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NWCG Standards for Aerial Supervision

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- The *NWCG Standards for Aerial Supervision* establishes standards for aerial supervision operations for national interagency wildland fire operations. These standards:
- Promote safe, cost-efficient, and effective aviation services in support of agency and interagency goals and objectives.
- Support standardization of Aerial Supervision operations, training, certification, and currency.
- Standardize Aerial Supervision mission procedures to enhance safety, effectiveness, efficiency, and professionalism.
- Provide guidance on aerial firefighting strategy, tactics, and risk management.
- Provide or reference other performance support materials for aerial supervisors.

Supplemental documents for the *NWCG Standards for Aerial Supervision*, PMS 505, are found at <https://www.nwcg.gov/publications/505>. These documents are separate to enable the use and editing of forms and logs as appropriate.

The National Wildfire Coordinating Group (NWCG) provides national leadership to enable interoperable wildland fire operations among federal, state, tribal, territorial, and local partners. NWCG operations standards are interagency by design; they are developed with the intent of universal adoption by the member agencies. However, the decision to adopt and utilize them is made independently by the individual member agencies and communicated through their respective directives systems.

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Chapter 1 – Aerial Supervision Administration, Roles, and Responsibilities

Program Administration

Agencies are responsible for oversight and management of their agency’s Aerial Supervision program. To achieve a cohesive and highly standardized interagency program, the following roles and responsibilities of interagency program management are provided.

National Regional, State, County, Cities, CAL FIRE, and Military Agency Program Managers

Program managers are delegated by their respective agencies and are responsible to administer the agency’s Aerial Supervision program. Interagency scope of responsibilities should include:

- Coordinate with other agency program managers, the Interagency Aerial Supervision Subcommittee (IASS), Interagency Airtanker Board (IATB) and Interagency Geographic Area Coordination Center (GACC) Representatives to provide program coordination on an interagency basis.
- Coordinate with other agency program managers, the IASS, and interagency GACC Representatives to maintain and update a national resource qualifications list to include trainees, qualified personnel, Evaluators, and Final Evaluators.
- Ensure agency training and currency requirements are met. Annually review mission and qualification summaries.
- Participate in interagency working groups, committees, and subcommittees such as the Interagency Helicopter Operations Subcommittee, the Single-Engine Airtanker Board (SEATB), IATB, and the Interagency Airspace Subcommittee (IASC).
- Coordinate training at the national and/or geographic level.
- Manage Evaluators and Final Evaluator designations/qualifications to meet agency quality assurance, standardization, and training objectives.
- Coordinate with trainee’s unit/agency to track training progression and on-the-job training (OJT) needs.
- Ensure coaches are assigned to trainees.
- Provide for quality assurance and oversight of operational and training performance standards.
- Distribute Aerial Supervision program-related information on an interagency basis.
- Coordinate with agencies that have a desire to develop or enhance an Aerial Supervision program.
- Coordinate operational standards with international cooperators.
- Provide input to the revision of the *NWCG Standards for Aerial Supervision (SAS)*, PMS 505, <https://www.nwcg.gov/publications/505>, and interagency training management system.
- Additional roles and responsibilities may be assigned based on agency-specific needs.

1 **GACC Aerial Supervision Representatives (GACC REPS)**

2 Aerial Supervision Specialists, assigned by the Geographic Area Coordination Group, coordinate
3 geographic Aerial Supervision needs and provide quality assurance oversight of:

4 **GACC Representatives**

5 Should be recommended on a rotational basis and delegated in writing.

6 **Scope of Duties**

- 7 • Serve as Geographic Area Interagency Aerial Supervision point of contact.
- 8 • Coordinate with agency program managers and Geographic Area Training Representatives
9 (GATR) to coordinate suitability flights, quality assurance observation flights, final evaluation
10 flights, and training of federal, state, and local agencies.
- 11 • Make recommendations concerning training priorities to agency program managers and GATRs.
- 12 • Should assist the GACC aircraft coordinators with tactical Aerial Supervision information and
13 recommendations.
- 14 • Coordinate with agency program managers to ensure concurrent and cohesive training, training
15 curriculum, and operations standards are met nationally.
- 16 • Provide input to the revision of the SAS and interagency training management system.
- 17 • Participate during the IASS working group meeting(s).

18 **Aerial Supervision Working Groups**

19 There are three sub-groups of the IASS which provide subject matter expertise and technical assistance
20 to meet IASS assigned tasking. Each group is managed under a charter from IASS.

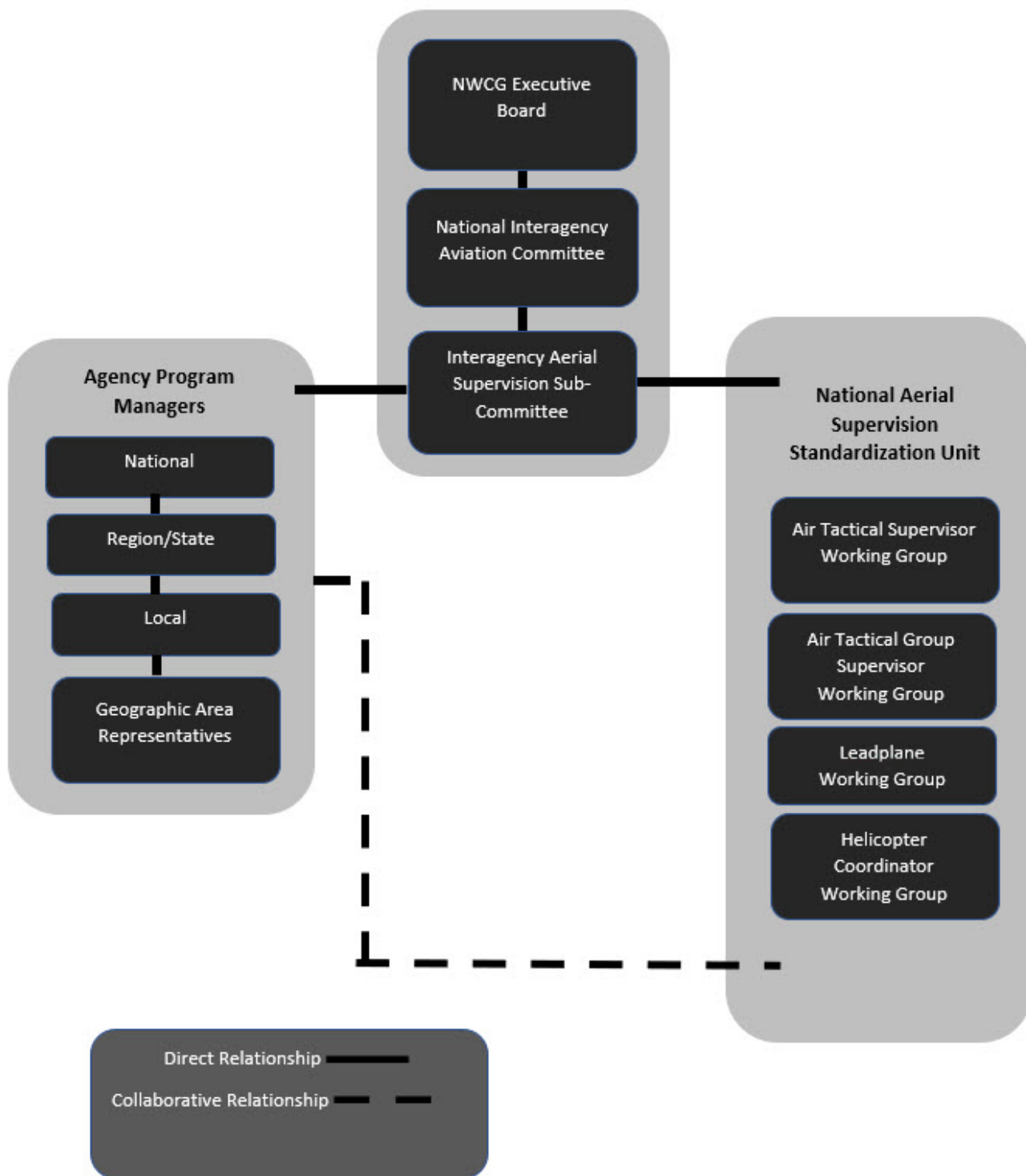
21 **Chair/Co-chair:**

- 22 • Serve as the point of contact to the IASS and manage the working group.
- 23 • Serve as the Subject Matter Expert (SME) during IASS meetings and deliberations.

24 **Working Group Members:**

- 25 • Air Tactical Group Supervisor (ATGS)/Aerial Supervision Module (ASM) – National, Regional,
26 State.
- 27 • Agency Leadplane Pilot (LPIL).
- 28 • GACC Representatives (Delegated) or Program Managers.

1 **Figure 1. Interagency Aerial Supervision Relationship Diagram**



2 **Aerial Supervision Resources**

3 There are four types of Aerial Supervision resources and four aerial supervisor Incident Command
4 System (ICS) positions. Although these positions are unique, they share the common purpose of
5 facilitating safe, effective, and efficient air operations in support of incident objectives.

1 **Air Tactical Group Supervisor (ATGS)**

2 The ATGS coordinates incident airspace and manages incident air traffic. The ATGS is an airborne
3 firefighter who coordinates, assigns, and evaluates the use of aerial resources in support of incident
4 objectives. The ATGS is the link between ground personnel and incident aircraft. The ATGS must
5 collaborate with ground personnel to develop and implement tactical and logistical missions on an
6 incident. The ATGS must be proactive in communicating current and expected fire and weather
7 conditions. The ATGS must provide candid feedback regarding the effectiveness of aviation operations
8 and overall progress toward meeting incident objectives. The ATGS must also work with dispatch staff
9 to coordinate the ordering, assignment, and release of incident aircraft in accordance with the needs of
10 fire management and incident command personnel.

11 On Initial Attack (IA) incidents (Type 4 and 5), the ATGS will sizeup, prioritize, and coordinate the
12 response of aerial and ground resources until a qualified Incident Commander (IC) arrives. On complex
13 incidents (Type 1, 2, or 3), the ATGS will coordinate and prioritize the use of aircraft between several
14 divisions/groups while maintaining communications with operations personnel and aircraft bases
15 (fixed/rotor).

16 In ICS, the ATGS works for the IC on IA and the Operations Section Chief (OSC), Air Operations
17 Branch Director (AOBD), or operational designee on extended attack. The ATGS supervises the LPIL,
18 ASM, and the HLCO positions when activated. The ATGS may operate from an airplane or helicopter.

19 **Aerial Supervision Module (ASM)**

20 An ASM consists of an Air Tactical Pilot (ATP) and Air Tactical Supervisor (AITS). An ASM can be
21 utilized as a LPIL, ATGS, or both, depending on the needs of incident management personnel.

22 ATP – The ATP is a qualified LPIL who has received specialized training and authorization to function
23 as an ASM crew member.

24 AITS – The AITS is a qualified ATGS who has received specialized training and authorization to
25 function as an ASM crew member.

26 LPIL – The LPIL coordinates, directs, and evaluates airtanker operations. When an ATGS is assigned
27 the LPIL is a subordinate to the ATGS position. If no ATGS is present the LPIL works for the IC, OSC,
28 AOBD, or designee.

29 A LPIL can increase the safety and effectiveness of an operation by assisting the ATGS through
30 management of the airtankers assigned to an incident. The LPIL is authorized for low-level flight
31 operations.

32 **Leadplane Pilot (LPIL)**

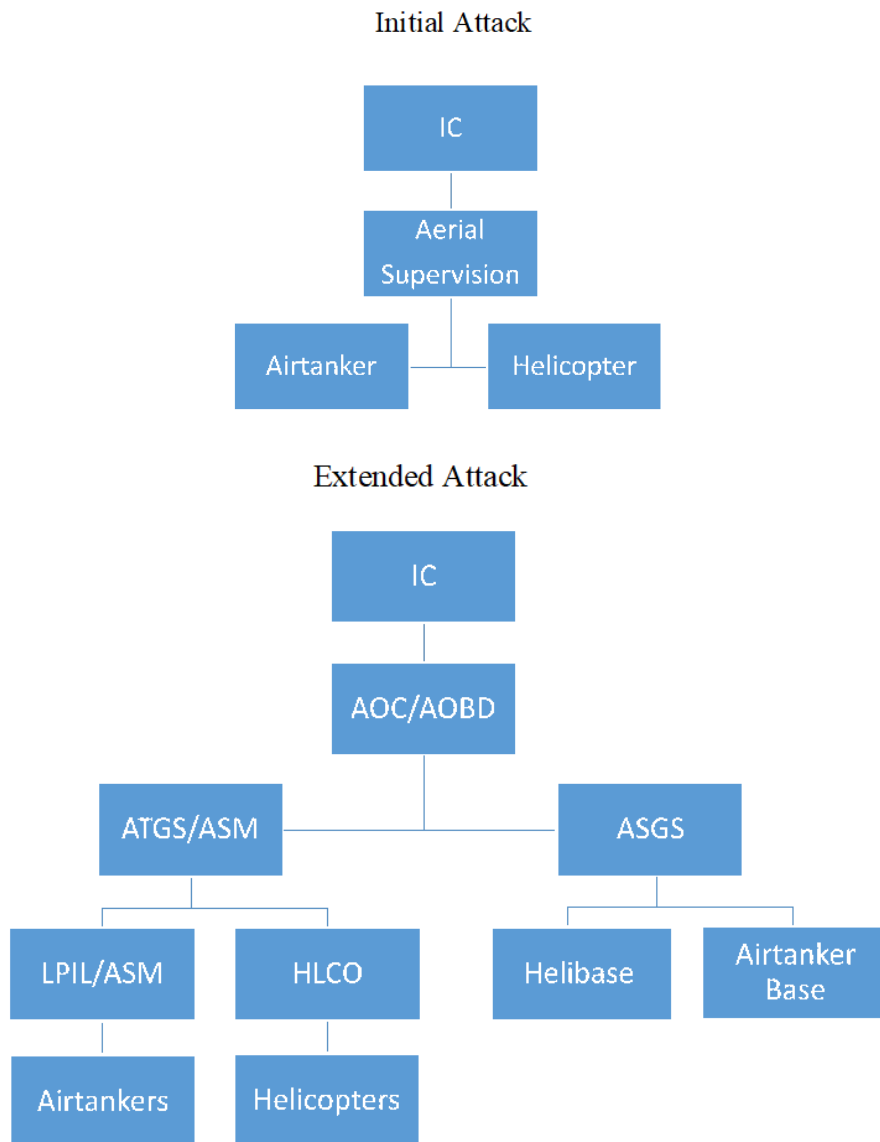
33 The Leadplane position is qualified and authorized for low-level operations. The low-level capabilities
34 of a Leadplane enhance the safety and effectiveness of airtanker operations in the often turbulent,
35 smoky, and congested fire environment.

36 **Helicopter Coordinator (HLCO)**

37 The HLCO coordinates, directs, and evaluates tactical/logistical helicopter operations. This position is
38 responsible for establishing and managing the Fire Traffic Area and or Temporary Flight Restriction in
39 the absence of the ATGS. The HLCO position **should** be activated whenever necessary or beneficial for
40 the ATGS when only helicopters are assigned or in instances where visibility from smoke is a limiting
41 factor for fixed-wing effectiveness.

- 1 When an ATGS is assigned, the HLCO is a subordinate position to the ATGS. If no ATGS is present,
- 2 the HLCO works for the IC, OSC, AOBD, or designee.
- 3 The HLCO is an integral part of the helibase briefings and operational tempo regarding helicopter
- 4 resources.
- 5 **Note:** Only aircraft with required radio configurations should be used for the HLCO mission. The
- 6 following chart depicts the relation of Aerial Supervision to other resources in ICS.

7 **Figure 2. Aerial Supervision organization during Initial Attack and Extended Attack**



1 Chapter 2 – Training, Certification, and Currency

2 The policies governing training, certification, and currency shall comply with the employee’s agency
3 policy requirements. Additional requirements described within this guide shall be considered
4 recommendations unless specifically adopted by the applicable agency as policy. The purpose of any
5 additional requirement and/or standard is to achieve the highest level of safety and performance.

6 ATGS

7 Aerial supervision operations place a high demand on communication and management skills.
8 Application of fire behavior knowledge combined with ground fire resource capability must be
9 correlated with tactical aircraft mission planning.

10 ATGS Position Duties

- 11 • Coordinate and evaluate the safe and effective use of aircraft in support of incident objectives.
- 12 • Coordinate incident airspace and manages incident air traffic.
- 13 • Collaborate with ground personnel to develop and implement tactical and logistical missions on
14 an incident.
- 15 • Communicate current and expected fire and weather conditions based upon continuous
16 observations of the area.
- 17 • Provide candid feedback regarding the effectiveness of aviation operations and overall progress
18 toward meeting incident objectives.
- 19 • Work with dispatch staff to coordinate the ordering, assignment, and release of incident aircraft
20 in accordance with the needs of fire management and incident command personnel.

21 ATGS Initial Training, Certification, and Currency

- 22 • Candidates will meet prerequisite experience requirements and mandatory training requirements
23 listed in the *NWCG Standards for Wildland Fire Position Qualifications*, PMS 310-1,
24 <https://www.nwcg.gov/publications/310-1>. United States Forest Service (USFS) employees will
25 meet the prerequisite experience requirements and mandatory training requirements in the *Forest*
26 *Service Fire and Aviation Qualification Guide*, FSM 5700, and FSH 5709.16.

27 ATGS Classroom Training

- 28 • Aerial Supervision (S-378), Air Tactical Group Supervisor (ATGS), State and Local Government)
29 OR National Aerial Supervision Training Academy (S-378) OR California Aerial Supervision
30 Academy (S-378).

31 **Note:** USFS and Department of the Interior (DOI) employees must attend and pass the National Aerial
32 Supervision Training Course or the California Aerial Supervision Course.

33 ATGS Agency Approved Crew Resource Management (CRM) Training

- 34 • Federal and federally sponsored Administratively Determined (AD) employees will complete Crew
35 Resource Management 7 Skills (N-9059) facilitated by an authorized instructor.
- 36 • State employees will follow state CRM training requirements.

1 **ATGS Mission Training Requirements**

2 The flight-training program should include a variety of work experience and be of sufficient duration to
3 ensure that the individual can independently function as an ATGS following certification.

- 4 • Observing an ATGS Evaluator during ongoing incident operations.
- 5 • All OJT will be under the direct supervision of an ATGS Evaluator in the same aircraft.
- 6 • Before final certification, candidates must undertake an OJT program under the supervision of an
7 ATGS Evaluator that provides a variety of experience in initial and extended attack scenarios.
- 8 • Attend refresher RT-378/RTN9059 triennially after the initial attendance of S-378/N9059.

9 **ATGS Candidate Evaluations**

- 10 • After completing all missions, the candidate shall receive a written and signed evaluation from
11 the ATGS Evaluator as an integral part of the mission de-briefing. Multiple missions during a
12 single day may be combined on one form.
- 13 • The Aerial Supervision Mission Evaluation form is the standard performance assessment tool.
- 14 • The candidate will retain a copy of the Mission Evaluation to supplement information completed
15 by the ATGS Evaluator in the candidate's Position Task Book (PTB).

16 **ATGS Training Opportunities**

17 Agency program managers can assist in the development of candidates by assigning a coach and
18 providing a variety of training opportunities in different locales, fuel types, and incident complexities.
19 Training opportunities include the following:

- 20 • Assignments to work with full-time, dedicated/exclusive use ATGS at an air attack base.
- 21 • Assignments to a national or geographic area Incident Management Team (IMT).
- 22 • Details or training assignments in other geographic areas to increase the depth of experience.
- 23 • Participate as a passenger on other tactical aircraft during missions [subject to approval from the
24 National Program Manager, Regional Aviation Manager (RAO), Contracting Officer,
25 Contractor, and Pilot-in-Command (PIC)].

26 **ATGS Certification Process**

27 Upon completion of the PTB, the agency Final Evaluator will:

- 28 • Successfully perform a final Mission Evaluation.
- 29 • Return the completed PTB to the ATGS trainee along with recommendations.
- 30 • Notify the appropriate agency program manager.

31 Trainee is responsible for submitting completed PTB, training documentation, and final
32 recommendation to certifying official.

1 **ATGS Supplemental Training**

2 The following training opportunities should be considered before initial certification or as supplemental
3 or refresher training for individuals currently certified as ATGS. The GACC representative, agency
4 program manager, or training official can assist in the development of candidates by providing a variety
5 of training opportunities in different locales, fuel types, and incident complexities. Related aviation
6 training opportunities should be made available to candidates to provide valuable knowledge,
7 experience, and skills applicable to ATGS. Training opportunities should include the following:

- 8 • Pinch Hitter pilot course.
- 9 • Private pilot ground school.
- 10 • National Aerial Fire Fighting Academy (NAFA and NAFA II).
- 11 • Participation in aerial reconnaissance or aerial detection missions.
- 12 • Observing or participating in large helibase operations.
- 13 • Orientation to airtanker base and retardant operations.
- 14 • Orientation to or observation of aircraft dispatch operations.
- 15 • Assignments working with full-time, exclusive use ATGS at an air attack base.
- 16 • Peer-to-peer observation and cross training is recommended.
- 17 • Assignments to a national or geographic area IMT.

