

CALIFORNIA MASTER COOPERATIVE WILDLAND FIRE MANAGEMENT AND STAFFORD ACT RESPONSE AGREEMENT

EXHIBIT G

Interagency Aircraft Utilization Guidelines

Introduction

Aircraft are limited resources that can have a critical effect on the success of wildfire suppression efforts, therefore the State and Federal Agencies strive to achieve a high level of interagency cooperation in the utilization of aircraft.

The shared acquisition, deployment, and utilization of aviation facilities and resources to achieve fire suppression objectives are in the best interest of both state and federal taxpayers.

Therefore, it is incumbent upon the employees of all agencies to work cooperatively to achieve efficient utilization of aviation resources.

Deployment and Utilization

“Agency aircraft” deployed for initial attack in California are strategically located. All firefighting aircraft will be dispatched in accordance with the closest forces concept.

Air Tankers

A. Initial Attack

For initial attack on any fire, the responsible State or Federal Agency dispatch office may directly dispatch “uncommitted” air tankers located at the base closest to the fire, regardless of whether the aircraft are owned/operated by State or Federal Agency. Additional air tankers must be requested through dispatch channels. The closest available air tanker will be mobilized. The unit dispatcher will send the closest air tanker based at their unit. If the closest air tanker is on an adjacent unit and is listed in the unit’s wildland response plan, the dispatcher may place the request directly to that dispatch office. If said air tanker is not available, the request will be placed with the GACC for the closest available. If a federal incident requires “load and return” of State air tankers or additional air tankers are requested for the incident, the appropriate command center will request Federal air tankers to replace the State air tankers.

B. Diverts

If the closest air tankers to a new fire are already committed to other fires, a divert would normally be made, except when the Incident Commander has declared a No Divert, due to an immediate, critical threat to life.. The using dispatch office must immediately notify the appropriate higher-level dispatch office of any No Divert situation. While the specific divert process used may vary by protection unit and circumstance, each dispatch office has operational control of any aircraft in its jurisdictional airspace assigned to its agency’s Order Number. In order to meet new incident initial attack needs without undue delay, the responsible dispatch office should normally give the divert order directly to the Aerial Supervision aircraft.

Diverts between protection units are to be requested through the appropriate Federal Agency GACC or Region Command Center (RCC).

C. Extended Attack/Major Incidents

Units will release all air tankers daily and place requests for the next day needs by 1900 hr each night. The GACC coordinators will be responsible for negotiation with the protection unit to identify how many of the air tankers are available for initial attack. Assignment of air tankers will be based on operational need and efficiency, State air tankers should NOT be considered as a replacement for Federal aircraft on extended attack or major Federal incidents in California.

Requests for more than 4 State air tankers on a Federal or local government incident require CAL FIRE Region Duty Chief notification/approval.

All air tankers assigned to an extended attack or major incident will be released each night, regardless of their actual overnight location, and reordered with a new Request Number for the next day.

In the case where there are more air tankers available at the base than originally requested or allotted for the incident assignment, the incident or air attack base can request rotational use of all the available air tankers. This must be approved on case by case bases with concurrence of the Agency Duty Chief, IC of the Incident. Approvals will only be for that incident on that day. At no time will additional air tankers be dispatched to an incident unless it has been issued its own "A" request number.

When arranging the assignment of air tankers to a major incident, the coordinating dispatchers should cooperatively maintain adequate initial attack coverage while meeting the operational needs of the incidents. Assignment of air tankers shall be based on operational need and efficiency.

When several air tankers are operating out of one base, individual aircraft should be rotated to assure adequate crew rest and operational equity. The total number of air tankers assigned shall not be augmented by rotation; every air tanker brought into the rotation must have a Request Number and replace one of the aircraft that was already flying.

Aerial Supervision Aircraft

Aerial supervision aircraft are shared resources, and are used interchangeably on the fires of all cooperating agencies.

A. Initial Attack

The aerial supervision aircraft closest to the fire will be directly dispatched by the responsible dispatch office.

If the closest aerial supervision aircraft is not available, the ordering unit will place the request through established dispatch channels.

B. Diverts

One of the major roles of the Air Tactical Group Supervisor (ATGS) is to ensure airspace safety over an incident. An aerial supervision aircraft may be diverted to a new incident only when it is the closest resource and the diversion will not adversely affect the safe separation and coordination of aircraft remaining on the incident. The aerial supervision aircraft should be used on the incident with the greatest immediate need for airspace safety coordination. An additional aerial supervision aircraft can be ordered for the other incident.

C. No Divert

A "No Divert" notification of air support is for the direct and immediate threat to life of a firefighter or the public. The incident commander shall contact the ECC and advise of a "No Divert". When the threat has passed, the incident commander shall immediately advise the ECC that the "No Divert" is lifted. This

procedure shall be used for genuine emergencies only. An advancing fire or structure threat is not, in itself, enough justification to request a “No Divert”.

D. Extended Attack/Major Incidents

For long-term air operations, more than one aerial supervision aircraft and ATGS should be assigned for rotation to assure adequate crew rest and continuous coverage. For large or complex operations, a second aerial supervision aircraft or a Lead Plane/Plane can be utilized as the Air tanker Coordinator, to maintain an appropriate span of control and aerial supervision in support of the incident objectives.

E. Supplemental Detection

Aerial supervision aircraft may be used as necessary for supplemental detection following lightning storms or for other purposes. Adjacent units should coordinate through appropriate dispatch channels as necessary. Sometimes it may be more efficient to use administrative aircraft or “Call-When-Needed” (CWN) aircraft for supplemental detection, keeping the aerial supervision aircraft available for new incident responses.

Lead Planes/ASM

A Lead Plane or ASM can be requested in support of any agency’s incidents; to include wildland fires in support of air tankers in accordance with Interagency policy or when they are requested for by an air tanker or aerial supervision aircraft regardless of agency. .

Lead Planes or ASM’s will be requested through established dispatch channels.

Helicopters

A. Initial Attack

The closest available helicopter with crew will be mobilized, regardless of the agency requesting the helicopter or ownership of said aircraft. A helicopter without crew may be mobilized if requested. The request will be placed through established dispatch channels to the agency administering the helicopter base.

B. Extended Attack/Major Incidents

Requests for additional helicopters after initial attack will be placed through established dispatch channels.

Because the initial attack helicopter modules are so valuable on initial attack, it is desirable to replace them with CWN helicopters when such aircraft are available and can meet the mission needs of the incident. If an initial attack helicopter is not being used for tactical firefighting purposes, it should be replaced with a CWN helicopter and module whenever possible.

C. Call-When-Needed (CWN) Helicopters

CWN helicopters with a module may be sent to the incident as an additional resource.

D. Non-Fire Use

Agency helicopters and exclusive use helicopters may be ordered on a reimbursable basis for emergency non-fire missions.

Military Aircraft

Military aircraft ordered by type, may be used only after available agency and commercial aircraft are committed following existing guides and agreements.

Dispatching Procedures

Follow national and state mobilization guides.

Aircraft Accident Investigation

Pursuant to Public Law 103-411, the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) has been given the authority and responsibility to perform all aircraft accident investigations. If requested by the NTSB, the agency on whose order number the aircraft was assigned will take the lead in assisting with the investigation. As a result, the other involved agency (ies) will be in a supporting role. Refer to CFMA, Accident Investigations.

The sharing of information between agencies on accident investigations and their findings and probable causes is a valuable tool for safety and must be encouraged.