

National Multi-Agency Coordinating Group

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To: Geographic Area Coordination Group Chairs

From: National Multi-Agency Coordinating Group

Subject: Unmanned Aircraft System (UAS) incursions on wildfires

The number of incidents of unauthorized UAS, also known as drones, being flown by the public over or near wildfires has increased steadily the past three years. UAS incursions have been experienced by Federal, state and local jurisdictions in twelve states around the country. To date, the 2017 fire season has had **eleven** reported UAS incursions with ten of these events requiring fire aircraft to shut down to reduce risk. UAS incursions have become a known recurring hazard which should be expected and planned for, especially on emerging incidents.

The NWCG has endorsed a response protocol through NWCG Memo 16-006 which provides information on notifications and actions based on risk levels. The protocol can be found as an attachment to this document, on the Interagency Fire Unmanned Systems Subcommittee resources page or by using the following link:

<https://www.nwcg.gov/sites/default/files/eb-m-16-006a.pdf>

The UAS incursion protocol provides information about reporting incursions to the Air Tactical Group Supervisor (ATGS), Incident Commander, Dispatch, Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), Law Enforcement and documenting the event through a hazard reporting system, such as SAFECOM. A reporting script for UAS airspace notifications has been developed in coordination with the FAA. The script allows necessary information to be gathered and reported to the FAA for their use in airspace enforcement. The reporting script can be found as an attachment to this memo, on the Southwest Coordination Center's aviation webpage or by using the following link:

https://gacc.nifc.gov/swcc/dispatch_logistics/dispatch/mobguide/Attachments/Reporting%20UAS%20Situation%20A RTCC%20Script.pdf

The National Interagency Fire Center in Boise has developed multiple tools to help with public education, including a flyer, PSAs, and templates for both electronic and social media. Strong public educational efforts are critical to raising awareness of the risk to firefighters both in the air and on the ground. The communication tools can be found on the NIFC website or by using the following link: https://www.nifc.gov/PIO_bb/fs.html

Key points:

- Expect the known hazard of a UAS incursion by the public, especially on emerging incidents.
- Safety of flight for our fire aviators should be primary when making risk decisions.
- Make appropriate notifications to the ATGS, Incident Commander, FAA and Law Enforcement.
- Submit an aviation hazard report (e.g. SAFECOM or FC-119) to share information about the hazard and document the risk fire aviators are facing.

/s/ Dan Buckley
Chair, NMAC

Attachment: NWCG Memo 16-006