18 **ATGS Currency Requirements**

19 All ATGS will meet the requirements stated in the *NWCG Standards for Wildland Fire Position*
20 *Qualifications*, PMS 310-1, and forward an annual mission summary¹ to the appropriate agency
21 program manager/RAO.

22 In addition:

- 23 • Triennially perform, document, and report a minimum of 15 missions. (Failure to maintain
24 ATGS mission currency requires a passing evaluation by a Final Evaluator on an actual or
25 simulated mission).
- 26 • Each mission may be documented as a “shift” in the appropriate qualification management
27 system.
- 28 • Attend a triennial RT-378. Attend a triennial CRM 7 Skills Refresher (RT9059F) or agency
29 approved CRM refresher course.
- 30 • Recertification – See *NWCG Standards for Wildland Fire Position Qualifications*, PMS 310-1,
31 or agency-specific policy.

32 Quality Assurance

33 Agency program managers may request a quality assurance (QA) assessment. QA evaluations may
34 occur during RT-378 or over an incident.

35

¹ Annual Mission Summaries, Individual Mission forms, and Mission Evaluation forms are components of the Aerial Supervision Logbook, PMS 509.

1 The request will be made from the program manager to the GACC Representative and a Final Evaluator
2 will perform the QA assessment as an evaluation flight and document using the Aerial Supervision
3 Mission Evaluation form in the Aerial Supervision Logbook, PMS 509,
4 <https://www.nwcg.gov/publications/509>.

5 **Note:** USFS qualified ATGSs must meet the *Forest Service Fire and Aviation Qualifications Guide* and
6 the *NWCG Standards for Wildland Fire Position Qualifications*, PMS 310-1, for ATGS currency unless
7 more restrictive requirements are established within operating plans approved by the Regional
8 Forester/FAM Staff. California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE) supports the
9 above currency requirements and manages them internally.

10 **Air Tactical Group Supervisor Refresher Training (RT-378)**

11 Required Elements

- 12 • Proficiency exercise.
- 13 • Review of applicable agency policies.
- 14 • Risk management/System Safety.
- 15 • Mission procedures.
- 16 • Fire Traffic Area (FTA) management.
- 17 • Fire and Aviation Weather.
- 18 • Lessons Learned/Case Studies.
- 19 • Agency approved CRM refresher.
 - 20 ○ Federal and federally sponsored AD employees will complete the 7 Skills CRM refresher
 - 21 (1.5 hours minimum) facilitated by a federally authorized instructor.
 - 22 ○ State employees will follow state CRM training requirements.

23 Optional Elements

- 24 • Radio programming.
- 25 • Map reading and navigation.
- 26 • Strategy and tactics.
- 27 • Aviation incidents/accidents from the preceding season.
- 28 • Payment documents.
- 29 • Contract and aircraft fleet updates.
- 30 • Issues and concerns from national and/or regional user groups (fire management, dispatch,
31 hotshots, ICs, etc.).
- 32 • Communications brevity.
- 33 • Electronic flight bags.

1 Proficiency Exercise

2 All ATGS will demonstrate proficiency in the required refresher elements and complete a moderate
3 complexity (a mix of at least four fixed and helicopter aircrafts) mission or flight/Sand Table Exercises
4 (STEX). Students will be evaluated utilizing the Aerial Supervision Mission Evaluation form (PMS
5 509).

6 The exercise will represent a typical IA and will require the ATGS to demonstrate the minimum
7 acceptable skill set of the position including FTA entry, determining FTA altitudes, initial aircraft
8 briefings, aircraft separation, communication with air and ground resources, and situational awareness.

9 Performance will be documented on a Mission Evaluation, reviewed with the participant, and a copy
10 will be forwarded to the appropriate agency program manager. Failure to demonstrate an acceptable
11 level of proficiency, a rating of (4), for the six required evaluation elements will require the ATGS
12 agency-specific performance deficiency or decertification process to be implemented.

13 Documentation packet (or agency record of completion) will be issued to attendees who complete the
14 refresher. Documentation will be forwarded to the appropriate agency program manager and the training
15 official.

16 **ATGS Mission Evaluation**

17 The standard method for evaluating ATGS performance is an actual mission utilizing the Aerial
18 Supervision Mission Evaluation form. ATGS (Evaluator/Final Evaluator) conducts mission evaluations
19 for the following purposes:

- 20 • ATGS training.
- 21 • ATGS certification.
- 22 • ATGS currency.
- 23 • ATGS performance deficiencies.

24 **ATGS Performance Deficiencies**

25 If an ATGS is observed performing unsafely/deficiently:

- 26 • The written deficiencies will be provided to the ATGS GACC representative and supervisor.
- 27 • The event and written deficiencies will be discussed with the individual and documented.
28 Documentation should consist of recommendations on how to bring ATGS up to currency
29 standards.

30 The recommendations will be forwarded to the appropriate RAO/agency program manager, and the
31 individual's supervisor or sponsoring agency/official. The ATGS may be made unavailable for ATGS
32 assignments in the appropriate dispatch status system until the certifying official reviews the
33 recommendations.

34 **ATGS Coach**

35 ATGS Coaches serve as a point of contact and SME for the trainee throughout the training process.

36 **Position Requirements**

37 Qualified ATGS.

1 **Responsibilities**

- 2 • Help develop a training plan for the candidate.
- 3 • Coordinate with the agency program manager and employee supervisor.
- 4 • Assure training is on track and that all requirements are being scheduled so as not to delay
- 5 progress.
- 6 • Assist with any problems regarding agency and training requirements.
- 7 • Coaches should be an independent, nonpartisan person outside the employee’s standard chain of
- 8 command.

9 **ATGS Evaluator**

10 ATGS Evaluators should provide consistent ATGS instruction, evaluation, and feedback on ATGS

11 missions.

12 **Position Requirements**

- 13 • One year following ATGS qualification while maintaining currency.
- 14 • Attend a regionally sponsored ATGS Evaluator workshop. Documentation shall be forwarded to
- 15 the appropriate GACC representative or agency official.
- 16 • ADs are authorized for this position providing they meet the position requirements.
- 17 • Maintain ATGS currency as defined by agency training policy.
- 18 • The agency program manager/appropriate Regional Aviation Officer (RAO) will track ATGS
- 19 Evaluators. State agency aviation program managers can designate state-employed ATGS
- 20 Evaluators.

21 **Responsibilities**

- 22 • Utilize applicable methods to promote ATGS trainee progress and ultimate certification.
- 23 • Utilize training aids, best practices, forms, and policy documents to maximize the training
- 24 experience.
- 25 • Conduct ground training exercises.
- 26 • Review and complete applicable PTB elements.
- 27 • Document strengths and focus on improvement areas utilizing the Aerial Supervision Mission
- 28 Evaluation form, PMS 505-11.
- 29 • Provide feedback to the trainee’s supervisor/coach.
- 30 • Share progress reports with ATGS trainee’s GACC representative.
- 31 • Coordinate with the trainee’s supervisor to recommend and schedule the final evaluation flight.

32 **ATGS Evaluator Workshop**

33 Workshops should prepare ATGS Evaluators to apply current and consistent training procedures. The

34 Evaluator workshop should be integrated with RT-378.

1 **Target Group**

2 Qualified ATGS.

3 **Workshop Instructor Requirement**

4 ATGS Evaluator.

5 **Course Prerequisite**

6 None.

7 **Course Level**

8 Regional, state, or area.

9 **Course Content:**

- 10 • Utilization of the Mission Evaluation form, PMS 505k, <https://www.nwcg.gov/publications/505>.
- 11 • Mission flights.
- 12 • Lecture.
- 13 • STEX.
- 14 • After Action Review (AAR).
- 15 • Interagency/regional consistency.
- 16 • CRM/Human Factors – How to provide constructive criticism.
- 17 • Training aids.

18 **ATGS Final Evaluator**

19 This section describes the qualifications, training, certification, and currency requirements necessary to
20 perform as an ATGS Final Evaluator.

21 **ATGS Final Evaluator Duties**

22 Provide final ATGS trainee evaluation and complete the Final Evaluator verification page in the ATGS
23 PTB.

24 **Position Requirements**

- 25 • One year of experience as an ATGS Evaluator.
- 26 • Attend a nationally sponsored ATGS Final Evaluator Workshop. Individuals meeting the
27 requirements of a Final Evaluator will be designated in writing by their agency. Annual letters
28 will be maintained by the appropriate GACC representative or agency official and disseminated
29 to agency training committees.
- 30 • AD employees are NOT authorized to perform this function.
- 31 • Maintain ATGS currency as defined by agency training policy.
- 32 • The appropriate RAO /agency program manager will provide a Letter of Authorization to the
33 ATGS Final Evaluator upon completion of the requisite training.

1 **Note:** State agency aviation program managers can designate state-employed ATGS Final Evaluators.

2 **Responsibilities**

- 3 • Coordinate with ATGS Instructor and trainee’s supervisor to schedule and implement a final
4 evaluation.
- 5 • Perform final evaluation and complete Aerial Supervision Mission Evaluation form (PMS 509).
- 6 • Complete the PTB.
- 7 • Complete Final Evaluator Verification or complete an Evaluation Record (experience block) to
8 document further training recommendations.
- 9 • Review evaluation with ATGS trainee.
- 10 • Contact trainee’s supervisor and review the final evaluation.

11 **ATGS Final Evaluator Workshop**

12 **Objective**

13 Prepare ATGS Final Evaluators to perform ATGS trainee final evaluations. The Final
14 Evaluator Workshop should be integrated with the Aerial Supervision Academy or equivalent.

15 **Target Group**

16 ATGS Evaluators.

17 **Instructor Requirement**

18 ATGS Final Evaluator.

19 **Course Prerequisite**

20 None.

21 **Course Level**

22 National.

23 **Course Content**

- 24 • Policy.
- 25 • Documentation.
- 26 • ATGS PTB.
- 27 • Aerial Supervision Mission Evaluation form (PMS 509).
- 28 • CRM/Human Factors – How to provide constructive criticism.
- 29 • Agency-specific qualification/certification processes.

1 **Leadplane Pilot (LPIL)**

2 The primary mission of the LPIL is to ensure the safe, efficient, and effective use of airtankers in the
3 management of wildland fire.

4 LPIL operations place a high demand on not only pilot skills, but on a person's ability to manage and
5 coordinate airspace.

6 A LPIL is an aerial firefighter. As such, National Wildfire Coordinating Group (NWCG) firefighter
7 training titles are used instead of standard Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) pilot terminology. For
8 purposes of LPIL training:

- 9 • An “Instructor” is herein referred to as an “Evaluator.”
- 10 • A “Pilot Examiner or Check Airman” is herein referred to as a “Final Evaluator.”
- 11 • An interagency LPIL call sign/qualification list is maintained by the National Branch Chief, Pilot
12 Standardization (USFS) and published annually in the National Interagency Mobilization Guide.

13 **LPIL Qualifications**

14 Candidates for LPIL designation must be federal or state (or state contract) employees who have the
15 appropriate FAA pilot and medical certifications. USFS candidates shall possess, as a minimum, the
16 flight experience listed in the *Forest Service Handbook* (FSH) 5709.16. DOI pilots shall meet, as a
17 minimum, the requirements of 351 Departmental Manual (DM) 3. State contract employees shall
18 possess, at a minimum, the flight experience listed in FSH 5709.16 Trainees shall complete the mission
19 training and certification requirements of this section. It is desirable that LPIL candidates have line
20 firefighting experience.

21 Deviations or Exceptions

22 The National Aerial Supervision Program Manager, National Branch Chief, Pilot Standardization in
23 coordination with the appropriate RAO (USFS), the National Flight Operations Manager (BLM), or
24 appropriate State and Private Forestry Aviation Official may authorize deviations or exceptions from the
25 training requirements. Approved deviations or exceptions will be in writing. Documentation will be
26 maintained by the appropriate agency official, and a copy will be carried in the trainee’s training folder.

27 **LPIL Training**

28 See NWCG LPIL position description.

29 **Note:** The courses listed in the NWCG LPIL position description shall be completed prior to entering
30 Phase 3 of the N-9065 training course.

31 **Operational Flight Instruction**

32 Training is divided into three phases. Each phase is to be completed before progressing to the next
33 phase. Identified deficiencies shall be documented and corrected before the candidate’s progress to the
34 next phase.

1 **Documentation of Training**

2 The pilot is responsible for maintaining their training folder. The folder shall include the following:

- 3 • Course completion certificates.
- 4 • Record of ground and flight training including documentation of corrected deficiencies.
- 5 • Signoffs for each phase of flight training.

6 **Flight-Training Records**

7 LPIL Evaluators will provide the trainee with written documentation of each training flight. The original
8 copy will be retained by the trainee in their training folder. A copy of the phase training completion
9 form will be sent to the appropriate RAO and a copy forwarded to the National Aerial Supervision
10 Program Manager, Pilot Standardization (USFS), the National Flight Operations Manager (BLM), or the
11 appropriate State and Private Forestry Aviation Official. The LPIL Evaluator will retain a copy for their
12 records.

13 **LPIL Training and Check Rides**

14 The LPIL/Mission Evaluation form is to be used to record all LPIL training and check rides.

15 **Initial LPIL Training Process**

16 Every effort shall be made to limit the number of LPIL Evaluators assigned to provide training for each
17 candidate during Phases 1 and 2.

18 **Note:** The LPIL Evaluator may alternate between the left and right (front and back) seats during Phases
19 2 and 3.

20 Phase 1

- 21 • Minimum of two missions of LPIL tactical flight training comprised of low-level flight,
22 mountainous terrain flight, proximity flight, and airtanker simulation.

23 **Note:** Flight time obtained in the Initial LPIL Training Course can be used to meet this requirement.

- 24 • Phase Check –This check will evaluate the following in a non-fire environment.
- 25 ○ Oral – The trainee shall pass an oral review covering all activities under Phase 1. The oral
26 will consist of questions involving (1) specific safety-of-flight and key operational issues, (2)
27 discussion questions designed to determine if the trainee has the base knowledge that should
28 be gained from Phase 1 activities, and (3) general questions to establish that the trainee has
29 an understanding of the operational issues that are necessary to progress to Phase 2.
- 30 ○ Flight Check – The flight check shall include low-level mountain flying, airspeed control,
31 tactical low-level patterns and join ups.

32 Phase 2

- 33 • Minimum of three missions in the right seat observing fire operations with a LPIL Evaluator.
- 34 • Minimum of two operational periods of observing an ATGS/AITS on missions with a minimum
35 of moderate complexity.
- 36 • Ride as an observer on a variety of airtankers during fire missions.

- 1 • Minimum of 15 LPIL missions on fires of various sizes and complexity as the flying pilot in the
2 left seat under the supervision of a LPIL Evaluator.
- 3 • Phase Check – A LPIL Evaluator will administer the Phase Check.
 - 4 ○ Oral – The trainee shall pass an oral review covering all activities under Phase 2. The oral
5 will consist of questions involving (1) specific safety-of-flight and key operational issues, (2)
6 discussion questions designed to determine if the trainee has the base knowledge that should
7 be gained from Phase 2 activities, and (3) questions designed to determine that the trainee has
8 the knowledge to address situations that can arise when performing the LPIL mission.
 - 9 ○ Flight Check – The flight check to determine that the trainee (1) can safely perform the LPIL
10 mission, (2) operate within the designated mission profiles, and (3) has been exposed to
11 varying fire size and complexities. Any identified problem areas will be satisfactorily
12 resolved.

13 Phase 3

14 All required ground training shall be completed prior to initiating Phase 3.

- 15 • Multiple LPIL missions on fires of varying size and complexity as the flying pilot without
16 reliance on the LPIL Evaluator.
- 17 • The number of missions should provide the trainee an opportunity to demonstrate the skills
18 needed to manage resources safely, effectively, and efficiently as a LPIL.
- 19 • A portion of the LPIL missions shall be flown in other geographic areas if not accomplished in
20 Phase 2.
- 21 • Additional flights in airtankers as necessary.
- 22 • Final LPIL Progress Check – A LPIL Evaluator will make a final progress check upon
23 completion of Phase 3. This will consist of an oral review covering all aspects of LPIL
24 operations.
- 25 • Complete Records Review – Complete records review of the training folder by the candidate's
26 coach to determine that all requirements have been met and signed off. The coach will then
27 schedule a final check ride.

28 **Final Evaluation and Qualification**

29 To be designated as a LPIL, candidates shall have:

- 30 • Satisfactorily completed all operational flight training and acquire the necessary operational
31 flight experience.
- 32 • Undergone a complete oral and operational evaluation. The evaluation consists of:
 - 33 ○ A Phase 3 sign-off by a LPIL Evaluator who has instructed the candidate during Phase 3,
34 attesting to the candidate's mission competence.
 - 35 ○ A final flight check (which may require multiple missions to allow the LPIL Final Evaluator
36 to observe adequate performance in complex environments) by a LPIL Final Evaluator
37 certifying that the candidate has completed the required training and recommends they be
38 approved to perform as a LPIL.

- 1 • The National Aerial Supervision Program Manager and National Branch Chief, Pilot
2 Standardization (USFS) in coordination with the appropriate RAO (USFS), the National Flight
3 Operations Manager (BLM), or appropriate State and Private Forestry Aviation Official will
4 issue a letter of designation upon successful completion of LPIL training.

5 **LPIL Currency**

6 Experience

7 LPILs shall complete any combination of 30 LPIL or ATP missions in a three-year period. Pilots not
8 meeting the 30-mission requirement shall pass a flight check on a LPIL fire mission. A mission consists
9 of a flight on an actual fire where retardant is delivered. Each fire flown during a single flight counts as
10 a mission.

11 **Qualified LPIL's May Be Authorized to Ride on Airtankers As an Observer for Training** 12 **Purposes.**

13 Authorization Requirements.

- 14 • Written authorization from the Contracting Officer and the Leadplane Pilot's agency stating they
15 are approved for observation flights (This approval must be presented to the Airtanker PIC when
16 asked).
- 17 • Notification, before the observation flight, to the national lead plane coordinator, the hosting
18 GACC and Airtanker Base Manager. (This may be verbal).
- 19 • Permission from the Airtanker PIC and notification (verbal) to the company.

20 **Annual LPIL Refresher**

21 Attend RT-9065 annually.

22 **Optional Ground School Refresher Elements**

- 23 • Target Description Exercise.
- 24 • Safety.
- 25 • Communications.
- 26 • Tactics.
- 27 • Airtanker Operations.
- 28 • ICS.
- 29 • Pre-season Update: (airtanker crew assignments, Expected fire behavior, Long-term weather
30 prognosis).
- 31 • Fire sizeup.
- 32 • Additional elements may be added based on national trends and needs.

33 **Required Flight-Training Refresher Elements**

34 Flight Training shall be a minimum of three flight hours and include:

- 35 • Target Description.
- 36 • LPIL tactical flight profile.

- 1 • Communications.
- 2 • Escape Routes.
- 3 • Emergency Procedures.
- 4 • Pass an annual LPIL mission competency check from a LPIL Evaluator.

5 **Standardization Evaluation**

6 LPIL mission checks may be conducted at any time for all qualified LPILs without prior notice. The
7 results will be forwarded to the appropriate RAO and National Aerial Supervision Program Manager,
8 National Branch Chief, Pilot Standardization (USFS), the National Flight Operations Manager (BLM),
9 or appropriate State and Private Forestry Aviation Official and the LPIL briefed on the evaluation.

10 **ATP/ASM Training**

11 See the ASM section.

12 **Modular Airborne Fire Fighting System (MAFFS)**

13 MAFFS qualification is an additional required endorsement. LPILs are required to attend the first
14 available MAFFS training session after the initial LPIL qualification.

- 15 • Be a qualified LPIL.
- 16 • Shall have completed MAFFS LPIL training.
- 17 • Interim certification may be granted upon initial LPIL qualification based on actual MAFFS
18 operational experience obtained during LPIL training. LPILs who obtain interim MAFFS
19 certification shall attend the next MAFFS training session.
- 20 • LPILs shall attend the MAFFS training session every four years.

21 **California Familiarization**

22 LPILs shall receive instruction by a LPIL Evaluator in California before operating alone in that area.
23 The National Aerial Supervision Program Manager, National Branch Chief, Pilot Standardization in
24 coordination with the appropriate RAO (USFS), the National Flight Operations Manager (BLM), or
25 appropriate State and Private Forestry Aviation Official may waive this requirement if the LPIL received
26 instruction in this area on fire missions during Phase 2 or Phase 3 LPIL training.

27 **Supplemental (AD/Contract) LPILs**

28 AD/Contract pilots shall maintain the same currency and training requirements stipulated for agency
29 pilots. The USFS WO will publish a list of supplemental LPILs on an annual basis.

