international Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) flight plan; or in accordance with a Bureau approved flight plan program; or in accordance with an OAS Director approved vendor flight program specified in a DOI procurement document. FAA flight plans may be supplemented by agency flight plans and the administrative tracking and notification procedures specified in the *National and Geographic Area Mobilization Guide*. A qualified flight manager (per *OPM-04*) will be assigned to perform the administrative functions and assure a briefing is given to the pilot and a pre-flight safety briefing is given to the passengers (reference *National Interagency Mobilization Guide* Chapter 20 for specific responsibilities). A 9400-1a Form or other Aircraft Flight Strip (per Dispatch SOP) will be utilized to provide dispatch with the appropriate aircraft and pilot information, a passenger manifest, and an estimated time of departure and arrival.

Special Use Flights: Agency flight plans for fire/emergency mission flights will be documented on the Aircraft Flight Strip (per Dispatch SOP) and/or Resource Order. Agency flight plans for non-fire/non-emergency mission flights will be documented on the 9400-1a Flight Request/Schedule or equivalent Aircraft Flight Strip (per Dispatch SOP) and/or PASP. The flight manager and the pilot will plan the mission together. Approval to conduct non-fire/non-emergency mission flights is required prior to flight (see *NAP* 4.3.2). Elements to be considered are:

- Type of mission
- Environmental conditions – departure point, route, destination
- Time frames
- Logistics – fuel, landing areas, equipment, support crew
- Communications
- Airspace, flight hazards
- Aircraft and/or Pilot carding requirements (i.e ACETA, Low-Level, etc. reference OPM-29)

For all point-to-point flights, a Flight Request Form will be filled out.

Flight following procedures for aircraft flying non-point-to-point require a status check at 15-minute intervals. This can be accomplished utilizing Automated Flight Following (AFF) or by radio check-ins. The following information should be documented at each 15-minute interval:

- Time of check in.
- Current position of aircraft (Latitude/Longitude and geographic landmark if known).
- Direction of travel (unless orbiting or consistently working in one area).
- Any changes in flight plan or status.

Prior to any flight, the aircraft dispatcher should have a full understanding of the purpose of the mission, destination, duration, persons on board, check-in intervals, communication networks, and emergency procedures in the event of an accident/mishap. The aircraft dispatcher and pilot must agree to which method of flight following will take place (AFF with 15 or 30 min “ops normal” radio check-ins/strictly radio check-ins). Pilots must monitor at least one predetermined radio frequency as an alternate means of flight following in the event the AFF system fails in the aircraft or in dispatch, or in case dispatch needs to cancel a mission, divert the aircraft to a higher priority incident, or relay other critical information regarding hazardous weather, TFRs, etc. Regardless of AFF being used, radio communications must be maintained with all aircraft which the dispatcher has agreed to flight follow. If radio communications cannot be maintained through the duration of the flight, the flight will be immediately terminated, and the dispatch office contacted. The exception to this is, if the lack of communications is temporary and there are mitigation measures in place. For instance, if the aircraft is working in a known radio dead zone and the pilot/manager and dispatch have agreed that at predetermined intervals, not to exceed 30 minutes, the aircraft will return to an area with radio coverage and check-in as well as AFF is positively maintained. For flights crossing dispatch area boundaries and when the aircraft has flown out of radio contact, the dispatch center area it has flown into will be contacted and the aircraft “handed off”. The flight will not be closed out with CPC until it is confirmed that another dispatch center has radio communications with the aircraft.

Refer to the Airspace Boundary Plan contained in the Unit Aviation Plan for flights taking place in the common corridor along dispatch boundaries.

Point-to-Point Flight Following

The sending dispatch center has the ultimate responsibility for flight following. This responsibility may be handed off to RMACC for fire mobilization flights. If the flight was originated by CPC, then the Chief of Party/Flight Manager or pilot will notify CPC of any delays and upon arrival at the final destination (unless the flight following has been handed off to RMACC).

Automated Flight Following (AFF) Requirements & Procedures Refer to ISRM Ch. 50 (Pg. 66)

Aircraft Accident/Incident Reporting Refer to RMG Ch. 50 (Pg. 92) [Pg 89](#)

All accidents and incidents will be reported immediately to the Dispatch Center and appropriate line officers. Emergency procedures will be followed as outlined in the Aircraft Incident/Accident Response Guide. SAFECOMs need to be filed by persons that observed or were involved with the incident. A copy of the SAFECOM will be provided to the Unit Aviation Officer.

Overdue and Missing Aircraft Refer to RMG Ch. 50 (Pg. 92) [Pg 90](#)

Airborne Thermal Infrared (IR) Fire Mapping Refer to RMG Ch. 50 (Pg. 116) and ISRM Ch. 50 (Pg. 78)

Lead Planes

A lead plane, Air Attack, or air tanker coordinator is required for the following missions:

- Two or more air tankers will be over the incident at the same time or at staggered intervals of 15 minutes or less.
- Any mission where the air tanker pilot is not IA rated.
- The fire is in a congested area.
- Wherever any air tanker is operating over an incident within 30 minutes prior to official sunset of the nearest air tanker base.
- Wherever any air tanker is operating over an incident within 30 minutes after official sunrise of the nearest air tanker base

If a lead plane is not available, a qualified Air Tactical Group Supervisor may be used until a lead plane arrives, as long as the air tanker Pilot-In-Charge (PIC) is IA rated. Non-IA rated PIC's require a lead plane. Refer to section 24.6.2 of the RMG – Aerial Supervision Requirements in the Rocky Mountain Area Matrix for additional guidance.