30 **LPIL Coach**

31 This section describes the qualifications, training, and currency requirements necessary to perform as a
32 LPIL Coach. LPIL Coach: Serves as a point of contact and SME for the trainee throughout the training
33 process.

1 **Position Requirements**

2 Qualified LPIL.

3 **Responsibilities**

- 4 • Help develop a training plan for the candidate.
- 5 • Coordinate with the appropriate RAO/agency program manager and employee supervisor.
- 6 • Assure training is on track and that all requirements are being scheduled to not delay progress.
- 7 • Assist with any problems regarding agency and training requirements.
- 8 • Coaches should be an independent, nonpartisan person outside the employee's standard chain of
- 9 command.

10 **LPIL Evaluator**

11 LPIL Evaluator provides consistent LPIL instruction, evaluation, and feedback on LPIL missions.

12 **Qualification Requirements**

- 13 • Current LPIL with a minimum of two seasons of experience after initial qualification.
- 14 • Multi-region experience as a qualified LPIL.
- 15 • MAFFS Qualified.
- 16 • Possess the appropriate FAA flight instructor certificate.
- 17 • California Experience.
- 18 • Attend the LPIL Evaluator workshop every two years.

19 **Responsibilities**

- 20 • Utilize applicable methods to promote LPIL trainee progress and ultimate certification.
- 21 • Utilize training aids, best practices, forms, and policy documents to maximize the training
- 22 experience.
- 23 • Review and complete applicable phase training documentation.
- 24 • Document strengths, area for improvement, and focus areas utilizing the LPIL Training/ Check
- 25 Form.
- 26 • Provide feedback to the trainee's supervisor/coach.
- 27 • Share progress reports with the LPIL Evaluator community.
- 28 • Coordinate with the trainee's supervisor to recommend and schedule the final evaluation flight.

29 **Certification Process**

- 30 • Pass a LPIL Evaluator oral and flight check.
- 31 • The National Aerial Supervision Program Manager, National Branch Chief, Pilot Standardization
- 32 in coordination with the appropriate RAO (USFS), the National Flight Operations Manager
- 33 (BLM), or appropriate State and Private Forestry Aviation Official will issue a LPIL Evaluator
- 34 designation letter.

1 **Currency**

- 2 • Maintain LPIL currency.
- 3 • Maintain MAFFS currency.
- 4 • Attend Evaluator Workshop every two years.

5 **LPIL Evaluator Workshop**

6 **Objective**

- 7 • Prepare LPIL Evaluators to apply current and consistent training procedures.
- 8 • Target Group: Qualified LPILs with 2 years of experience.
- 9 • Workshop Instructor Requirement –LPIL Evaluators and Final Evaluators.

10 **Nomination Process**

11 The LPIL supervisors in conjunction with the National Aerial Supervision Program Manager, National
12 Branch Chief, Pilot Standardization (USFS) and the appropriate RAO (USFS), the National Flight
13 Operations Manager (BLM), or State and Private Forestry Aviation Official will nominate pilots who
14 meet the qualifications and whom they consider having the experience, aptitude, dedication, and ability
15 to perform the duties of a LPIL Evaluator.

16 **Course Prerequisite**

- 17 • Multi-region experience as a qualified LPIL.
- 18 • MAFFS Qualified.
- 19 • Possess the appropriate FAA flight instructor certificate.
- 20 • California Experience.

21 **Course Level**

22 National Interagency.

23 **Course Content**

- 24 • Instructional methods.
- 25 • Utilization of the LPIL Training/ Check Form.
- 26 • Mission flights.
- 27 • Lecture.
- 28 • STEX.
- 29 • AAR.
- 30 • Standardization of instruction.
- 31 • CRM/Human Factors – How to provide constructive criticism.
- 32 • Training Aids.
- 33 • Policy.

1 **LPIL Final Evaluator**

2 LPIL Final Evaluator provides final LPIL trainee evaluations. The LPIL Final Evaluator makes the
3 recommendation for certification to the appropriate agency program manager.

4 **Qualification Requirements**

- 5
- Current LPIL with a minimum of three seasons as a LPIL Evaluator.
 - MAFFS Qualified.
 - Possess the appropriate FAA flight instructor certificates.
 - Attend the LPIL Final Evaluator workshop biennially.
- 6
7
8

9 **Responsibilities**

- 10
- Coordinate with LPIL Evaluator and trainee’s supervisor to schedule and implement a final
11 evaluation/check ride.
 - Perform final evaluation/check ride and complete LPIL Training/ Check Form.
 - Contact trainee’s supervisor and review the final evaluation.
- 12
13

14 **Certification**

- 15
- Pass the LPIL Final Evaluator oral and flight check.
 - The National Aerial Supervision Program Manager, National Branch Chief, Pilot Standardization
16 in coordination with the appropriate RAO (USFS), the National Flight Operations Manager
17 (BLM), or appropriate State and Private Forestry Aviation Official will issue the LPIL Final
18 Evaluator designation letter.
- 19

20 **Currency**

- 21
- Maintain LPIL currency.
 - Maintain MAFFS currency.
 - Attend Evaluator Workshop every two years.
- 22
23

24 **LPIL Final Evaluator Workshop**

25 **Objective**

26 Prepare LPIL Final Evaluators to apply current and consistent training procedures.

27 **Target Group**

28 Qualified LPIL Evaluator Pilots with 3 years of experience.

29 **Workshop Instructor Requirement**

30 LPIL Evaluator.

1 **Nomination Process**

2 The LPIL working group, in conjunction with the National Aerial Supervision Program Manager,
3 National Branch Chief, Pilot Standardization (USFS) and the appropriate RAO (USFS), the National
4 Flight Operations Manager (BLM), or appropriate State and Private Forestry Aviation Official will
5 nominate pilots who meet the qualifications and whom they consider having the experience, aptitude,
6 dedication, and ability to perform the duties of a LPIL Final Evaluator.

7 **Course Prerequisite**

- 8 • Multi-region experience as a qualified LPIL Evaluator.
- 9 • MAFFS Qualified.
- 10 • Possess the appropriate FAA flight instructor certificate.

11 **Course Level**

- 12 • National Interagency.

13 **Course Content**

- 14 • Final evaluation methods.
- 15 • Mission flights.
- 16 • Standardization of final evaluation.
- 17 • CRM/Human Factors – How to provide constructive criticism.
- 18 • Policy.

19 **LPIL/Trainee Performance Deficiencies**

20 If a LPIL/Trainee is observed performing unsafely/deficiently:

- 21 • The event will be discussed with the individual and documented as appropriate.
- 22 • Depending on the agency, the documentation will be forwarded to the National Aerial
23 Supervision Program Manager, National Branch Chief, Pilot Standardization, and the appropriate
24 RAO (USFS), the National Flight Operations Manager (BLM), or appropriate State and Private
25 Forestry Aviation Official. The individual may be made unavailable for LPIL/Trainee
26 assignments in the appropriate dispatch/status system.

27 **ASM**

28 An ASM is a crew of two specially trained individuals who retain their individual LPIL and ATGS
29 qualifications. Each crew member has specific duties and responsibilities that fall within their area of
30 expertise. These vary in scope based on the mission and task loads of each crew member.

31 The ATP serves as the PIC and is primarily responsible for fixed-wing aircraft coordination over the
32 incident. Following LPIL qualification, it is recommended that LPILs acquire one year of LPIL
33 experience in multiple geographic regions before operating as an ATP. This does not preclude the LPIL
34 from attending ASM training or flying with an AITS to gain additional firefighting and retardant use
35 experience.

1 The AITS serves as the mission commander who develops/implements strategy/tactics in conjunction
2 with the IC and Operations personnel or ATGS. When no IC is present, the AITS assumes those
3 responsibilities until qualified ground personnel arrives. AITS initial candidates must be qualified as an
4 ATGS Evaluator. This does not preclude the AITS candidate from attending ASM training.

5 **ASM Utilization**

6 The ASM is a shared national resource and can be utilized in the following capacities:

- 7 • ASM, LPIL, ATGS, detection/recon, all hazard, etc.

8 **ASM Resource Status, Ordering, and Identification**

9 ASM resource identification and status are reported using the following procedures:

10 Tactical Aircraft Report

11 The National Interagency Coordination Center (NICC) and GACC report the status of the ASM crews as
12 a national resource. The ATP's LPIL designator is used in conjunction with the agency ASM designator
13 to identify the ASM. The State of Alaska ASM designator is A (Alpha). The USFS and BLM ASM
14 designator is B (Bravo). The CAL FIRE ASM designator is C (Charlie).

15 Resource Ordering

16 Federal ASMs are a national resource and will be ordered in the same manner as LPILs or other national
17 resources. The AITS and LPIL should be rostered as subordinates to the aircraft on the resource order.

18 **Flight and Duty Day Limitations**

19 The AITS, when assigned to an ASM, will have the same flight and duty limitation as the ATP and are
20 considered a crew member. The AITS will match the ATP tour of duty for consistency and resource
21 availability.

22 **Authorized Personnel on ASM_LP Flights**

23 The following positions are authorized to be on board the aircraft during ASM operations:

- 24 • ATP/ATP Trainee.
- 25 • LPIL/LPIL Trainee. (Including Evaluator/Final Evaluator)
- 26 • AITS/AITS Trainee. (Including Evaluator/Final Evaluator)

27 Other passengers must be authorized in writing by the National Aerial Supervision Program Manager,
28 National Branch Chief, Pilot Standardization, National Branch Chief, Aviation Operations (USFS), the
29 National Flight Operations Manager (BLM), or appropriate State and Private Forestry Aviation Official
30 and approved by the flight crew. This is generally limited to three total personnel on board the aircraft
31 during low-level ASM mission operations.

32 **Initial ASM Training (ATP/AITS)**

33 **Objective**

34 To establish the qualification and training requirements necessary to perform as an ASM.

1 **Nomination**

2 RAO's/agency program managers will nominate candidates to attend ASM initial training.

3 **Documentation of Training**

4 It is the responsibility of the AITS/ATP candidate to maintain and update a training and experience
5 folder which will include:

- 6 • Course completion certificates.
- 7 • A copy of the signed ATGS certification page.
- 8 • Annual update of experience to agency-specific Incident Qualification and Certification System
9 (IQCS).
- 10 • AITS/ATP Letter of Authorization.

11 Deviations or Exceptions

12 The National Aerial Supervision Program Manager, National Branch Chief, Pilot Standardization in
13 coordination with the appropriate RAO (USFS), the National Flight Operations Manager (BLM), or
14 appropriate State and Private Forestry Aviation Official may authorize deviations or exceptions from the
15 training requirements. Approved deviations or exceptions will be in writing. Documentation will be
16 maintained by the appropriate agency official, and a copy will be carried in the trainee's training folder.

17 **ASM Initial/Refresher Course of Instruction**

18 **Classroom Training**

19 ASM initial is a national level course.

20 **Required Classroom Elements**

- 21 • Safety.
- 22 • Tactical Mission CRM.
- 23 • Communications (Tactical).
- 24 • Aircraft Familiarization/Differences.
- 25 • Tactics.
- 26 • Airtanker/ Helicopter Sequencing.

27 **Optional Classroom Elements**

- 28 • Crew interaction and CRM utilization.
- 29 • ICS.
- 30 • Pre-season Update: Program Updates/Changes, Expected fire behavior, Long-term weather
31 prognosis.
- 32 • Additional elements may be added based on national trends and needs.
- 33 • Global Positioning System (GPS)/Radio/Technology Review.

1 **Operational Mission Instruction**

2 ASM candidates should have a variety of OJT. The following flight-training requirements provide
3 guidance for evaluating ASM candidates. Individualized training and evaluation programs should be
4 developed to refine the skills and abilities of each trainee prior to certification.

5 **AITS Initial Observation Flights**

6 Two observation flights must be completed prior to front seat flight training. One of these flights must
7 occur on a fire mission:

- 8 • Two simulated missions to occur during ASM Initial.
- 9 • Initial OJT must occur under the direct supervision of an AITS Evaluator in the same aircraft.
- 10 • After initial OJT and when mutually agreed upon by the ATP Evaluator and AITS Evaluator an
11 AITS trainee may be authorized to continue training with an ATP Evaluator without an AITS
12 Evaluator onboard the aircraft. Approval will be made on a case-by-case basis. A final evaluation
13 must be conducted by an AITS Final Evaluator on board the aircraft.

14 **ASM Evaluation**

15 The standard method for evaluating AITS performance is an actual or simulated mission utilizing the
16 ASM Mission Evaluation form.

17 Recommended minimum incident complexity for final evaluation:

18 Crew members' (ATP and AITS) workload will be balanced and at a tempo that limits verbal
19 communication and requires nonverbal communications be utilized for a portion of the mission.

20 Low-level operations while coordinating a minimum of two airtankers and two helicopters in
21 collaboration with ground resources shall occur. The ASM crew shall have operational control of the
22 four aircraft, working low-level on the incident. Demonstrate CRM on a moderate complexity incident.

23 **AITS Certification**

24 Upon completion of the PTB the AITS Final Evaluator will:

- 25 • Administer a final ASM Mission Evaluation, documenting a rating of (4), for the 14 required
26 evaluation elements.
- 27 • Return the completed PTB to the AITS trainee along with recommendations.
- 28 • Notify the appropriate agency program manager.
- 29 • The AITS trainee is responsible for submitting completed PTB, training documentation, and final
30 recommendation to certifying official.
- 31 • The National Aerial Supervision Program Manager or National Branch Chief or the Pilot
32 Standardization in coordination with the appropriate RAO (USFS), the National Flight
33 Operations Manager or the National Aerial Supervision Program Manager (BLM), or appropriate
34 State and Private Forestry Aviation Official issues a Letter of Authorization to the employee and
35 supervisor.

36 **ATP Certification**

37 The ATP Final Evaluator will:

- 1 • Administer a final ASM Mission Evaluation, documenting a rating of (4), for the 14 required
2 evaluation elements.
- 3 • Notify the appropriate agency program manager.

4 The ATP trainee is responsible for submitting training documentation, and final recommendation to
5 certifying official.

6 The National Aerial Supervision Program Manager, National Branch Chief, Pilot Standardization in
7 coordination with the appropriate RAO (USFS), BLM National Flight Operations Manager, or
8 appropriate State and Private Forestry Aviation Official issues a Letter of Authorization to the employee
9 and supervisor.

10 **AIMS Supplemental Training**

- 11 • Attend professional simulator training as a crew.
- 12 • Agency provided Pinch Hitter Course (Aircraft Specific).
- 13 • Private Pilot Ground School/Private Pilot Rating.

14 **ASM Currency**

- 15 • 5 ASM missions per year.
- 16 • ATP: ASM missions can be considered LPIL missions. LPIL missions do not count toward ATP
17 currency.
- 18 • The annual mission summary will be forwarded to the agency program manager.
- 19 • If currency lapses a final evaluation must be performed on an actual/simulated mission.
- 20 • Attend an ASM refresher triennially.

21 One Year Lost Currency

22 If the AITS has not met the five-mission requirement in the previous 12 months, a passing “final
23 evaluation” must be documented by an AITS Final Evaluator during ASM initial/refresher **or** on an
24 actual wildfire assignment.

25 Two Consecutive Years of Lost Currency

26 If the AITS has not met the five-mission requirement for the second consecutive year, a passing “final
27 evaluation” must be documented by an AITS Final Evaluation during ASM initial/refresher **and** on an
28 actual wildfire assignment.

29 **Quality Assurance**

30 Agency program managers may request a QA assessment. QA evaluations may occur during ASM
31 refresher, ASM initial, or over an incident. The request will be made from the program manager to the
32 National Aerial Supervision Training Academy (NASTA) course coordinator to describe intent and
33 needs if it needs to occur during NASTA. The course coordinator will facilitate flights to ensure the QA
34 request needs are met on a case-by-case basis.

35 **ASM Deficiencies**

36 If an ASM is performing deficiently:

- 1 • The event will be discussed with the individuals and documented. Documentation should consist
2 of recommendations on how to bring ASM up to current standards; additional academics,
3 coaching, mentoring, observations, etc.
- 4 • The recommendations will be forwarded to the National Aerial Supervision Program Manager,
5 National Branch Chief, Pilot Standardization, and appropriate RAO (USFS), the National Flight
6 Operations Manager (BLM), or appropriate State and Private Forestry Aviation Official. The
7 crew may be made unavailable for ASM assignments in the appropriate dispatch/status system.
8 This may not make them individually unavailable for LPIL or ATGS assignments.

9 **AITS Coach**

10 An AITS Coach serves as a point of contact and SME for the trainee throughout the training process.

11 **Position Requirements**

12 Qualified AITS Evaluator.

13 **Responsibilities**

- 14 • Help develop a training plan for the candidate.
- 15 • Coordinate with the agency program manager and Employee Supervisor.
- 16 • Assure training is on track and that all requirements are being scheduled to not delay progress.
- 17 • Assist with any problems regarding agency and training requirements.
- 18 • Coaches should be an independent, nonpartisan person outside the employee's standard chain of
19 command.

20 **AITS Evaluator**

21 AITS Evaluator provides consistent AITS instruction, evaluation, and feedback on AITS missions.

22 **Position Requirements**

- 23 • Qualified AITS.
- 24 • ADs are authorized for this position providing they meet the position requirements.
- 25 • Maintain AITS currency.
- 26 • Attend ASM Evaluator Workshop.
- 27 • The RAO/agency program manager will track AITS Evaluator.

28 **Responsibilities**

- 29 • Utilize applicable methods to promote AITS trainee progress and certification.
- 30 • Utilize training aids, best practices, forms, and policy documents to maximize the training
31 experience.
- 32 • Review and complete applicable PTB elements.
- 33 • Document strengths, area for improvement, and focus areas utilizing the ASM Mission.

1 **Evaluation Form**

- 2 • Provide feedback to the trainee’s supervisor/coach.
3 • Share progress reports with the AITS Evaluator community.
4 • Coordinate with the trainee’s supervisor to recommend and schedule the final evaluation flight.

5 **ASM Evaluator Workshop**

6 **Objective**

7 Prepare AITS/ATP Evaluators to apply current and consistent training procedures.

- 8 • Target Group – Qualified AITS/ATP.
9 • Workshop Instructor Requirement –AITS/ATP Evaluators and Final Evaluators.

10 **Nomination Process**

11 The AITS working group, in conjunction with the National Aerial Supervision Program Manager,
12 National Branch Chief, Pilot Standardization and appropriate RAO (USFS), the National Flight
13 Operations Manager (BLM), or appropriate State and Private Forestry Aviation Official will nominate
14 AITS/ATP’s who meet the qualifications and whom they consider having the experience, aptitude,
15 dedication, and ability to perform the duties of an AITS/ATP Final Evaluator.

16 **Course Prerequisite**

17 Multi-Region experience as a qualified AITS/ATP.

18 **Course Level**

19 National Interagency.

20 **Course Content**

- 21 • Instructional methods.
22 • Utilization of the ASM Mission Evaluation Form.
23 • Mission flights.
24 • Lecture.
25 • STEX.
26 • AAR.
27 • Standardization of instruction.
28 • CRM/Human Factors – How to provide constructive criticism.
29 • Training Aids.
30 • Policy.

31 **AITS Final Evaluator**

32 AITS Final Evaluators provide final AITS trainee evaluation and complete the Final Evaluator
33 verification page in the AITS PTB.

1 **Position Requirements**

- 2 • One year of experience as an AITS Evaluator.
- 3 • AD employees are not authorized to perform this function.
- 4 • Maintain AITS currency.
- 5 • Attend ASM Final Evaluator Workshop.
- 6 • The National Aerial Supervision Program Manager, National Branch Chief, Pilot Standardization
7 in coordination with the appropriate RAO (USFS), or the National Flight Operations Manager
8 (BLM) or National Aerial Supervision Program Manager (BLM), or appropriate State and
9 Private Forestry Aviation Official will provide a Letter of Authorization to the AITS Final
10 Evaluator upon completion of the requisite training.

11 **Responsibilities**

- 12 • Coordinate with AITS Evaluator and trainee’s supervisor to schedule and implement a final
13 evaluation.
- 14 • Perform final evaluation and complete the ASM Mission Evaluation form.
- 15 • Complete the PTB.
- 16 • Review evaluation with AITS trainee.
- 17 • Contact trainee’s supervisor and review the final evaluation.

18 **ASM Final Evaluator Workshop**

19 **Objective**

20 Prepare AITS/ATP Final Evaluators to apply current and consistent training procedures.

- 21 • Target Group: Qualified AITS/ATP Evaluator.
- 22 • Workshop Instructor Requirement –AITS/ATP Evaluators and Final Evaluators.

23 **Nomination Process**

24 The AITS working group, in conjunction with the National Aerial Supervision Program Manager or
25 National Branch Chief, Pilot Standardization in coordination with the appropriate RAO (USFS), the
26 National Flight Operations Manager or National Aerial Supervision Program Manager (BLM), or
27 appropriate State and Private Forestry Aviation Official issues a Letter of Authorization to the employee
28 and supervisor.

29 **Course Prerequisite**

30 Multi-region experience as a qualified AITS/ATP Evaluator.

31 **Course Level**

32 National Interagency.

33 **Course Content**

- 34 • Instructional methods.

- 1 • Utilization of the ASM Mission Evaluation Form.
- 2 • Mission flights.
- 3 • Lecture.
- 4 • STEX.
- 5 • AAR.
- 6 • Standardization of instruction.
- 7 • CRM/Human Factors – How to provide constructive criticism.
- 8 • Training Aids.
- 9 • Policy.

10 **ATP Evaluator**

11 ATP Evaluator provides consistent ATP instruction, evaluation, and feedback on ASM missions.

12 **Position Requirements**

- 13 • Qualified LPIL (E).
- 14 • 1 Year following ATP qualification while maintaining currency.
- 15 • Attend ASM Evaluator Workshop.
- 16 • Pass an oral evaluation from an ATP Final Evaluator.
- 17 • Pass a flight evaluation from an ATP Final Evaluator.
- 18 • Maintain ATP currency.
- 19 • The National Aerial Supervision Program Manager, National Branch Chief, Pilot Standardization
- 20 in coordination with the appropriate RAO (USFS), the National Flight Operations Manager
- 21 (BLM), or appropriate State and Private Forestry Aviation Official will provide a Letter of
- 22 Authorization to the ATP Evaluator upon completion of the requisite training.

23 **Responsibilities**

- 24 • Utilize applicable methods to promote ATP trainee progress and ultimate certification.
- 25 • Utilize training aids, best practices, forms, and policy documents to maximize the training
- 26 experience.
- 27 • Review and complete applicable PTB elements.
- 28 • Review document strengths, areas for improvement, and focus areas utilizing the ASM Mission.

29 **Evaluation Form**

- 30 • Provide feedback to the trainee’s supervisor/coach.
- 31 • Share progress reports with the ATP Evaluator community.
- 32 • Coordinate with the trainee’s supervisor to recommend and schedule final evaluation flight).

33 **ATP Final Evaluator**

34 ATP Final Evaluators provide final ATP trainee evaluation.

1 **Position Requirements**

- 2 • One year of experience as an ATP.
- 3 • Attend ASM Final Evaluator Workshop.
- 4 • Pass an oral evaluation from an ATP Final Evaluator.
- 5 • Pass a flight evaluation from an ATP Final Evaluator.
- 6 • Maintain ATP currency.
- 7 • The National Aerial Supervision Program Manager, National Branch Chief, Pilot Standardization
- 8 in coordination with the RAO (USFS), the National Flight Operations Manager (BLM), or
- 9 appropriate State and Private Forestry Aviation Official will provide a Letter of Authorization to
- 10 the ATP Final Evaluator upon completion of the requisite training.

11 **Responsibilities**

- 12 • Coordinate with ATP's supervisor to schedule and implement a final evaluation.
- 13 • Perform final evaluation and complete the ASM Mission Evaluation form.
- 14 • Review evaluation with the ATP trainee.
- 15 • Contact trainee's supervisor and review the final evaluation.

16 **Helicopter Coordinator (HLCO)**

17 HLCO is used in conjunction with ATGS/ASM or as stand-alone aerial supervisors of helicopters. Large
18 incidents may have more than one HLCO operating at the same time.

19 **HLCO Position Duties**

- 20 • Coordinates, directs, and evaluates tactical/logistical helicopter operations.
- 21 • Provide sole Aerial Supervision on an incident where only helicopters are assigned, otherwise
- 22 ATGS is required.
- 23 • Collaborate with ground personnel to develop and implement tactical and logistical missions on
- 24 an incident.
- 25 • Communicate current and expected fire and weather conditions.
- 26 • Provide candid feedback regarding the effectiveness of aviation operations and overall progress
- 27 toward meeting incident objectives.
- 28 • When possible, fly to fixed-wing bases and interact with ATGS/ASM/LPIL.
- 29 • Work with dispatch/AOBD/IC/OPS staff to coordinate the ordering, assignment, and release of
- 30 incident aircraft in accordance with the needs of fire management and incident command
- 31 personnel.
- 32 • Attend operational briefing (when possible) at ICP.
- 33 • Make recommendations for additional orders to cover mission requirements.
- 34 • Establish routes, patterns, checkpoints, dip sites, etc. and identify hazards. Ensure all are added
- 35 to the flight hazard maps daily.
- 36 • Ensure communications are adequate and make recommendations to incident personnel as
- 37 needed.

- 1 • When working from a helibase conduct helicopter pilot briefings covering objectives,
2 assignments, established incident protocols, and identified hazards.
- 3 • Establish an ordering process with helibase/dispatch for additional aircraft.
- 4 • Establish trigger points for smoke/visibility impacts regarding safe operations.

5 **HLCO Initial Training**

- 6 • Candidates will meet prerequisite experience requirements and mandatory training requirements
7 listed in the PMS 310-1 or *Forest Service Fire and Aviation Qualification Guide*.
- 8 • Attend and pass Aerial Supervision (S-378), or equivalent.

9 **Note:** USFS and DOI employees must attend and pass the National Aerial Supervision Training Course
10 or the California Aerial Supervision Course. Completion of PTB and recommendation for certification
11 by a qualified/ current HLCO.

12 **HLCO Agency Approved CRM Training**

- 13 • Federal and federally sponsored AD employees will complete Crew Resource Management 7 Skills
14 (N-9059) facilitated by an authorized instructor.
- 15 • State employees will follow state CRM training requirements.

16 **HLCO Mission Training Requirements**

17 The flight-training program should include a variety of work experience and be of sufficient duration to
18 ensure that the individual can independently function as an HLCO following certification.

- 19 • Observing a HLCO Evaluator during ongoing incident operations.
- 20 • All OJT will be under the direct supervision of an HLCO Evaluator in the same aircraft.
- 21 • Prior to final certification, candidates must undertake an OJT program under the supervision of
22 an HLCO Evaluator that provides a variety of experience in initial and extended attack scenarios.

23 **HLCO Candidate Evaluations**

- 24 • The candidate shall receive a written evaluation at the completion of all missions from the
25 HLCO Evaluator as an integral part of the mission de-briefing. Multiple missions in a single day
26 may be combined on one evaluation form.
- 27 • The Aerial Supervision Mission Evaluation form is the standard performance assessment tool.
- 28 • The candidate will retain a copy of the Mission Evaluation to supplement information completed
29 by the HLCO Evaluator in the candidate's PTB.

30 **HLCO Training Opportunities**

31 Agency program managers can assist in the development of candidates by assigning a coach and
32 providing a variety of training opportunities in different geographical areas, fuel types, and incident
33 complexities. Training opportunities may include the following:

- 34 • Assignments to work with full-time, dedicated/exclusive use ATGS at an air attack base.
- 35 • Assignments to a national or geographic area IMT.
- 36 • Details or training assignments in other geographic areas to increase the depth of experience.

1 **HLCO Certification Process**

2 Upon completion of the PTB, the agency Final Evaluator will:

- 3 • Perform a final Mission Evaluation.
- 4 • Return the completed PTB to the HLCO trainee along with recommendations.
- 5 • Notify the appropriate agency program manager.
- 6 • Trainee is responsible for submitting completed PTB, training documentation, and final
7 recommendation to certifying official.

8 **HLCO Supplemental Training**

- 9 • Load Calculation Overview.
- 10 • Attend RT-378, Air Tactical Group Supervisor Refresher, triennially.
- 11 • 7 Skills CRM training.
- 12 • S-271, Helicopter Crew Member.
- 13 • S-372, Helicopter Manager.
- 14 • S-371, Helibase Manager.

15 **HLCO Currency**

16 All HLCO will meet the requirements stated in the PMS 310-1 and forward an annual mission
17 summary² to the appropriate agency program manager/RAO.

18 Additionally:

- 19 • Triennially perform, document, and report a minimum of 15 missions. (By 2023, failure to
20 maintain HLCO mission currency requires a passing evaluation by a Final Evaluator on an actual
21 or simulated mission.)
- 22 • Each mission may be documented as a “Shift” in the appropriate qualification management
23 system.
- 24 • Attend a triennial Air Tactical Group Supervisor Refresher (RT-378). Attend a triennial CRM 7
25 Skills Refresher (RT9059F) or agency approved CRM refresher course.
- 26 • Recertification – See PMS 310-1 or agency-specific policy.

27 Quality Assurance

28 Agency program managers may request a QA assessment. QA assessments may occur during RT-378 or
29 on an incident. The request will be made from the program manager to the GACC Representative and a
30 Final Evaluator will perform the QA assessment as an evaluation flight and document using the Aerial
31 Supervision Mission Evaluation form, PMS 509, <https://www.nwcg.gov/publications/509>.

32 **Note:** USFS qualified HLCOs must meet the *Forest Service Fire and Aviation Qualifications* Guide and
33 the PMS 310-1 for ATGS currency. California Department of Forestry (CAL FIRE) supports the above
34 currency requirements and manages them internally.

² Annual Mission Summaries, Individual Mission forms, and Mission Evaluation forms are components of the *Aerial Supervision Log Book*, PMS 509.

1 **HLCO Evaluator**

2 HLCO Evaluators should provide consistent HLCO instruction, evaluation, and feedback on HLCO
3 missions.

4 Position Requirements

- 5 • One year following HLCO qualification while maintaining currency.
- 6 • Attend a regionally sponsored HLCO Evaluator workshop. Documentation shall be forwarded to
7 the appropriate GACC representative or agency official.
- 8 • ADs are authorized for this position providing they meet the position requirements.
- 9 • Maintain HLCO currency as defined by agency training policy.
- 10 • The agency program manager/appropriate Regional Aviation Officer (RAO) will track HLCO
11 Evaluator. State agency aviation program managers can designate state-employed HLCO
12 Evaluators.

13 Responsibilities

- 14 • Utilize applicable methods to promote HLCO trainee progress and ultimate certification.
- 15 • Utilize training aids, best practices, forms, and policy documents to maximize the training
16 experience.
- 17 • Conduct ground training exercises.
- 18 • Review and complete applicable PTB elements.
- 19 • Document strengths and focus on improvement areas utilizing the Aerial Supervision Mission
20 Evaluation form, PMS 505-11.
- 21 • Provide feedback to the trainee’s supervisor/coach.
- 22 • Share progress reports with HLCO trainee’s GACC representative.
- 23 • Coordinate with the trainee’s supervisor to recommend and schedule the final evaluation flight.

24 **HLCO Evaluator Workshop**

25 Workshops should prepare HLCO Evaluators to apply current and consistent training procedures. The
26 Evaluator workshop should be integrated with RT-378.

27 Target Group

28 Qualified HLCO.

29 Workshop Instructor Requirement

30 HLCO Evaluator.

31 Course Prerequisite

32 None.

33 Course Level

34 Regional, state, or area.

1 Course Content:

- 2 • Utilization of the Mission Evaluation form, PMS 505k, <https://www.nwcg.gov/publications/505>.
- 3 • Mission flights.
- 4 • Lecture.
- 5 • STEX.
- 6 • After Action Review (AAR).
- 7 • Interagency/regional consistency.
- 8 • CRM/Human Factors – How to provide constructive criticism.
- 9 • Training aids.
- 10 • HLCO Final Evaluator

11 This section describes the qualifications, training, certification, and currency requirements necessary to
12 perform as an HLCO Final Evaluator.

13 **HLCO Final Evaluator Duties**

14 Provide final HLCO trainee evaluation and complete the Final Evaluator verification page in the HLCO
15 PTB.

16 Position Requirements

- 17 • One year of experience as an HLCO Evaluator.
- 18 • Attend a nationally sponsored HLCO Final Evaluator Workshop. Individuals meeting the
19 requirements of a Final Evaluator will be designated in writing by their agency. Annual letters will be
20 maintained by the appropriate GACC representative or agency official and disseminated to agency
21 training committees.
- 22 • AD employees are NOT authorized to perform this function.
- 23 • Maintain HLCO currency as defined by agency training policy.
- 24 • The appropriate RAO /agency program manager will provide a Letter of Authorization to the HLCO
25 Final Evaluator upon completion of the requisite training.

26 **Note:** State agency aviation program managers can designate state-employed HLCO Final Evaluators.

27 Responsibilities

- 28 • Coordinate with HLCO Instructor and trainee’s supervisor to schedule and implement a final
29 evaluation.
- 30 • Perform final evaluation and complete Aerial Supervision Mission Evaluation form, PMS 509,
31 <https://www.nwcg.gov/products/509/aerial-supervision-logbook-forms>.
- 32 • Complete the PTB.
- 33 • Complete Final Evaluator Verification or complete an Evaluation Record (experience block) to
34 document further training recommendations.
- 35 • Review evaluation with HLCO trainee.
- 36 • Contact trainee’s supervisor and review the final evaluation.

1 **HLCO Final Evaluator Workshop**

2 Objective

3 Prepare HLCO Final Evaluators to perform HLCO trainee final evaluations. The Final
4 Evaluator Workshop should be integrated with the Aerial Supervision Academy or equivalent.

5 Target Group

6 HLCO Evaluators.

7 Instructor Requirement

8 HLCO Final Evaluator.

9 Course Prerequisite

10 None.

11 Course Level

12 National.

13 Course Content

- 14 • Policy.
- 15 • Documentation.
- 16 • HLCO PTB.
- 17 • Aerial Supervision Mission Evaluation form, PMS 509, [https://www.nwcg.gov/products/509/aerial-](https://www.nwcg.gov/products/509/aerial-supervision-logbook-forms)
18 [supervision-logbook-forms](https://www.nwcg.gov/products/509/aerial-supervision-logbook-forms).
- 19 • CRM/Human Factors – How to provide constructive criticism.
- 20 • Agency-specific qualification/certification processes.

21

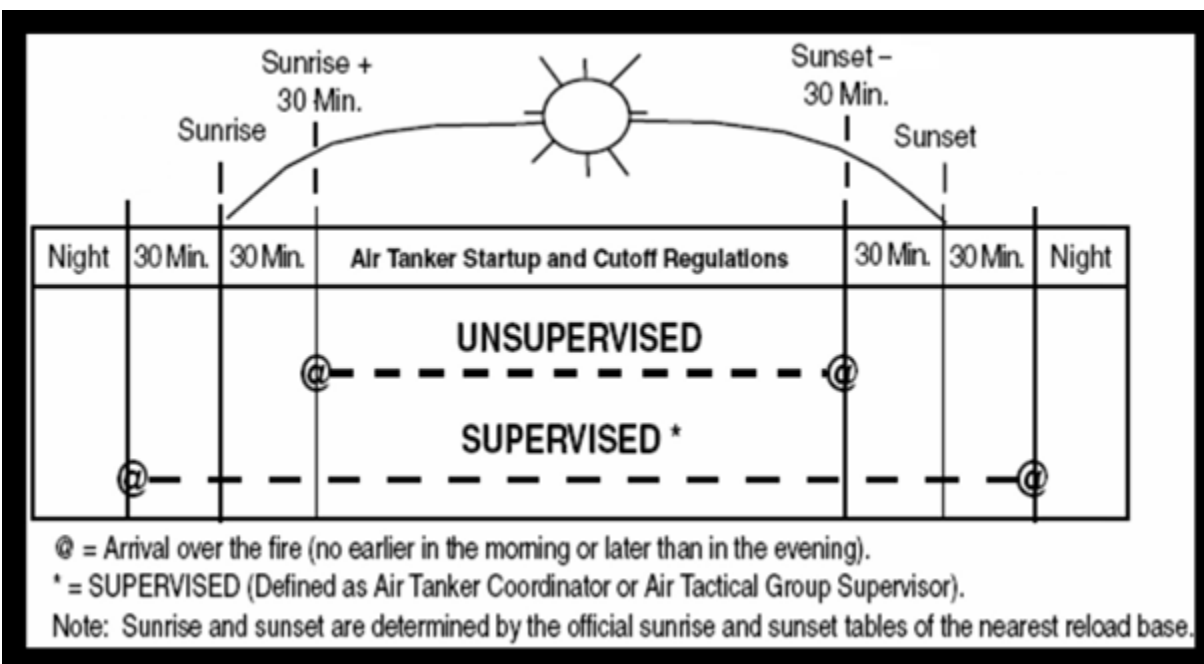
Chapter 3 – Policies, Regulations, and Guidelines

Incident aviation operations are often conducted under adverse flight conditions. Congested airspace, reduced visibility, number of aircraft on scene, poor weather, and mountainous terrain all add risk and complexity to incident Aerial Supervision operations. Complexity dictates the level of supervision required to conduct aerial operations safely and effectively. Aerial supervision may be provided by a LPIL, ASM, ATGS, or HLCO as individual resources or in any combination based on ICS models.

Low Light Conditions (Sunrise/Sunset)

Daylight hours are defined as 30 minutes prior to sunrise until 30 minutes after sunset as noted in the table below. Low-level fixed-wing operations are permitted 30 minutes before and after sunrise, as well as 30 minutes before and after sunset, but must have concurrence by the involved flight crews and Aerial Supervision (Lead, ATCO, ASM, or ATGS) must be on scene. Multi-engine aircraft empty of retardant may fly to assigned bases after daylight hours. Daylight hours may be further limited at the discretion of the pilot, aviation manager, ATGS, ASM, or leadplane because of low visibility conditions caused by smoke, shadows, or other environmental factors.

Figure 3. Aerial Supervision organization during Initial Attack and Extended Attack



Note: In Alaska, fixed-wing dropping operations shall not be authorized during periods outside of civil twilight.

Note: For paracargo operations see the *Interagency Smokejumper Operations Guide*, https://www.fs.usda.gov/sites/default/files/media_wysiwyg/interagency_ismog_final_02_05_2018signed.pdf, and the PMS 310-1 for ATGS currency.

Note: Single-Engine Airtankers (SEATs) and helicopters are limited to flight during official daylight hours.

Note: Sunrise and sunset are determined by the official sunrise and sunset tables of the nearest reload base.

1 **Aerial Supervision Requirements**

2 When aerial supervisors are co-located with retardant aircraft, they will be launched together on the
 3 initial order to maximize safety, effectiveness, and efficiency of incident operations. Federal policy
 4 dictates additional requirements as listed below.

5 **Table 1. Incident Aerial Supervision Requirements**

6 **Incident Aerial Supervision Requirements**

7 **Note:** Deviations from this table may be authorized by the agencies through local mitigations.

SITUATION	HLCO	ASM / LPIL	ATGS / ASM
Three or more manned aircraft over an incident or when mixed type and kind aircraft are over the incident working at the same time.	ORDERED IF NO ATGS AND ONLY HELICOPTERS	ORDERED IF NO ATGS AND ONLY FIXED WING	ORDERED
If manned and unmanned aircraft are operating within the same working area/area of operation (WA/AO). <i>(If only UAS, no aerial supervision is required.)</i>	ORDERED IF NO ATGS AND ONLY HELICOPTERS	ORDERED IF NO ATGS AND ONLY FIXED WING	ORDERED
Fixed-Wing Low-Level Operations in Low Light conditions.	N/A	REQUIRED IF NO ATGS	REQUIRED IF NO ASM/LPIL
MAFFS/VLAT.	N/A	REQUIRED	N/A
Airtanker / Muti-Engine Amphibious Water Scooping Aircraft not IA carded.	N/A	REQUIRED IF NO ATGS	REQUIRED IF NO ASM/LPIL
Level 2 SEAT / Fireboss operating on an incident with more than one other tactical aircraft on scene.	N/A	REQUIRED IF NO ATGS	REQUIRED IF NO ASM/LPIL
Foreign Government Aircraft.	N/A	REQUIRED IF NO ATGS	REQUIRED IF NO ASM/LPIL
Congested Area Flight Operations.	ORDERED	ORDERED	REQUIRED
Periods of marginal weather, poor visibility, or turbulence.	REQUIRED IF NO ATGS/ASM / LPIL	REQUIRED	REQUIRED
Active Duty (Non-National Guard) Military Helicopter Operations.	ORDERED	N/A	REQUIRED IF NO HLCO
When requested by airtanker, helicopters, ATGS, LPIL, or ASM.	REQUIRED	REQUIRED	REQUIRED

**ASM can perform all ATGS missions however, an ATGS is required when requested by ASM.

8

1 Required

2 Aerial supervisory resource(s) shall be over the incident when specified air tactical operations are being
3 conducted. Required aerial supervision resources shall be on scene before dispatching tactical resources
4 (helicopters, airtankers, water scoopers) during periods of marginal weather, poor visibility, or
5 turbulence.

6 Ordered

7 Aerial supervisors shall be ordered by the unit maintaining operational control (operations may be
8 continued while the aerial supervisor is en route to the incident. Operations can be continued if the
9 resource is not available and assigned resource are notified).