Aerial Supervision Modules (ASM1) Refer to RMG Ch. 50 (Pg. 98)

Aerial Supervision Requirements Refer to RMG Ch. 50 (Pg. 98)

Air Tactical and Reconnaissance Aircraft Refer to RMG Ch. 50 (Pg. 98)

Exclusive Use Contract Helicopters Refer to RMG Ch. 50 (Pg. 107) and ISRM Ch. 50 (Pg. 70)

All initial attack requests for the State Helicopter will be placed with Casper Interagency Dispatch. CPC will be responsible for flight following the State Ship at all times (unless handed off to another Dispatch Center or flight following local), this includes project work, fires, and re-positioning. All orders for the helicopter will be placed with Casper Dispatch. Individual overhead orders for any members of the module will be placed with Casper Dispatch. The helicopter will be mobilized with the module, chase truck, and fuel truck unless different instructions are specified at the time of the order.

Orders for project work will be coordinated with the Helicopter Manager prior to ordering through Casper Dispatch.

Helicopter – Call When Needed (CWN) Refer to RMG Ch. 50 (Pg 108)

All CWN helicopters will be ordered through CPC. If the CWN is for fire suppression the order will then be placed with RMACC. If it is for a non-fire incident, CPC in conjunction with the unit aviation manager will utilize the OAS source list or USFS rental agreements and obtain an appropriate aircraft for the mission.

When a CWN helicopter is used, it must have appropriate level of supervision depending on size and mission. A qualified Helicopter Manager or Project Manager must inspect the aircraft prior to use.

1 Modules are not automatically ordered by RMACC when a helicopter order is filled by a CWN aircraft.
2 CPC dispatchers need to order the module upon notification that a CWN is filling the order. The module
3 is ordered on an Overhead order and cross-referenced with the Aircraft order.
4

5 Refer to the appropriate agency aviation plan for guidance concerning use of aircraft for non-fire flights
6 and projects.
7

8 **High Desert District** sponsors a Type 3 Helicopter located in Rawlins, WY. It is available to the units
9 within the Casper Interagency Dispatch area. Orders for the helicopter will be placed through the Casper
10 Interagency Dispatch Center, coordinated with HDD Duty Officer or FMO.

11
12 **Wyoming State Forestry** sponsors a Type 3 Helicopter located outside of Glenrock, WY. Orders for the
13 helicopter will be placed to the Casper Interagency Dispatch Center. Units using this helicopter need to
14 be aware that if a higher priority fire occurs on State and/or private land anywhere within the State of
15 Wyoming the State Duty Officer may require it to be released off the incident to respond to the
16 State/private land incident.
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18 **Large Transport Aircraft** Refer to RMG Ch. 50 (Pg. 106)
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20 **Passenger/Cargo Manifest** Refer to RMG Ch. 50 (Pg. 107)
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22 **Airtanker Dispatch** Refer to RMG Ch. 50, (Pg. 101)
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24 **Airtanker Use in Optional and Post Season Periods** Refer to ISRM Ch. 50 (Pg. 79)
25

26 **Modular Airborne Firefighting Systems (MAFFS)** Refer to ISRM Ch. 50 (Pg. 80)
27

28 **Single Engine Airtankers (SEATS)** Refer to RMG Ch. 50 (Pg. 103), ISRM Ch. 50 (Pg.81) and the SEAT
29 Operations Guide for general policy and guidelines.
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31 **Tanker/Retardant/SEAT Bases**

32 There are several fixed Retardant Bases are managed by neighboring Dispatch Centers. These bases
33 are available to reload heavy airtankers for incidents within the CPC area. Call RMACC for reload
34 availability.
35

36 SEAT bases are located at Greybull, Worland and Riverton within the Cody Dispatch Zone. Other SEAT
37 bases around the state include but are not limited to Casper, Gillette and Rock Springs. Those dispatch
38 centers will need to be contacted for activation. Contact the BLM duty officer for activation of the
39 Greybull, Worland, or Riverton SEAT base.
40

41 **Temporary Flight Restrictions (TFR) (FAR 91.137)** Refer to RMG Ch. 50 (Pg. 115)

42 All TFR's will be ordered through Casper Interagency Dispatch Center and then CPC will place them with
43 RMACC. It is important that after the need for a TFR no longer exists, that CPC is notified so that the
44 TFR can be released.
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46 **Military Training Routes (MTR) and Special Use Airspace (SUA)** Refer to RMG Ch. 50 (Pg. 113)
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48 **Airspace Conflicts** Refer to RMG Ch. 50 (Pg. 112) and ISRM Ch. 50 (Pg. 85)
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50 **FAA Temporary Airport Control Tower Operations** Refer to RMG Ch. 50 (Pg. 117) and ISRM Ch. 50
51 (Pg. 85)
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53 **Dedicated Radio Frequencies and Management** Refer to RMG Ch. 50 (Pg. 118) and ISRM h. 50 (Pg.
54 84)
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1 **Frequency Management**

2 Federal and State Land Management Agencies agree to the sharing of specific radio frequencies that are
3 authorized/licensed for each agency. Shared frequencies are to provide efficient, cost effective
4 radio/communication support in protecting life and property. The sharing of frequencies is under the
5 authority of the NTIA Regulations Manual, Sections 7.3.1,7.3.4, and 7.5.1 and the FCC Rules and
6 Regulations, Part 90, Sections 90.405 and 90.407. Refer to the specific County Annual Operating Plan
7 for the shared frequencies within the CPC zone.

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9 **Interagency Interim Flight & Duty Limitations** Refer to RMG Ch. 10 (Pg. 5)
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