10 Assigned

11 Tactical resource allocated to an incident. The resource may be flying en route to and from, or on hold at
12 assigned airport/helibase.

13 N/A

14 Not authorized or applicable to the level of supervision required for the mission/resource.

15 **Note:** Aerial Supervision personnel and equipment may be used during night flying operations when
16 approved by the agency having operational control. Incidents on USFS lands or using USFS resources
17 will follow the USFS National Night Air Operations Plan,

18 <https://gacc.nifc.gov/oncc/docs/2021/Final%202021%20Night%20Air%20Ops%20Plan.pdf>.

19 Aerial Supervision personnel must carefully evaluate flight hazards, conditions (visibility, wind, thunder
20 cells, turbulence, and terrain) to ensure that operations can be conducted in a safely and effectively.

21 The following policies and guidelines are designed to do this:

22 **Visibility**

23 Visibility must meet the FAA Visual Flight Rules (VFR) minimum requirement for the airspace that
24 operations are within. When poor visibility precludes safe operations, flights will be suspended. It is
25 highly recommended that all incident aircraft fly with lights on, appropriate to the aircraft and
26 conditions, at all times. Regular position reporting is critical in marginal visibility conditions.

27 **Night Air Operations**

28 Reference FIRESCOPE and USFS Night Air Operations Plan.

29 **Hazardous Conditions**

30 Moderate to high winds and turbulent conditions affect flight safety and water/retardant drop
31 effectiveness. Several factors including terrain, fuel type, target location, resources at risk, crosswinds,
32 etc., must be considered. Aerial operations should cease when safety-of-flight is or may be
33 compromised, water/retardant drops become ineffective, or at the pilot's recommendation. Refer to the
34 *Incident Response Pocket Guide (IRPG)*, PMS 461, <https://www.nwcg.gov/publications/461>, refusal of
35 risk process.

1 Evaluate thunderstorms and other hazardous weather activities for flight safety. Erratic winds, lightning,
2 hail, and diminished visibility adversely affect aviation operations. Consider delaying operations or
3 reassigning resources to safe operation areas. Suspend flight operations when lightning or other adverse
4 weather conditions are present. Further reading: Interagency Aviation Accident Prevention Bulletin 13-
5 04, MAFFS operations plan, Federal Aviation Regulations (FAR)/Aeronautical Information Manual.

6 **Note:** Any aerial supervisor, pilot, or ground resource can halt operations to mitigate risk or hazardous
7 situations.

8 **Foreign Government Aircraft on United States Incidents**

9 Under international cooperative agreements the USFS, BLM, and state agencies may enlist the
10 assistance of Canadian air tactical resources on United States incidents. A Canadian Air Attack Officer
11 flying in a Bird Dog or LPIL will normally be assigned with Canadian airtankers. The State of Alaska
12 also employs a Bird Dog program and manages it internally for the State of Alaska airtankers which are
13 federally approved. The Canadian airtanker communications system is compatible with USFS and DOI
14 Systems. Aerial supervisors assigned to these incidents will adhere to the following policies and
15 guidelines:

16 **Incidents on Federal Lands**

- 17 • Aerial Supervision shall be assigned to the incident as outlined in the Incident Aerial Supervision
18 Requirements table in this chapter.
- 19 • A Federal ATGS, ASM, or LPIL shall supervise Canadian airtankers. In the absence of a LPIL
20 or ASM, the Canadian Air Attack Officer/Bird Dog is authorized to coordinate airtanker drops
21 and function as ATGS (after completing an orientation).

22 **Deviations From This Policy Must Be Specifically Approved By The Appropriate Agency.**

- 23 • Airtanker Reloads – The reload base for Canadian airtankers shall be determined by the
24 originating dispatch.
- 25 • Canadian airtanker pilots shall be briefed on standard drop height minimums as they normally
26 drop from lower heights.
- 27 • Canadian airtankers and helicopters operating on federal lands will be managed in the same
28 manner as United States resources.

29 **Incidents on Cooperator Lands**

30 When an ATGS, ASM, or LPIL are assigned to a cooperator incident employing Canadian air resources
31 the incident will be managed as outlined in this chapter.

32 **Authorization to lead United States Airtankers**

33 Canadian Air Attack Officers/Bird Dogs or Alaskan Bird Dogs are not authorized to “lead” U.S.
34 airtankers.

35 **Air Attack Pilot Standards**

36 Pilots flying air tactical missions must be agency approved. Airplane Pilot Qualification Cards must be
37 checked prior to air tactical missions.

1 **Air Attack Pilot Approval**

2 Aerial supervision pilots (for ATGS or HLCO) shall be inspected and approved annually by a qualified
3 USFS or Office of Aviation Services (OAS) Pilot Inspector. Qualification for air tactical missions shall
4 be indicated on the Airplane Pilot Qualification Card.

5 **Pilot Orientation and Training**

6 Prior to flying their initial air tactical mission, preferably pre-season, the pilot shall receive a basic
7 orientation/training from a qualified ATGS. As a minimum, the following shall be covered:

- 8 • General scope of the mission.
- 9 • Incident air organization – emphasis on ATGS, ASM, and HLCO roles.
- 10 • Specific responsibilities of the ATGS.
- 11 • Fire Anatomy.
- 12 • Specific responsibilities and expectations of the ATGS pilot.
- 13 • Air resources commonly assigned to, or present on, the type of incident.
- 14 • Communications hardware, procedures, protocol, and frequency management.
- 15 • Air space management, FTA, Temporary Flight Restrictions (TFRs), flight patterns, etc.
- 16 • Operations safety.
- 17 • Standard Operating Procedures.
- 18 • Fuel management.
- 19 • Dispatch readiness, availability for duty.
- 20 • Records.

21 **Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) Policy**

22 The following PPE is required for all interagency ATGS operations (ATGS and Pilot):

- 23 • Leather or Nomex® shoes.
- 24 • Full-length cotton or Nomex® pants or a flight suit.
- 25 • Cotton or Nomex® shirt.

26 The following PPE is required for all interagency HLCO operations (HLCO and Pilot):

- 27 • Leather or Nomex® shoes.
- 28 • Pants and long sleeve shirt made of Nomex® or a flight suit.
- 29 • Leather or Nomex® gloves.
- 30 • Agency approved flight helmet.

1 **LPIL and ASM**

2 Policy

3 The use of PPE by personnel engaged in LPIL/ASM operations is required as per agency policy. This
4 requirement is stated in various publications, including the *USDA Safety and Health Handbook*, FSH
5 6709.11, Chapter 3, the *DOI Safety and Health Handbook*, 485 DM, Chapter 20, and both departments'
6 *Aircraft Accident Prevention Plans*. Specific requirements for PPE differ slightly among organizations.
7 A complete text of requirements can be found in the DOI Departmental Manual (351 DM 1).

8 **Requirements**

9 Flight Suit

10 One-piece fire-resistant polyamide or aramid material or equal. The use of wildland firefighter Nomex®
11 shirts and trousers (two-piece) is authorized.

12 Protective Footgear

13 Leather boots shall extend above the ankle. Such boots may not have synthetic insert panels (such as
14 jungle boots).

15 Gloves

16 Gloves made of polyamide or aramid material or all leather gloves, without synthetic liners. Leather
17 gloves must cover the wrist and allow required finger dexterity.

18 Flight Helmets

19 Aerial Supervision from helicopters requires a flight helmet.

20 **Oxygen Requirements**

21 Flights must comply with the FAA Part 135, 14, or Part 91.211 of Code of Federal Regulations (CFR)
22 part 135.89 or more restrictive contractual regulations.

23 **Note:** Refer to aircraft contract for specific direction on applicable FARs.

24 **Day/Night Flight Policy**

25 **Twin-Engine Fixed-Wing**

26 These aircraft are not limited to daylight operations. The aircraft can travel to/from or work over the
27 incident before sunrise and after sunset as long as the aircraft and pilot are equipped/authorized for
28 Instrument Flight Rules (IFR) operations and in compliance with fixed-wing low-level operations in low
29 light conditions in this guide. Consult agency policy for further clarification.

30 **Single-Engine Fixed-Wing**

31 Flight time is limited to 30 minutes prior to sunrise and 30 minutes after sunset unless IFR equipped,
32 and the pilot is qualified.

33 **USFS:** Use only multi-engine or turbine-powered single-engine aircraft (fixed-wing or helicopter) for
34 night flights that meet the applicable requirements in FAR Part 91 and Part 61 as referenced in FSH
35 5709.16 or applicable contract requirements.

1 **Helicopters**

2 Flight time is limited to 30 minutes prior to sunrise and 30 minutes after sunset. Multi-engine helicopters
3 are not limited to daylight operations under certain stipulations such as emergencies or lighted airports,
4 or specific programs/contracts.

5 **USFS:** Low-level helicopter night flight operations will primarily be conducted using Night Vision
6 Goggles (NVG), a temporary unaided flight is allowed when excessive illumination exists and becomes
7 hazardous to NVG aided flight. Helicopters will be approved for NVG operations. Refer to agency
8 policy and/or aircraft contract.

9 **Flight Crew Duty Day and Flight Hour Policy**

10 Refer to the *Interagency Standards for Fire and Fire Aviation Operations* (Red Book), Chapter 16, for
11 current Interagency Interim Flight and Duty Limitations
12 https://www.nifc.gov/policies/pol_ref_redbook.html.

13 **Communications Guidelines**

14 **Flight Following**

15 A frequency is assigned by the dispatch center for check-ins and incident related information. National
16 Flight Following (NFF) frequency (168.650 Tx/Rx. Tone 110.9 Tx/Rx) is the primary flight follow
17 frequency. Local units may assign an additional (VHF-AM or VHF-FM) based on unit policy. Dispatch
18 centers may require a 15-minute check-in or a confirmation that an aircraft is showing “positive” on the
19 automated flight following (AFF) system. See National/GACC Mobilization Guide for specific flight
20 following responsibilities.

21 **Note:** Consult hosting dispatch center for local procedures.

22 **Air-to-Ground Communications**

23 It is essential to have a dedicated air-to-ground frequency that is continuously monitored by Aerial
24 Supervision resources.

- 25 • IA – Many agencies have pre-assigned FM air-to-ground frequencies assigned to geographic
26 areas. Other agencies use standard work channel frequencies.
- 27 • Extended Attack Incidents – Specific frequencies should be ordered to avoid radio conflicts with
28 other incidents. Some incidents require two air-to-ground frequencies to separate command and
29 tactical air-to-ground communications. These frequencies must be ordered through the dispatch
30 system. Once assigned, incident frequencies and their specified use will be listed in the ICS 220
31 Air Operations Summary and the ICS 205 Incident Radio Communications Plan.

32 **Air-to-Air Communications**

33 Communication between all airborne incident aircraft is critical to safety and effectiveness. Air-to-air
34 communications are usually accomplished using a VHF-AM frequency. California uses a VHF-FM for
35 air-to-air communications, which requires three FM radios.

- 36 • Primary air-to-air frequencies are assigned on an aircraft dispatch form. Agencies may have pre-
37 assigned air-to-air frequencies for IA specific to geographic areas. Specific frequencies should be
38 ordered for extended attack incidents to avoid conflict with other incidents through the local
39 dispatch center. Extended attack incidents have discrete air-to-air frequencies assigned by the
40 incident’s Communication Unit Leader and are listed in the Air Operations Summary (ICS-220),
41 and Incident Radio Communication Plan, (ICS-205).

- 1 • Secondary air-to-air frequencies are assigned on an aircraft dispatch form. If needed due to radio
2 congestion, a second air-to-air frequency should be established for helicopter operations. This
3 frequency may also be used for the flight following frequency at the helibase. The ATGS should
4 retain the primary air-to-air frequency for fixed-wing operations so airtankers en route to the
5 incident can check-in. A discrete air-to-air frequency may be required for LPIL operations.

6 **Air-to-Air Continuity**

7 The ATGS must monitor all assigned air-to-air frequencies and maintain communications with incident
8 aircraft. Air resources under the direct supervision of the ATGS must monitor their assigned air-to-air
9 frequency.

10 **Air Guard**

11 VHF-FM 168.625 (TX Tone 110.9) has been established as the USDA/DOI emergency frequency. This
12 frequency is permanently programmed and continuously audible in the multi-channel programmable
13 radio system.

14 Authorized uses of the Air Guard frequency include:

- 15 • In-flight aircraft emergencies.
- 16 • Emergency aircraft-to-aircraft communications.
- 17 • Emergency communications between air and ground resources.
- 18 • Dispatch contact (when use of the designated flight following frequency does not result in
19 positive communications).
- 20 • Initial call, recall, and redirection (diversion) of aircraft when assigned frequencies fail to work.

21 **Air-to-Air Enroute Position Reporting**

22 During periods of poor visibility, a VHF-AM or FM frequency may be established for assigned aircraft
23 position and altitude reporting (calls in the blind).

24 **In-flight Communications Failure**

25 At time of dispatch, all aircraft must have both VHF-FM and VHF-AM radio systems in working order.
26 In the event of a radio system failure, the following will apply:

- 27 • Total System Failure – No ability to monitor or transmit – seek a safe altitude and route and
28 return to base in accordance with FARs.
- 29 • VHF-FM System Failure – Report the problem to other aircraft and dispatch (if able) on VHF-
30 AM system and return to base.
- 31 • VHF-AM System Failure – Report the problem to other aircraft, IC, and Dispatch on VHF-FM
32 system and return to base in accordance with FARs.

1 **Frequency Management**

- 2 • Both VHF-FM and VHF-AM frequencies are allocated to wildland agencies.
- 3 • VHF-FM is allocated by the National Telecommunications and Information Administration.
- 4 • VHF-AM is allocated by the FAA.
- 5 • VHF-AM frequencies may change from year to year.
- 6 • Additional FM and AM frequencies may be allocated during major fire emergencies.
- 7 • The agency dispatch centers may order additional frequencies through GACCs.

8 **Backcountry Airstrips / Uncontrolled Airstrips**

9 When there is a potential conflict between agency aircraft and public users of backcountry airstrips
10 announce intention relating to fire activity on the appropriate backcountry frequency. The Air Attack
11 Pilot should monitor Unicom/Multicom/Common Traffic Advisory Frequency and brief the ATGS
12 regarding traffic.

13 **Conflicting Radio Frequencies**

14 When multiple incidents in relative proximity are sharing the same tactical frequencies, interference can
15 seriously impair operations. The ATGS must recognize this and request different frequencies through
16 dispatch or the IMT Communications Unit Leader. ATGS may select a “LOW” transmit power setting,
17 if available, to attempt to mitigate interference issues. A local (geographic area) frequency coordinator
18 and the National Incident Radio Support Cache should be involved when assigning frequencies where
19 several incidents are in close proximity.

20 **Tone Guards**

21 Tones have been established to allow the use of assigned frequencies selectively. The tone can be
22 programmed, or selected, on VHF-FM radios for both receive and transmit frequencies positions when
23 tones are assigned incident aircraft shall use them as directed. When frequencies are protected in the
24 “receive” position only radios that have specified tone in their “transmit” position will be heard.

25 **Air Resource Identifiers**

- 26 • ATGS/HLCO identifier en route to and from incidents will use their unit identifier (Air Attack or
27 HLCO) or Tail Number (last 3) until they assume incident duties
- 28 • The State of Alaska ASM designator is A (Alpha). The USFS and BLM ASM designator is B
29 (Bravo). The CAL FIRE ASM designator is C (Charlie).
- 30 • LPIL identifier is “Lead”.
 - 31 ○ LPIL – Pilots are assigned a one or two-digit identifier (ex: Lead 1 is pronounced “Lead one”
32 and Lead 0-1 is “Lead zero one”).
- 33 • Airtanker: Tanker plus identification number (ex: Tanker 21 is “Tanker two one”).
- 34 • Scooper: Scooper plus identification number (ex: Scooper 260 is “Scooper two six zero”).
- 35 • MAFFS: MAFFS plus identification number (ex: MAFFS 6 is “MAFFS six”).

- 1 • Helicopter: Helicopter plus last three characters of N-number (ex. helicopter 72D is “Helicopter
2 seven two delta”) or a locally assigned agency identifier (ex. Helicopter 534 is “Helicopter five
3 three four”).
- 4 • Smokejumper Aircraft: Jumper plus last two characters of N-number (ex. Jumper 41) or an
5 agency assigned identification number.
- 6 • Other Fixed-Wing: Other fixed-wing are identified by “make or model prefix” plus the last three
7 characters of N-number (ex. Cessna 426).
- 8 • Other Identifiers:
 - 9 ○ Air Ops: Air Operations Director
 - 10 ○ Air Support: Air Support Group Supervisor
 - 11 ○ Operations or Ops: OSC

12 **Message Sequence**

13 Protocol requires the resource you are calling be stated first, followed by your identification. “Tanker
14 two three, Trinity Air Attack.” Make messages as short and concise as possible.

15 **Frequency Identification**

16 Monitoring several frequencies when all are actively receiving makes it difficult to determine which
17 frequency is being heard. When making initial contact, state the frequency you are transmitting on:
18 “Lead six-eight, Bear Air Attack on Victor one-one-eight-two-five-zero.”

19 **Airspace Policy**

20 The *NWCG Standards for Airspace Coordination, PMS 520*, <https://www.nwcg.gov/publications/520>,
21 covers all aspects of wildland agency airspace management. Aerial supervision personnel must be
22 familiar with information in the guide and FAA designated airspace. Dispatch centers and airtanker base
23 managers should have a copy of both available for reference. Clearance from dispatch is **not** a clearance
24 from the FAA or Air Traffic Control (ATC) and the pilot must obtain clearance appropriate to the
25 airspace.

26 **Federally Designated Special Use Airspace (SUA)**

27 Incidents may be located in, or flight routes to incidents may pass through, areas designated by the FAA
28 as Special Use Areas. Operations through, or within these areas, may require specific procedures to be
29 followed.

30 SUA “consists of airspace wherein activity must be confined because of its nature and/or wherein
31 limitations may be imposed upon aircraft operations that are not part of those activities.” These areas
32 include Military Operations Areas (MOAs), Restricted Areas (RAs), Prohibited Areas (PAs) Alert Areas
33 (AAs) Warning Areas (WAs) and Controlled Firing Areas (CFAs).

34 SUA Locations

35 All areas except CFA are identified on National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA)
36 Aeronautical Sectional Charts. Many of these are located in wildland areas throughout the United States.

1 Procedures

2 The Interagency Airspace Coordination Guide and the FAA Handbook 7400.2 (Procedures for Handling
3 Airspace Matters) discuss procedures to be used when wildland aerial fire operations are requested in or
4 through these areas. Often, flights through, or within SUA's, require authorization from the using or
5 controlling agencies. Depending on the type of SUA involved, contact with the controlling agency may
6 be initiated by the air resource pilot. Dispatch is not a controlling agency regarding airspace.

- 7 • RA – These areas denote the existence of unusual and often invisible hazards to aircraft such as
8 artillery firing, aerial gunnery, or guided missiles. Aircraft must obtain authorization from the
9 controlling agency prior to entry. Many dispatch centers have a deconfliction plan for this type of
10 airspace.
- 11 • MOA – Many MOAs in the Western United States are located in airspace over agency lands.
12 Current information regarding MOA scheduling is published in the Area Planning (AP/IB)
13 Handbook and Charts. When wildfires occur in these areas the local unit should contact the
14 controlling agency and notify them that incident aircraft will be in the area. Do not assume there
15 will be no military activity within the SUA. Authorization is not required to enter a MOA,
16 however, the controlling agency may alter operations in the vicinity of the incident.
- 17 • Military Training Route (MTR) – MTRs are located over many agency lands in the United
18 States. Centers should have daily schedule information (hot routes) and may notify the FAA and
19 Military.
- 20 • Scheduling Activity when incident aircraft may conflict with military aircraft on or near a MTR.
21 Do not assume an MTR has been de-conflicted.
- 22 • Other Military Training Routes and Areas – While the MOAs and MTRs are charted on sectional
23 maps and the AP/IB charts, Slow Speed Low-Altitude Training Routes (SRs) and Low-Altitude
24 Tactical Navigation Areas (LATNs) and other low-altitude flights are not charted and schedules
25 are not published. Dispatch centers should alert you to these flights, if known. The ATGS will
26 notify the dispatch center and other incident aircraft if they observe military aircraft en route to,
27 near, or within the operations area.

28 **Incident Airspace; the FTA**

29 An interagency airspace management tool containing an established communication protocol. All
30 wildland incidents, regardless of aircraft on scene, have an FTA. The FTA is a section of airspace with a
31 five nautical mile (NM) radius from the center point of an incident during fire suppression operations.
32 Responding resources shall arrive on scene using the following procedures based on resource type.

33 Key components and procedures of the FTA include:

- 34 • Initial Communication Ring – A ring 12 Nautical Miles (nm) from the center point of the
35 incident. At or prior to 12 nm, inbound aircraft contact the ATGS or appropriate aerial resource
36 for permission to proceed to the incident. Briefing information is provided to the inbound aircraft
37 by the aerial supervisor over the incident.

- 1 • No Communication (NOCOM) Ring – A ring 7 nm from the center point of the incident that
2 should not be crossed by inbound aircraft without first receiving clearance from the appropriate
3 on-scene incident aircraft.
- 4 • Three (3) Cs of initial contact – Communication requirements and related actions to be
5 undertaken by the pilot of the inbound aircraft:
 - 6 ○ Communication – Establish communications with the controlling aerial supervisor or an on-
7 scene aircraft if there is no Aerial Supervision.
 - 8 ○ Clearance – Receive clearance from aerial supervisor (or on-scene aircraft if there is no
9 Aerial Supervision) to proceed to the incident past the NOCOM ring. The inbound pilot will
10 acknowledge receipt of clearance or (hold) outside the NOCOM ring until the clearance is
11 received and understood.
 - 12 ○ Comply – Inbound aircraft will comply with clearance. If compliance cannot be
13 accomplished, the inbound aircraft will remain outside the NOCOM ring until an amended
14 clearance is received and understood.
- 15 • Departing Aircraft – Aircraft departing incident airspace must follow assigned departure route
16 and altitude. Aerial supervisors must deconflict routes for departing aircraft within the airspace.

17 **Initial Points (IP)**

18 The IP is a location that airtankers initially fly to when coming to the fire. It can be identified by latitude
19 and longitude, a geographic location, or even a distance and direction from the fire.

20 **TFR**

21 Under the conditions listed below the responsible agency should request a TFR under FAR Part 91.137
22 (a)(2). A TFR may be initiated by the dispatch center, IC, AOBD, LPIL, ASM, or ATGS.

23 For more information, refer to the *NWCG Standards for Airspace Coordination* or FAR Part 91.137
24 (a)(2).

25 Aerial Supervision Responsibilities Regarding TFRs

26 During the IA phase of an incident, the aerial supervisor may initiate a request for a TFR. The aerial
27 supervisor should provide information required on the Interagency Request for TFRs form and radio this
28 information to the responsible dispatch coordination center. On Type 1 or 2 incidents, the ATGS in
29 consultation with the ASM, HLCO, and/or LPIL will advise the AOBD when the dimensions of the TFR
30 should be changed. These changes must be forwarded immediately to the dispatch center that will
31 initiate a new order to the FAA. The aerial supervisor should coordinate with the incident AOBD or
32 local dispatch office as appropriate to recommend termination of an existing TFR.

33 Ordering a TFR

34 Three pieces of information are required:

- 35 • Center point in Degree Minutes Seconds (DMS) format.
- 36 • Vertical dimension in feet Mean Sea Level (MSL).
- 37 • Horizontal radius in Nautical Miles (nm) from center point.
 - 38 ○ Non-standard/non-circular TFR dimensions require points in DMS format at each corner of
39 the polygon listed clockwise around the perimeter.

1 **Note:** The Interagency Airspace Coordination Guide covers this subject in detail.

2 TFR Additional Factors to Consider

- 3 • Length of operation: Extended operations (>3 hours) are anticipated. Local agency policy for the
4 anticipated length of incident operations may apply.
- 5 • Congested airspace involved: Operations are in the vicinity of high-density civil aircraft
6 operation (airports).
- 7 • Incident size and complexity.
- 8 • Potential conflict with non-operational aircraft.
- 9 • Extended operations on MTRs.
- 10 • Extended Operations within SUA.
- 11 • The type and number of aircraft operations occurring within the incident airspace and their
12 aeronautical requirements.
- 13 • The operating altitudes to provide all incident aircraft including the ATGS and ATGS relief
14 aircraft a safe operating orbit.
- 15 • Entry and exit points and routes to bases.
- 16 • Other aviation operations in the geographic area.
- 17 • Size, shape, and rate of increase of the incident.
- 18 • Location of the incident helibases, water sources, etc.
- 19 • Location of airports.

20 TFR Lateral Dimensions

21 The suggested radius for a TFR is 7 nm from the center point. Any incident helicopter operating bases
22 within “reasonable distance” should be included (helibase, heli-dip site) within the TFR. The lateral
23 dimensions/shape may be irregular to conform to incident airspace requirements. TFRs reaching 20 nm
24 will require a special frequency from the FAA.

25 TFR Vertical Dimensions

26 The suggested guideline for an incident TFR is 2,000 feet above the highest flying incident aircraft.
27 Generally, this will be, 4,500 feet above terrain.

28 **Note:** The vertical and lateral dimensions of the desired airspace may conflict with FAA requirements
29 and what they will approve. The FAA, through the dispatch center, will provide the approved TFR
30 dimensions.

31 TFRs for Multiple Incidents in Close Proximity

32 Multiple incidents in close proximity may result in overlapping restrictions. To avoid confusion the
33 respective dispatchers and AOBs should consolidate multiple TFRs into one manageable TFR. This
34 will need to be negotiated between agencies and IMT’s. Frequency management will also need to be
35 considered. As long as the TFRs do not overlap, they may share boundaries.

1 Proper Identification of TFR Part 91.137 Paragraph

2 TFR Part 91.137 is divided into three sections referred to as Paragraphs (a)(1), (a)(2), and (a)(3)
3 indicating the type of disaster event normally associated with each designation. The most commonly
4 requested TFR for wildfire is 91.137 (a)(2).

- 5 • Volcanic eruption, toxic gas leaks, spills.
- 6 • Forest and range fires, earthquakes, tornado activity, etc. Disaster/hazard incidents of limited
7 duration that would attract an unsafe congestion of sightseeing aircraft, such as aircraft accident
8 sites.

9 **Note:** Non-participating aircraft may enter the TFR under the following conditions:

- 10 • The aircraft is carrying law enforcement officials.
- 11 • The aircraft is on a flight plan and carrying properly accredited news representatives.
- 12 • The aircraft is operating under the ATC approved IFR flight plan.
- 13 • The operation is conducted directly to or from an airport within the area or is necessitated by the
14 impracticability of VFR flight above or around the area due to weather, or terrain; notification is
15 given to the Flight Service Station (FSS) or ATC facility specified in the Notice To Air Missions
16 (NOTAM) to receive advisories concerning disaster relief aircraft operations; and the operation
17 does not hamper or endanger relief activities and is not conducted for observing the disaster.
- 18 • Participating aircraft must be approved by the official in charge of the on-scene emergency
19 response and must be in directed by the official in charge as guided by 91.137(a)(2).

20 **Protocol for Airspace Conflicts and Intrusions Inside a TFR**

21 When incident airspace conflicts and intrusions occur, the aerial supervisor must:

- 22 • Immediately ensure the safety of incident aircraft.
- 23 • Notify incident aircraft in the immediate area of the position of the intruder.
- 24 • Attempt radio contact with intruder aircraft by use of VHF-AM (known Victor, local Unicom)
25 and VHF-FM (assigned, local, or Air Guard) frequencies.
- 26 • If radio contact can be established, inform the intruder of the incident in progress, airspace
27 restriction limitations in effect, and other aircraft in the area. Determine if the intruder has
28 legitimate authority to be within the TFR.
- 29 • Request intruder departs TFR area (assign an altitude and heading if necessary). Request the
30 intruder to stay in radio contact until clear of the TFR.
- 31 • If the aircraft is a legitimate “non-participating” aircraft and has the authority (law enforcement)
32 to be within the area, communicate with the aircraft and advise incident aircraft of its presence. If
33 possible, coordinate altitudes, and locations.
- 34 • For drone conflicts and intrusions please reference: Unmanned Aircraft Systems:
35 <https://www.faa.gov/uas/>.
- 36 • *NWCG Standards for Airspace Coordination*, PMS 520,
37 <https://www.nwcg.gov/publications/520>.

38 If radio contact is not established:

- 1 • Do not attempt to drive, guide, or force the intruder from the area. The aerial supervisor must
2 monitor intruder's position, altitude, and heading.
- 3 • The aerial supervisor must ensure that incident aircraft are informed and kept clear of intruder.
4 This may require removing incident aircraft and suspending operations for as long as intruder is
5 considered a potential hazard.
- 6 • Report intruder immediately to local dispatch office and ask them to contact the Air Route
7 Traffic Control Center (ARTCC). The FAA sometimes has the capability of tracking an aircraft
8 or identifying the aircraft.
- 9 • If there is a conflict or intrusion, report it to the appropriate dispatch center. Ask dispatch to
10 report the intrusion to the local ARTCC.
- 11 • Submit a Mishap or Aviation Safety Communiqué (SAFECOM) Report as per agency policy and
12 procedures.

13 **Air Operations in Congested Areas**

14 Fires in the urban interface are considered to be in “congested areas.” Airtankers can drop retardant in
15 congested areas under DOI authority given in FAR Part 137. USFS authority is granted in exemption
16 392, FAR 91.119 as referenced in the Forest Service Manual 5700 and 5709.16. When such operations
17 are necessary, they may be authorized and are subject to these limitations:

- 18 • Airtanker operations in congested areas may be conducted at the request of the city, rural fire
19 department, county, state, or federal fire suppression agency.
- 20 • An ASM or LPIL is ordered to coordinate aerial operations.
- 21 • The ATC facility responsible for the airspace is notified before or as soon as possible after the
22 beginning of the operation.
- 23 • A positive communication link must be established between the LPIL or the ASM, airtanker
24 pilots, and the responsible fire suppression agency official.
- 25 • The IC or designee for the responsible agency will advise Aerial Supervision personnel or
26 airtanker that the line is clear before retardant drops.

27 **Use of Firefighting Aircraft Transponder Code 1255**

28 All incident aircraft will utilize a transponder code of 1255 unless another code is assigned by ATC.

29 **SUA Reminders**

- 30 • Check with dispatch when receiving the Resource Order.
- 31 • Is the incident within SUA?
- 32 • Is the Restricted Area/MOA/MTR “hot” or about to be?
- 33 • Confirm the military has been notified and what action will be taken.
- 34 • The pilot must obtain clearance/routing from ATC through or around RAs en route to the
35 incident.
- 36 • Always be alert for military aircraft even when SUA/MTRs are “cold.”

1 **Canadian Airtankers on U.S. Border Fires**

2 On fires near the Canadian/U.S. border, a Canadian Air Attack Group may be dispatched to a U.S. fire.

- 3 • This group may include two airtankers or scoopers and a Bird Dog.
- 4 • On board, the Bird Dog is an Air Attack Officer, very similar to an ATGS.
- 5 • Typically, on a ‘quick strike’ across the border, the Bird Dog would assume control of the
6 airspace and work the fire until a U.S. ATGS is present.
- 7 • When a U.S. ATGS is on scene, the ATGS has overall responsibility for the airspace.
- 8 • The Bird Dog is in charge of directing Canadian airtanker operations much like a LPIL under the
9 supervision of the ATGS. The ATGS is responsible for the direction of all U.S. resources and the
10 Bird Dog.
- 11 • Refer to policies of the local agency or your home agency about the utilization of Canadian air
12 resources.
- 13 • The local unit Dispatch should coordinate flights with Air and Marine Interdiction Coordination
14 Center at 1-866-AIRBUST.

1 Chapter 4 – Incident Aircraft

2 Aerial supervisors should have knowledge of the types of aircraft they supervise, how to communicate
3 with them, and the logistics required to support them.

4 Tactical and logistical aircraft supervised and coordinated by aerial supervisors may be procured from
5 the USFS, DOI OAS, U.S. Department of Defense, or state, county, or municipal sources. Contract or
6 procurement agreement requirements and standards will vary among the various sources. For more
7 detailed information about air tactical and logistical aircraft, refer to the Aircraft Identification Library
8 on the DOI/USFS Interagency Aviation Training site at: <https://www.iat.gov/default.asp>.

9 **Note:** See the USFS *Standards for Airtanker Operations*,

10 [https://www.fs.usda.gov/sites/default/files/2020-08/fs_standards_for_airtanker_operations_-
11 _final_08192020.pdf](https://www.fs.usda.gov/sites/default/files/2020-08/fs_standards_for_airtanker_operations_-_final_08192020.pdf) for specific information related to federal airtankers.

12 Very Large Airtankers (VLAT)

13 VLATs may be used on fires to augment Type 1, Type 2, and Type 3 airtankers, but not as a
14 replacement.

- 15 • VLAT airtanker base operations will not limit or restrict the capacity of an airtanker base to load
16 large airtankers (LAT).
- 17 • Establish flight paths holding areas/altitudes, to avoid creating hazards to other aerial resources
18 within the FTA.
- 19 • To avoid wake turbulence, it is required to wait a minimum of 3 minutes after the VLAT has
20 dropped to resume aerial operations near the pattern from the drop.
- 21 • Aerial supervision (the PMS 310-1 for ATGS currency or ASM) is required by contract and
22 interagency policy for VLATs while dropping retardant.
- 23 • The leadplane or ASM must be on scene prior to dispatching the VLAT.
- 24 • VLATs are less maneuverable than large airtankers and should be used in less challenging terrain
25 that affords better maneuverability and effectiveness for dispensing.
- 26 • The VLATs minimum drop height is 250 feet above the top of the vegetation. Generally, drop
27 heights should increase when using higher coverage levels.

28 **Note:** See the USFS *Standards for Airtanker Operations* for specific information related to federal
29 airtankers: [https://www.fs.usda.gov/sites/default/files/2019-09/standards_for_airtanker_operations_-
30 _final_-_2019_approved_0.pdf](https://www.fs.usda.gov/sites/default/files/2019-09/standards_for_airtanker_operations_-_final_-_2019_approved_0.pdf)

1 Airtanker Typing

2 **Table 2. Airtanker Typing**

Ordered as	Type	Capacity (gallons)
VLAT	VLAT	8,000+
LAT	1	3000-7999
	2	1800-2999
SEAT or Multi-Engine	3	800-1799
	4	Up to 799

3 Airtankers Capabilities

4 **Table 3. Airtanker Classification (Does not account for retardant download requirements.)**

Type	Aircraft Make and Model	Maximum Gallons	Cruise Speed (Knots)	Tank/Door System
VLAT	DC-10	9,400	380	3 Constant Flow Tanks
VLAT	747	18,000	500	1 Pressurized System
Type 1	C-130H/Q	4,000	300	1 Constant Flow
Type 1	B-737	4,000	450	1 Constant Flow
Type 1	C-130 (MAFFS)	3,000	300	1 Pressurized System
Type 1	DC-7	3,000	235	8 Doors
Type 1	BAE-146	3,000	330	5 Valves-Constant Flow
Type 1	RJ-85	3,000	340	1-Constant Flow
Type 1	MD-87	3,000	320	1-Constant Flow
Type 2	Q-400	2,600	320	1-Constant Flow
Type 2	P3	2,250	328	1-Constant Flow
Type 3	CL-215, Scooper	1,400	160	2 (foam capable)
Type 3	CL-415, Scooper	1,600	180	4 (foam capable)
Type 3	S2 Turbine Tracker	1,200	230	1-Constant Flow
Type 3	Air Tractor AT-802 F	800	170	1-Constant Flow
Type 3	Air Tractor AT-802 F (Amphibious)	800	150	1-Constant Flow
Type 4	Air Tractor AT-802/602	600-799	140	1 (in-line or horizontal)
Type 4	Turbine Thrush	400-770	122	1 (in-line or horizontal)
Type 4	Turbine Dromader	500	122	1 (in-line or horizontal)

1 **Airtanker Retardant Delivery Systems**

2 Due to the number of approved airtanker makes/models and the number of airtanker operators there are
3 several approved tank/door systems. The tank/door systems are evaluated and approved by the IATB
4 and or contracting agency, to ensure that the systems meet desired coverage level and drop
5 characteristics. The four basic systems used today include the following:

- 6 • Variable Tank Door System – Multiple tanks or compartments controlled by an electronic
7 intervalometer control mechanism to open doors singly, simultaneously, or in an interval
8 sequence. The pilot may select a low flow rate or a high flow rate.
- 9 • Constant Rate System – A single compartment with two doors controlled by a computer. The
10 system is capable of single or multiple even flow drops at designated coverage levels from .5
11 gallons per 100 square feet (GPC) to +8 GPC.
- 12 • Pressurized Tank System – MAFFS C-130s are equipped with a pressurized system to discharge
13 their 3,000 gallons of retardant through one (18”) dispensing nozzle. The system is capable of
14 coverage level (CL) 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, and, 8. The line width is about 70% of other (LAT) systems
15 but is more continuous throughout the drop. The MAFFS pattern is the same as an S2T, constant
16 flow, and setting/coverage level 8. Standard Tank System – This system is common on SEATs.
17 Single or multiple tanks/compartments controlled manually or electronically. Some tank systems
18 may be controlled by an electronic intervalometer control mechanism to open doors singly,
19 simultaneously, or in an interval sequence.

20 **Use of Non-Federally Approved Airtankers**

21 A non-federally approved airtanker is an aircraft that is on contract with a cooperator and may not meet
22 USFS or DOI contract standards or policy and may not meet the National Association of State Foresters
23 Cooperator Aviation Standards.

24 For further information refer to the *Interagency Standards for Fire and Aviation Management* (Red
25 Book), Ch. 16: https://www.nifc.gov/policies/pol_ref_redbook.html.

26 Non-federally approved airtankers are permitted to reload out of federal airtanker bases, following the
27 standards established in the *NWCG Standards for Airtanker Base Operations*, PMS 508,
28 <https://www.nwcg.gov/publications/508>.

29 **Helicopters**

30 ICS categorizes three types of helicopters based on minimum gallons of water/retardant, lift capability,
31 number of passenger seats, and weight capacity. Operations personnel refer to helicopters by type.
32 Density altitude will greatly affect lift capability.

33 Loads under high-density altitude conditions are displayed in the helicopter classification table.

- 34 • Helicopter Type 1
- 35 • Helicopter Type 2
- 36 • Helicopter Type 3

1 **Table 4. Helicopter Classification**

Helicopter Type	Aircraft	Typical Payload at 8,000 feet Density Altitude (lbs.)	Typical Payload at 11,000 feet Density Altitude (lbs.)
Type 1	Sikorsky S-64E (Aircrane)	12,700	9,117
Type 1	Sikorsky S-64F (Aircrane)	15,640	10,288
Type 1	Boeing 234/CH-47 (Chinook)	19,063	15,363
Type 1	Boeing 107/CH-46 (Vertol)	4,656	3,424
Type 1	Sikorsky S-61	4,038	2,221
Type 1	Airbus 332L (Super Puma)	4,328	2,729
Type 1	Airbus SA 330 (Puma)	4,525	3,325
Type 1	Kaman 1200 (Kmax)	5,288	4,588
Type 1	Sikorsky CH-54 (Skycrane)	11,098	7,978
Type 1	Sikorsky UH-60/S-70	6,569	5,669
Type 2	Bell B-214	3,754	2,665
Type 2	Bell B-212	1,973	1,010
Type 2	Bell B-205A-1	1,294	642
Type 2	Bell B-205A-1+	1,596	896
Type 2	Bell B-205A-1++ (Super 205)	2,806	2,120
Type 2	Bell B-412	1,742	884
Type 2	Sikorsky S-58T	1,635	597
Type 3	Bell B-206 B3 (Jet Ranger)	715	380
Type 3	Bell B-206 L3 (Long Ranger)	950	830
Type 3	Bell B-206 L4 (Long Ranger)	1,196	767
Type 3	Bell B-407	1,315	880
Type 3	Airbus 350-B2 (Astar)	1,083	700
Type 3	Airbus 350-B3/H125 (Astar)	1,972	1,911
Type 3	MD Helicopters MD500 D/E/F	515	295

2 **Helicopter Retardant/Suppressant Delivery Systems**

3 There are two basic delivery systems: bucket and tank systems.

- 4 • Buckets – Two types of helicopter buckets are used and may or may not have “power fill
5 capabilities.” These include:
- 6 ○ Rigid Shell (100 to 3,000 gallons).
- 7 ○ Collapsible (94-2000 gallons).
- 8 • Tanks – Internal and external tank systems have been developed for various Type 1-3
9 helicopters. These include:
- 10 ○ Computerized metered or constant flow tank system.
- 11 ○ Conventional tank/door system.

12 **Aerial Supervision Aircraft Considerations**

13 All aircraft must be carded by the appropriate agency official for the mission.

14 In selecting an aircraft for a particular mission, the following should be considered:

1 **Visibility**

2 Fixed-Wing

- 3 • High or low-wing aircraft designed with the cockpit forward of the wings typically provide the
4 best visibility.
- 5 • Low-wing aircraft designed with the cockpit over the wings; provide for limited visibility.
- 6 • Helicopters open cockpit designs facilitate excellent visibility. Consider potential issues derived
7 from doors off in-flight. They can fly under smoke layers which fixed-wing may not be able to.
8 Helicopters are advantageous if the incident is not near any airport and if the aerial supervisor
9 must meet with the OSC. Helicopters are generally utilized for HLCO however, they may also be
10 desirable for ATGS missions when visibility is limited or helicopters are meeting incident
11 objectives.

12 **Speed**

13 For large, IA, and multiple incident scenarios, aircraft speed is important. On IA incidents in particular,
14 it is key that the aerial supervisor arrives before other aerial resources to determine incident objectives
15 and set up the airspace. Twin-engine fixed-wing aircraft are usually the best choice in these situations
16 (150+ knots cruise speed with 200+ knots desirable).

- 17 • Twin-Engine Fixed-Wing – Fast (generally greater than 150 kts)
- 18 • Single-Engine Fixed-Wing – Slower (generally less than 150 kts)
- 19 • Helicopters – Slowest (generally less than 130 kts)

20 **Pressurization**

21 When performing missions above 10,000 ft msl, consider a pressurized aircraft.

22 **Endurance**

23 Consider length of the mission, distance of dispatch, and area of availability.

24 **Aircraft Performance**

25 Consider operating environment, payload, endurance, runway length requirements, weather, and training
26 needs.

27 **Noise Level**

28 Excessive noise can interfere with the ability to communicate for prolonged periods and can contribute
29 to fatigue. Consider using an active noise-canceling headset to help mitigate noise-related fatigue.

30 Aircraft Approvals

31 Aircraft must have interagency approval to be used for an air tactical mission. The approval card must
32 be carried onboard the aircraft.

33 Avionics Equipment

34 In addition to the above avionics' requirements, the following are required:

- 35 • Headset(s) with boom microphones for each person.
- 36 • Voice Activated Intercom.

- 1 • Separate Audio Panels for the pilot and ATGS/AITS.
- 2 • Separate volume and squelch controls for the pilot and ATGS/AITS.
- 3 • A separate audio panel and voice activated intercom station in a rear seat may be required in
- 4 aircraft to accommodate an ATGS/AITS trainee (observer) of ATGS Evaluator or ATGS Final
- 5 Evaluator.

6 Traffic Collision Avoidance System (TCAS/TCAD)

7 The threat of midair collision is ever-present in the fire environment. TCAS/TCAD is now part of the
8 standard equipment in leadplane and ASM aircraft. The systems are enhanced with special features
9 designed to improve safety and operational effectiveness on incidents. USFS Smokejumper airplanes are
10 equipped with TCAS.

11 **Helicopter Emergency Services: Short-Haul/Hoist Extraction**

12 The interagency community produces a hoist/extraction guide annually. Please refer to the following
13 document: *Interagency Emergency Helicopter Extraction Source List*, PMS 512,
14 <https://www.nwcg.gov/publications/512>.

15 **Smokejumper Aircraft**

16 Smokejumper aircraft are turbine-powered aircraft carrying 8 to 12 smokejumpers plus spotters and
17 flight crew. Smokejumpers are primarily used for IA but are also used to reinforce large fires, build
18 helispots, etc.

19 **MAFFS**

20 See more information at: <https://www.fs.usda.gov/managing-land/fire/planes/maffs>.

21 **Policy**

22 The NICC mobilizes MAFFS as surge capability when contract airtankers are not readily available
23 within the contiguous 48 states. MAFFS may be made available to assist foreign governments when
24 requested through the State Department or other diplomatic memorandums of understanding.

25 The Governors of California, Nevada, and Wyoming may activate MAFFS units for missions within
26 state boundaries under their respective memorandums of understanding with military authorities and the
27 Forest Service. Approval of the Forest Service Assistant Director, Fire Operations is responsible for
28 initiating a MAFFS mission. Refer to the *National Mobilization Guide*, Chapter 20 for additional
29 MAFFS mobilization information.

30 Through the Memorandum of Understanding the USFS will provide the following resources:

- 31 • MAFFS unit “slip-in tank” systems.
- 32 • Qualified MAFFS LPIL.
- 33 • MAFFS Liaison Officer (MLO).
- 34 • MAFFS Airtanker Base Manager (MABM).
- 35 • VHF-FM radios.

1 **MAFFS Home Base (Wing) Locations**

2 Air National Guard and Air Force Reserve units utilizing C-130 are based at the following locations:

- 3 • Reno, Nevada (152nd AW) – Air National Guard
- 4 • Port Hueneme, California (146th AW) – Air National Guard
- 5 • Cheyenne, Wyoming (153rd AW) – Air National Guard
- 6 • Colorado Springs, Colorado (302nd AW) – Air Force Reserve

7 **Training and Proficiency**

8 Training will be conducted by the Forest Service, National MAFFS Training Coordinator annually for
9 military and agency personnel. Specific training dates will be negotiated with the military airlift wings.

10 **MAFFS Flight Crews**

11 Training of MAFFS crews will be in accordance with military qualifications and continuation training
12 requirements. To become qualified to fly MAFFS operations, MAFFS flight crews must attend initial
13 and recurrent training as appropriate at the annual MAFFS training session. The Air Force Mission
14 Commander (AFMC) will certify to the Forest Service National MAFFS Training Coordinator. The
15 status of flight crewmembers after the annual training currency requirements are as follows:

- 16 • MAFFS airdrop currency is required annually. If more than 120 days have elapsed since the last
17 airdrop, the crew’s first airdrop will be restricted to a target judged by the MAFFS LPIL to offer
18 the fewest hazards.
- 19 • If more than eight months have elapsed since the last MAFFS airdrop, an airborne MAFFS LPIL
20 supervised waterdrop will be required before entering the incident area.

21 Currency training will be conducted annually.

22 **MAFFS Operations Policies**

23 MAFFS Aircraft Identification

24 Each MAFFS aircraft will be identified by a large, high visibility number on the aircraft tail, side of the
25 fuselage aft of the cockpit area, and on top of the fuselage cabin. The MAFFS call sign will be this
26 number (i.e., MAFFS 2).

27 Supervision of a MAFFS Mission

- 28 • No MAFFS mission will be flown unless under the supervision of a qualified MAFFS LPIL. The
29 LPIL will communicate with the MLO/AFMC daily on flight needs of military crews.
 - 30 ○ International MAFFS missions will utilize a qualified MAFFS LPIL in the MAFFS aircraft
31 to assist the aircraft commander with tactical requirements. Headquarters (HQ) Military
32 Airlift Command approval must be obtained prior to flying civilian personnel aboard MAFFS
33 aircraft.
 - 34 ○ LPIL operations will be provided on each run and the runs are restricted to one MAFFS
35 aircraft at a time with no daisy-chain operations of multiple aircraft in trail.

1 **MAFFS**

2 Agencies must participate every 4 years to be re-qualified for operations with MAFFS. Qualified
3 MAFFS will be listed in the National Interagency Mobilization Guide.

4 **Military Flight Duty Limitations**

5 Flight time will not exceed a total of 8 hours per day.

- 6 • A normal duty day may be limited to 12 hours.
- 7 • Within any 24-hour period, pilots shall have a minimum of 12 consecutive hours off duty
8 immediately prior to the beginning of any duty day.
- 9 • Duty includes flight time, ground duty of any kind, and standby, or alert status at any location.

10 Standard Operation Procedures (SOPs)

11 Procedures for working MAFFS on an incident are the same as for contract airtankers. MAFFS flight
12 crews are rotated regularly. The AFMC will verify the status of the flight crews with the MLO. LPILs
13 should be aware that newly rotated flight crews may have restrictions on their initial airdrops to
14 accomplish currency requirements.

15 Operational Considerations

16 The procedures for using MAFFS over an incident are much the same as those used for contract
17 airtankers. The ATGS should be aware of the following key differences when using MAFFS aircraft:

- 18 • Volume – C-130s configured with MAFFS 2 (M2) normally carry 3,000 gallons unless takeoff
19 performance requires a download.
- 20 • Load Portions – Capable of Start/Stop drops.
- 21 • Coverage Levels – M2 is capable of Coverage Levels 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, and 8.
- 22 • Retardant Line Width – M2 has a narrower but more uniform line pattern than commercial
23 airtankers. This is a characteristic of the nozzle on the pressurized system. Density (coverage
24 level) at the center meets IATB criteria and remains consistent along the path of delivery.
- 25 • Reload – M2 can be sent to reload at pre-approved bases identified in the *NWCG Airtanker Base*
26 *Directory*, PMS 507, <https://www.nwcg.gov/publications/507>. Normally, following the final
27 airdrop MAFFS aircraft will recover to the activation base for servicing by military personnel.

28 **Communications Considerations**

29 Aircraft Identifier

30 The number displayed on the aircraft fuselage will identify MAFFS aircraft.

31 Radio Hardware

32 MAFFS aircraft are equipped with one USFS supplied P-25 compliant VHF-FM radio operating over
33 the frequency band of 138–174 MHz. Communications may also be conducted using a VHF-AM
34 frequency in the 118-136.975 MHz bandwidth in the same manner as other contract air tactical
35 resources.

1 Check-in Procedure

2 The aerial supervisor must identify the location and altitude of all other aircraft operating over the
3 incident as well as the incident altimeter setting to all MAFFS aircraft ‘checking in’ en route to the
4 incident.

5 Dispatch Communications

6 The ATGS or LPIL will notify dispatch whether additional loads of retardant will be required to meet
7 operational objectives on the incident.

8 **Military Helicopter Operations**

9 Regular Military refers to active military, reserve units and “federalized” National Guard aviation assets.
10 For an in depth discussion of military helicopter operations, refer to Chapter 70 of the *Military Use*
11 *Handbook*, <https://www.nifc.gov/nicc/logistics/references.htm>. Key portions of the parent text are
12 included below.

13 **Policy**

14 Regular military helicopter assets may be provided by the Department of Defense – Support of Civilian
15 Authority as requested by appropriate ordering entities when civilian aviation resources are depleted.

16 **Mission Profiles**

17 Mission profiles for regular military helicopter units are normally limited to:

- 18 • Reconnaissance or Command and Control activities.
- 19 • Medevac.
- 20 • Crew transportation.
- 21 • Cargo transportation (internal and external loads).
- 22 • Crew and cargo staging from airports to base camps for incident support.

23 **Bucket Operations**

24 An ATGS/ASM/HLCO shall be utilized whenever military helicopters are sequenced with contracted
25 helicopter resources.

26 **Communications**

- 27 • Military Radio Hardware – Regular military aircraft are equipped with VHF-AM aeronautical
28 radios that operate in the 118 to 136.975 MHz bandwidth.
- 29 • Agency Provided Radio Hardware – VHF-FM aeronautical transceivers compatible with agency
30 frequencies may be provided by the agency.

31 **Note:** Until agency furnished VHF-FM radio systems can be installed, a HLCO is required. Multi-ship
32 operations may be conducted without a HLCO if at least one helicopter has communications capability
33 using civilian bandwidths for air-to-air and air-to-ground communications.

1 **National Guard Helicopter Operations**

2 **Policy**

3 The use of National Guard helicopters for federal firefighting purposes within their state boundaries is
4 addressed in applicable regional, state, or local agreements, or memorandums of understanding between
5 federal agencies and specific National Guard units. The aerial supervisor should coordinate with local
6 agency officials, agency aviation management specialists or the AOBD to ensure planned use of
7 National Guard assets complies with applicable policy and procedures specific to the local area and/or
8 participating jurisdictions.

9 **Mobilization Authority**

10 The Governor can mobilize National Guard aviation assets at the request of local or state jurisdictions
11 for incidents on private land or multi-jurisdictional incidents.

12 **Mission Profiles**

13 In addition to the mission profiles discussed for regular military helicopters above, National Guard
14 helicopters routinely engage in water bucket operations in many states.

15 **Communications and HLCO**

16 Lack of VHF-FM communications capability may be a problem and will need to be addressed prior to
17 use of National Guard aviation resources on federal or multi-jurisdictional incidents. A HLCO should be
18 ordered to mitigate communications issues with ground and aviation resources on an incident.

19 **Training and Proficiency Assessment**

20 Operational procedures, mission training, and proficiency vary between states, National Guard units, and
21 flight crews. The ATGS should assess the proficiency of the resource and make adjustments as
22 appropriate to provide for the safe and effective use of National Guard resources.

23 **Water Scooping Aircraft**

24 Canadair CL-215, 415, and AT-802 Fire Boss.

25 **Policy and Availability**

26 • United States – Water scooping aircraft are located or utilized throughout the U.S. and operate
27 on a basis where water sources are conducive to operations. These aircraft are contracted by
28 DOI, USFS, and state agencies.

29 **USFS:** USFS contracted water scoopers shall not be loaded with chemical retardant, water enhancers, or
30 foam per the contract.

31 • Canada – Water scooping aircraft are widely used in Canada, especially from Quebec west to
32 Alberta. States bordering Canada may have agreements such as the Great Lakes Compact that
33 outline procedures for sharing resources on fires within a specified distance from the border.
34 There may also be provisions for extended use of Canadian airtankers in the U.S. when needed
35 and if available. Aerial supervisors should obtain a briefing on these agreements or procedures
36 when assigned, if applicable.

1 **Night Aerial Supervision**

2 A technology-enhanced exclusive use fixed-wing Aerial Supervision Platform may be available and
3 stationed in R5 USFS Southern California Operations Center (SOPS). The standard hours of the aircraft
4 availability will be 1800-0600 however, it can vary throughout the fire season to maximize coverage.
5 The night aerial supervisory platform is ordered through the South Operations GACC.

6 Considerations:

- 7 • ATGS will be trained to the standards within the USFS National Night Air Operations Plan
8 ATGS will be familiar with FIRESCOPE Night Flying Guidelines.
- 9 • IA Resource may be used on large fires with concurrence from SOPS GACC.
- 10 • 14-hour duty day, 8 hour flight time within the previous 24 hours.
- 11 • 10 hours of rest between shifts.
- 12 • If planned to be used on extended attack or emerging incident an effort should be made to allow
13 the ATGS to observe operations during daylight hours.
- 14 • Only aerial supervisors that are trained and designated can supervise incident aircraft during
15 night operations.

16 **Firewatch Aerial Supervision Platforms**

17 The USFS Firewatch Helicopter is a Bell 209 converted for use as an Aerial Supervision and
18 intelligence-gathering platform. There are two platforms in use H-507 and H-509. The platforms are
19 Technology-Enhanced Initial/Extended Attack HLCO/ATGS platforms based in Redding, California,
20 and repositioned as needed.

21 **Call Signs**

22 For mission clarification:

- 23 • When in the ATGS profile the call sign is Air Attack 507/509.
- 24 • For intelligence gathering, mapping, or suppression resource support profile, the call sign is
25 Firewatch 507/509.
- 26 • Mission Profiles – The USFS Firewatch Helicopter will request entry into the FTA in one of the
27 following mission profiles:
 - 28 ○ Tactical
 - 29 ▪ ATGS.
 - 30 ▪ HLCO.
 - 31 ○ Intelligence
 - 32 ▪ Tactical intelligence.
 - 33 ▪ Live video downlink.
 - 34 ▪ Infrared imagery/video.
 - 35 ▪ Mapping.

1 **Considerations**

2 Clearance for the Firewatch Platform (AA 507 or 509) into the FTA as an ATGS or HLCO should be
3 the same as any relief or IA ATGS or HLCO, one thousand feet either above or below the on-scene
4 Aerial Supervision or controlling platform for initial briefing and transition of control.

5 When performing live down link operations, aircraft may request 3,000 to 5,000 Above Ground Level
6 (AGL) altitudes for better big picture video feed.

7 **Unmanned Aircraft Systems**

8 See *NWCG Standards for Fire Unmanned Aircraft Systems Operations*, PMS 515,
9 <https://www.nwcg.gov/publications/515>.

10 Unmanned aircraft systems pilots are held to the same pilot operating procedures found in the *SAS*, PMS
11 505, <https://www.faa.gov/uas/>.

1 Chapter 5 – Wildland Fire Chemicals

2 Wildland fire suppressants and retardants are chemical agents applied to burning and adjacent fuels.
3 Only chemicals that are on the Qualified Products List (QPL) shall be used, and only for the delivery
4 method approved. See the Forest Service’s Wildland Fire Chemicals (WFCS) website for details:
5 <https://www.fs.usda.gov/rm/fire/wfcs/>.

6 Refer to the *Interagency Standards for Fire and Fire Aviation Operations*,
7 <https://www.nifc.gov/standards/guides/red-book>, or the website noted above for the most current
8 information on fire chemicals and their use.

9 Definitions

10 Suppressants (Direct Attack)

11 A fire suppression chemical applied directly to the flame base to extinguish the flame (water, foam,
12 gel/water enhancer).

13 **Note:** Federal Land Management agencies are not approving the use of fire chemicals (water enhancers)
14 mixed with onboard fire chemical injections systems on federal lands or federally contracted aircraft.

15 Foam Fire Suppressants

16 Foam fire suppressants contain foaming and wetting agents. The foaming agents and percentage of
17 concentrate added to water affect the accuracy of an aerial drop, how fast the water drains from the
18 foam, and how well the product clings to the fuel surfaces. The wetting agents increase the ability of the
19 drained water to penetrate fuels. These products are dependent on the water they contain to suppress the
20 fire. Once the water they contain has evaporated, they are no longer effective. Engines, portable pumps,
21 helicopters, and SEATs may apply foam. Some agencies also allow the application of foam from fixed-
22 wing water scoopers.

23 Water Enhancers

24 Water enhancers contain ingredients designed to alter the physical characteristics of water to increase
25 viscosity, accuracy of the drop, or adhesion to fuels. They improve the ability of water to cling to
26 vertical and smooth surfaces. The consistency of these products can change depending on the quality of
27 the water used for mixing. Once the water they contain has evaporated, they are no longer effective.
28 Approved products are available for use in helicopter buckets, with some approved at specific mixing
29 ratios for use in SEATs and fixed-tank helicopters.

30 Long-Term Retardant (Indirect and Direct Attack)

31 Retardants contain fertilizer salts that change the way fuels burn. They are effective even after the water
32 has evaporated. Large airtankers, SEATs, helicopter buckets, and ground engines may apply retardant.
33 Some retardant products are approved for fixed-tank helicopters. See the QPL for specific uses for each
34 product.

- 35 • Recommended coverage levels and guidelines for use can be found in the *IRPG*, under Principles
36 for Airtanker and Water Scooper Use.
- 37 • Retardant mixing, blending, testing, and sampling requirements can be found at the Forest
38 Service (FS) WFSC website: <https://www.fs.usda.gov/rm/fire/wfcs>.

- 1 • In general, one can expect chemicals to remain effective for the following amounts of time:
- 2 ○ Long-Term Retardants – Days to weeks (or until removed by environmental elements such as
- 3 rain or wind).
- 4 ○ Foams – Minutes.
- 5 ○ Water Enhancers/Gels – Minutes up to possibly an hour or more (direct sunlight breaks down
- 6 gels faster). Time will vary according to weather conditions (heat, humidity, wind, etc.).

7 **Note:** “Refreshing” dried water enhancers with waterdrops do not provide any additional effectiveness

8 than the water being dropped.

9 **Approved Fire Chemicals**

10 Many different retardants, foams, and water enhancers are approved for use. Prior to approval, these

11 agents must meet rigid criteria to ensure that they are environmentally safe, effective as a retardant or

12 suppressant, and that the chemicals do not harm aircraft surfaces. Chemical concentrates may be dry

13 powder or liquid. All USDA/DOI bases must use chemicals that are either fully approved or

14 “conditionally approved” during field evaluations. Approved fire chemicals can be found on the

15 Qualified Products Lists (QPL) found on the WFCS website: <https://www.fs.usda.gov/rm/fire/wfcs>.

16 **Retardant Mixing Facilities**

17 Retardant may be available from a variety of facilities including fire incident locations. Temporary

18 mixing facilities may be ordered through the incident management system.

19 **Airtanker Base Information**

20 Information regarding the operation and management of airtanker bases can be found in the following

21 documents:

22 *NWCG Standards for Airtanker Base Operations*, PMS 508: This guide defines and standardizes

23 interagency operating procedures at all airtanker bases for contractor and government employees.

24 *NWCG Airtanker Base Directory*, PMS 507: The directory is intended to aid wildland fire managers,

25 pilots, and contractors who operate at airtanker bases.

26 Wildland Fire Chemicals website: <https://www.fs.usda.gov/rm/fire/wfcs>

27 **Waterway and Avoidance Area Policy**

28 This policy has been adapted from the 2016 *Implementation Guide for Aerial Application of Fire*

29 *Retardant*. It has been expanded to include additional avoidance areas (both aquatic and terrestrial) for

30 aerial delivery of fire chemicals, as designated by individual agencies, and includes additional USFS

31 reporting requirements.

32 **Note:** This policy does not require the helicopter or airtanker PIC to fly in such a way as to endanger

33 their aircraft, other aircraft, or structures, or compromise ground personnel safety.

1 **Table 5. Aerial and Ground Delivery Policy**

Aerial Delivery Policy	Ground Delivery Policy
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Avoid aerial application of all wildland fire chemicals within 300 feet of waterways.• Additional mapped avoidance areas may be designated by the individual agency.• For USFS, whenever practical, as determined by the fire IC, use water or other less toxic wildland fire chemical suppressants for direct attack or less toxic approved fire retardants in areas occupied by threatened, endangered, proposed, candidate or sensitive species (TEPCS) or their designated critical habitats.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Avoid application of all wildland fire chemicals into waterways or mapped avoidance areas.

2 **Definition of Waterway**

3 Any body of water (including lakes, rivers, streams, and ponds) whether or not it contains aquatic life.

4 **Definition of Waterway Buffer**

5 300 ft. distance on either side of a waterway.

6 **Definition of Additional Mapped Avoidance Areas**

7 Other areas requiring additional protection outside of the 300 ft. waterway buffer. For USFS, this may
8 include certain dry intermittent or ephemeral streams for resource protection, or terrestrial critical
9 habitats.

10 **Guidance for Pilots**

11 Pilots will avoid all waterways and additional mapped avoidance areas designated by individual
12 agencies. To meet the 300 ft. waterway buffer zone or additional mapped avoidance areas guideline,
13 implement the following:

14 When approaching a waterway or riparian vegetation visible to the pilot (to assist in identification if
15 waterways) or other avoidance areas, the pilot shall terminate application of wildland fire chemical
16 approximately 300 ft. before reaching the area. When flying over a waterway, the pilot shall not begin
17 application of wildland fire chemical until 300 ft. after crossing the far bank or shore. The pilot shall
18 make adjustments for airspeed and ambient conditions such as wind to avoid the application of wildland
19 fire chemicals within the 300 ft. buffer zone.

20 Additional guidance to pilots/Aerial Supervisors of any aircraft supporting a fire on USFS lands:

- 21 • USFS may have additional mapped avoidance areas for TEPCS species, waterway buffers
22 exceeding 300 ft. or certain intermittent or ephemeral waterways identified as avoidance areas for
23 resource protection.
- 24 • Aerial Supervision resources should inquire if these avoidance areas exist on any USFS fire where
25 they are providing support.
- 26 • Prior to fire retardant application, aerial supervisors should be briefed by dispatch on the locations
27 of all TEPCS or other avoidance areas in the vicinity.

- 1 • If operationally feasible, pilots should make a ‘dry run’ over the intended application area to
2 identify avoidance areas and waterways in the vicinity of the wildland fire.

3 **Exceptions for USFS**

4 Deviations from the policy are allowed only for the protection of life or safety (public and firefighter).

5 **Exceptions for All Other Agencies**

- 6 • When alternative line construction tactics are not available due to terrain constraints, congested
7 area, life, and property concerns or lack of ground personnel, it is acceptable to anchor the
8 wildland fire chemical application to the waterway. When anchoring a wildland fire chemical
9 line to a waterway, use the most accurate method of delivery to minimize placement of wildland
10 fire chemicals in the waterway (e.g., a helicopter rather than a heavy airtanker).
- 11 • Deviations from the policy are acceptable when life or property is threatened and the use of
12 wildland fire chemicals can be reasonably expected to alleviate the threat.
- 13 • When potential damage to natural resources outweighs possible loss of aquatic life, the unit
14 administrator may approve a deviation from these guidelines.

15 **Reporting Requirements of Aerially Delivered Wildland Fire Chemicals into Waterways, 16 Waterway Buffer Areas, and Mapped Avoidance Areas**

- 17 • During training or briefings, inform field personnel of:
- 18 ○ Environmental guidelines for fire chemical application requirements for avoiding contact
19 with waterways;
 - 20 ○ Additional mapped avoidance areas as designated by individual agency; and
 - 21 ○ Their responsibility for upward reporting in the event of application, for whatever reason,
22 into avoidance areas.

23 If application of wildland fire chemicals occurs or anyone believes it may have been introduced within a
24 waterway, waterway buffered areas, or other mapped avoidance areas, the following is required as
25 appropriate:

- 26 • Inform supervisor;
- 27 • The information will be forwarded to incident management and the Agency Administrator,
28 usually through the Resource Advisor;
- 29 • The incident or host authorities must immediately contact specialists within the local jurisdiction;
30 and
- 31 • Notifications and reporting will be completed as soon as possible.

32 Procedures have been implemented for the required reporting. All information, including reporting tools
33 and instructions are posted on the USFS Interagency Wildland Fire Chemicals Policy and Guidance
34 website on fire retardant at: <https://www.fs.usda.gov/managing-land/fire/chemicals>.

1 The USFS has additional reporting requirements for threatened, endangered, proposed, candidate
2 (TEPCS) and USFS listed sensitive species for aerially delivered fire retardant only. This requirement
3 resulted from the Forest Service's acceptance of Biological Opinions received from the National Marine
4 Fisheries Service (NMFS) and the Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) and the 2011 Record of Decision for
5 Nationwide Aerial Application of Fire Retardant on National Forest System lands. The procedures,
6 reporting tools, and instructions can be found on the same website listed above.

7 **Endangered Species Act (ESA) Emergency Consultation**

8 The USFS has completed consultation with regulatory agencies (FWS and NMFS) for aerial delivery of
9 fire retardant only on National Forest System lands; please refer to the USFS fire retardant website at:
10 <https://www.fs.usda.gov/managing-land/fire/chemicals> for additional information and re-initiation of
11 consultation requirements.

12 Other agencies have not completed this consultation. In the event of a retardant application into a
13 waterway or other TEPCS species habitats onto non-USFS lands, the action agency must comply with
14 the emergency section 7 consultation procedures of the ESA for wildland fire chemicals.

15 Where TEPCS species or their habitats are potentially affected by application of wildland fire chemicals,
16 the action agency must determine if any adverse effects to a species or their habitat occurred.

17 If the action agency determines that there were adverse effects on TEPCS species or their habitats then
18 the action agency must consult with FWS and NMFS, as required by 50 CFR 402.05 (Emergencies).
19 Procedures for emergency consultation are described in the *Interagency Consultation Handbook*,
20 Chapter 8 (March 1998). In the case of a long duration incident, emergency consultation should be
21 initiated as soon as practical during the event. Otherwise, post-event consultation is appropriate. The
22 initiation of the consultation is the responsibility of the unit administrator.

Chapter 6 – Aerial Supervision Mission Procedures

Aerial Supervision operations are conducted in demanding flight conditions in a high workload and multi-tasking environment. Because of this, standardization of procedures is important to enhance safety, effectiveness, efficiency, and professionalism. This chapter addresses common procedures to be observed by all aerial supervisors as well as specific guidance for LPIL ASM, ATGS, and HLCO personnel.

The actions listed below pertain to all positions of Aerial Supervision. Methods for performing these actions differ and are often refined as CRM is enhanced.

Pre-Mission Procedures

Pilot Qualification Card and Aircraft Data Card

Review these cards and verify the pilot and aircraft are authorized for air tactical missions.

Flight and Duty Limitations

Determine when a pilot's duty day began and if sufficient flight/duty time is remaining. Order a relief pilot as appropriate regarding, flight, or duty limitations.

Aircraft Maintenance

Verify aircraft has sufficient time remaining before next scheduled maintenance. If not, order another aircraft.

Aircraft Preparation

Pilot Preflight Responsibilities

Include but not limited to:

- Aircraft preflight inspection.
- Calculate weight and balance of passengers and equipment.
- Calculate aircraft performance specific to the aircraft configuration and field conditions.
- Fueling: Discuss fuel requirements and limitations for mission with ATGS. Ensure proper fueling.
- PPE per contract.
- File a flight plan as needed.
- Obtain an adequate weather briefing.
- Cover aircraft checklist expectations with aerial supervisor.

ATGS/AITS Preflight Responsibilities

- Inspect communications system. Install auxiliary radio if required.
- Program VHF-FM tactical frequencies in radio (coordinate with pilot).
- Perform a radio check with dispatch and airbase before flying.

- 1 • Load Aerial Supervision kit/gear into aircraft.
- 2 • Assist pilot as requested with duties.
- 3 • Communicate destination and other applicable intended route of flight with PIC.
- 4 • Understand aircraft performance (takeoff distance, landing distance, single-engine performance,
- 5 max gross weight, fuel endurance) and document.

6 **Procurement Agreements**

7 The aerial supervisor should be familiar with the basic terms of the procurement agreement/contract.

8 **Obtain a Mission Briefing**

9 Whether the air tactical mission is IA or a project incident, all types of Aerial Supervision personnel
10 must obtain pertinent incident information. Dispatch centers must provide an aircraft dispatch form.

11 **IA Briefings**

12 The following information is recorded on an aircraft dispatch form and is recommended before
13 responding to an incident:

- 14 • Incident name or number.
- 15 • Agency responsible.
- 16 • Incident location – legal location, latitude/longitude and VOR.
- 17 • Frequencies and tones: Double check operating mode (N, W, D) and tones.
- 18 • Flight following.
- 19 • Air-to-Ground.
- 20 • Air-to-Air (FM and/or AM).
- 21 • Contacts: ground and air.
- 22 • Air resources assigned or to be assigned, Estimated Time En route (ETEs), type, and identifier.
- 23 • Other resources dispatched (as practical).
- 24 • Approximate incident size and fire behavior.
- 25 • Other available air resources.
- 26 • Aerial and ground hazards.
- 27 • Special information such as land status, watershed, wilderness, and urban interface.
- 28 • Airtanker reload base options and turnaround times.

29 **Extended Attack Briefings**

30 If possible, Aerial Supervision personnel should attend incident briefings. If this is not possible, critical
31 information should be relayed by phone, radio, email, fax, or messenger. A copy of the Incident Action
32 Plan (IAP) is preferred. Aerial supervision personnel may have to seek some of this information:

- 33 • Incident objectives by division (ICS 204).

- 1 • Organization Assignment List (ICS 203) or list of key operations people.
- 2 • Air Operations Summary (ICS 220) or list of assigned aircraft.
- 3 • List of all aircraft by make/model and identification.
- 4 • Incident Radio Communication Plan (ICS 205) or list of frequencies.
- 5 • Incident Map.
- 6 • Fire Behavior Report and local weather.
- 7 • Air resource availability/status.
- 8 • Incident Medevac Plan and Medevac helicopter assigned.

9 **Mission Safety Briefing for Pilot**

10 Prior to departure on an air tactical mission the aerial supervisor will brief the pilot on the following:

- 11 • General scope of the mission.
- 12 • Incident location: latitude-longitude and bearing-distance.
- 13 • Resources assigned.
- 14 • Radio frequencies.
- 15 • Special information including hazards and military operations.
- 16 • Expected duration of mission.
- 17 • Intended destination airport.

18 **Pilot Pre-Takeoff Responsibilities**

- 19 • Complete the appropriate aircraft checklists.
- 20 • Complete preflight including passenger safety briefing.
- 21 • Initiate Mission Checklist with aerial supervisor.
- 22 • Confirm fuel quantity.
- 23 • Obtain route clearances through SUA as required.
- 24 • Program GPS to incident location.

25 **ATGS/AITS Responsibilities**

- 26 • Obtain, record, and set local altimeter setting (from pilot or airport advisory).
- 27 • Program radios (AM/FM) – Check with pilot before programming the AM.
- 28 • Confirm fuel quantity and estimated flight time available for mission.
- 29 • Check with dispatch regarding status of military aviation operations (Restricted, MOAs, MTRs)
- 30 and TFRs.
- 31 • Assist with start, taxi, and pre-takeoff checklists as requested by the PIC.

1 **En Route Procedures**

2 **After Take Off**

- 3 • Record take off time (takeoff roll).
- 4 • Observe sterile cockpit protocol as previously agreed to with pilot.
- 5 • Establish flight following:
 - 6 ○ Call sign.
 - 7 ○ Departure location.
 - 8 ○ Number on board.
 - 9 ○ Fuel on board (hours).
 - 10 ○ ETE.
 - 11 ○ Destination.
 - 12 ○ Confirm AFF.

13 Example: “Boise Dispatch, Air Attack 1SA on National Flight Follow.” “1SA, Boise Dispatch.” “Air
14 Attack 1SA is off Boise, 2 on board, 4.5 hours fuel, 15 ETE to the Beaver Incident, confirm AFF?”
15 “1SA, Boise dispatch copies, and you’re positive AFF.” “Air Attack 1SA copies.”

- 16 • Notify pilot of any information or situation affecting the flight.
- 17 • Assist pilot as requested. Be an active crew member.
- 18 • Complete Mission Checklist.

19 **En Route Communications**

20 Maintain communications with dispatch and other aircraft concerning:

- 21 • Incident air resource updates.
- 22 • Status of SUA (TFR, MOA, etc.)
- 23 • Coordination with responding air resources can be done on the assigned air-to-air frequency
24 provided it does not interfere with operations over the incident.
- 25 • Monitor the fire frequencies to enhance situational awareness before arrival.

26 **FTA Entry Procedures**

27 12 nm from the center point of the incident, Aerial Supervision personnel must follow the FTA entry
28 procedures listed below. There are three scenarios: 1) Aerial supervision is on scene; 2) Aerial
29 Supervision is not on scene, but other aircraft are; or 3) there are no aircraft on scene.

30 **Scenario 1: Aerial Supervision is On Scene**

- 31 • Change to incident frequencies.
- 32 • Give 12-mile radio call to Aerial Supervision. Give your location and altitude.
- 33 • Obtain clearance:

- 1 ○ Altimeter setting.
- 2 ○ FTA clearance Altitude.
- 3 ○ Altitude of Aerial Supervision.
- 4 ○ Altitudes of other aircraft.
- 5 ○ Hazards.
- 6 ● Read back/enter the incident airspace, as briefed.
- 7 ● Watch for on-scene aircraft and call out a distance and clock reference when in sight.
- 8 ● Receive transition briefing and confirm positive handoff of Aerial Supervision responsibilities.
- 9 ● Outgoing Aerial Supervision will notify dispatch and incoming Aerial Supervision will notify
- 10 IC/ground personnel and confirm objectives and priorities.

11 **Scenario 2: Aerial Supervision is not On Scene, but Other Aircraft are On Scene**

- 12 ● Change to incident frequencies.
- 13 ● Give 12-mile call in the blind on assigned air-to-air frequency. Call receiving unit, give your call
- 14 sign, location, altitude, intent, and frequency. An on-scene aircraft should respond on the
- 15 assigned primary air-to-air frequency.
- 16 ● Obtain clearance into FTA by getting:
 - 17 ○ Altimeter setting.
 - 18 ○ FTA clearance altitude.
 - 19 ○ Altitudes and locations of other aircraft on scene.
 - 20 ○ Hazards.
- 21 ● Read back/enter the incident airspace, as briefed with on-scene aircraft.
- 22 ● Watch for other aircraft and call out a distance and clock reference when in sight.
- 23 ● Get status of all on-scene aircraft (location, mission type, etc.)
- 24 ● Call IC and get objectives and priorities.
- 25 ● Notify dispatch you are on scene and now the incident Aerial Supervision.

26 **Scenario 3: There Are No Aircraft on Scene**

- 27 ● Give 12-mile and 7-mile calls in the blind on the primary and secondary assigned air-to-air
- 28 frequencies.
 - 29 ○ FTA/TFR Calls in the Blind Script
 - 30 ○ Receiving unit
 - 31 ○ Call sign
 - 32 ○ Location
 - 33 ○ Altitude
 - 34 ○ Intent

- 1 ○ “Any traffic please advise.”
- 2 ○ Frequency

3 Example: “Beaver fire traffic, Air attack 0DT, 12 miles to the southwest, 6500, inbound, any traffic
4 please advise 122.925.”

- 5 • Call the IC/ground personnel on the assigned FM air-to-ground frequency and verify no other
6 aircraft are on scene.
- 7 • Proceed to the incident. Maintain at least 2,500 feet AGL and watch for other aircraft.
- 8 • Obtain center point and record sizeup information.
- 9 • Call dispatch, notify you are the on-scene aerial supervision and provide sizeup.
- 10 • Call the IC/ground forces and establish objectives and priorities.

11 **Entering Incident Airspace**

12 ATGS fixed-wing enters the airspace in a right-hand orbit at 2,500 feet AGL unless the situation dictates
13 a different altitude (smoke/terrain). LPILs/ASMs enter in a left orbit, or as directed by Aerial
14 Supervision.

15 **TFR Entry Procedures**

16 All assigned/ordered aircraft must obtain clearance into the incident TFR by the on-scene aerial
17 supervisor or the official in charge of the on-scene emergency response activities.

- 18 • An IROC order or Aircraft Dispatch form is **not** a clearance into a TFR.
- 19 • The first responding aircraft, typically on extended attack incidents, must have reasonable
20 assurance that there are no other aircraft in the TFR by making blind calls on the TFR frequency,
21 other assigned air-to-air frequencies, and double-checking with ground personnel (IC, OPS, or
22 Helibase).
- 23 • There may be multiple aircraft operations areas within a TFR.
- 24 • Remember – Non-Incident aircraft may enter the TFR under the following conditions:
 - 25 ○ The aircraft is carrying a law enforcement official.
 - 26 ○ The aircraft is on a flight plan and carrying properly accredited news representatives.
 - 27 ○ The aircraft is operating under the ATC approved IFR flight plan.

28 The operation is conducted directly to or from an airport within the area, or is necessitated by the
29 impracticability of VFR flight above or around the area due to weather, or terrain; notification is given
30 to the Flight Service Station (FSS) or ATC facility specified in the Notice to Airmen (NOTAM) to
31 receive advisories concerning disaster relief aircraft operations; and the operation does not hamper or
32 endanger relief activities and is not conducted for observing the disaster.

33 **Aerial Supervisor On-Scene Responsibilities**

34 **The Aerial Supervisor Must:**

- 35 • Watch for aircraft and make visual/radio contact with each one.
- 36 • Determine ground elevation and/or mission flight altitudes to establish FTA altitudes for
37 incoming aircraft including helicopters, airtankers, LPIL/ASM, smokejumpers, relief Aerial
38 Supervision, and media if not previously determined.

- 1 • Determine flight hazards – Power lines, antennas, snags, terrain, thunderstorm activity, excessive
2 wind, poor visibility, airspace conflicts, etc.
- 3 • Confirm incident objectives and priorities with the IC/ground personnel.

4 **Standard Briefings**

5 All aircraft will receive briefings:

6 **Initial Briefing**

7 Clearance to Enter

- 8 • Altimeter setting. “2992
- 9 • Clearance altitude. Cleared in 7000
- 10 • ATGS altitude. Air Attack is at 8000
- 11 • Other aircraft altitudes. 2 copters 6000 and below
- 12 • Hazards. Power lines south side ridge top”

13 Example: “Tanker one-four, Altimeter two nine-nine two, cleared in three thousand five hundred, air
14 attack is four thousand five hundred, one helicopter at, or below two thousand five hundred, caution
15 power lines.”

16 **Tactical Briefing**

17 Orientation

18 Specific Hazards

19 Objectives

- 20 • Direct, indirect, parallel, pretreating, point protection, or applicable terminology to explain what
21 is to be accomplished and why.

22 Target Description

- 23 • Concise communication using standard terminology expedites the task and increases safety.
- 24 • A standard target description includes the following:
 - 25 ○ Target location
 - 26 ○ Coverage level/Portion of load
 - 27 ○ Drop objectives/Type of drop
 - 28 ○ Hazards

29 **Methods to Describe Work Location**

30 **Long Range (Greater Than 12 Miles)**

- 31 • GPS reference points – in limited visibility (inversions), latitude, and longitude references can
32 significantly increase safety while reducing radio traffic.

33 **Note:** Be aware that the standard datum and coordinate format aviation GPS equipment is World
34 Geodetic System (WGS) 84 and decimal minutes whereas many GPS units used by ground personnel
35 default to a North American Datum (NAD) 27 datum and are in degrees, minutes, and seconds format.

1 The use of different datum and formats may result in misinterpreting the location of a specific target.
2 Ensure that the target location is confirmed with ground personnel.

3 **Medium Range (1 to 12 Miles)**

- 4 • Fire anatomy: Left and right flank, head, heel (tail in AK), etc.
- 5 • Elevation: Specify above sea level (MSL) or AGL.

6 **Short Range (Less than 1 Mile)**

7 Geographic features: Ridges, saddles, spur ridges, lakes, streams, etc.

- 8 • Specific activity: Dozer working, firing operation, parked vehicles, previous drop, etc.
- 9 • Incident features: Helibase, helispots, fireline, and division breaks, etc.
- 10 • Use standard terminology: See the *NWCG Glossary of Wildland Fire*, PMS 205,
11 <https://www.nwcg.gov/glossary/a-z>.

12 **Guiding Aircraft to Targets**

- 13 • Clock directions, left, or right, etc.
- 14 • Signal mirrors, ground panels, lights, etc.
- 15 • Have an on-scene aircraft lead new aircraft to the target area.
- 16 • Discuss target locations when the other aircraft is in position to observe.

17 Example:

18 ATGS: “Tanker one-four do you have the existing retardant line?”

19 Airtanker: “Tanker one-four, Affirmative”

20 ATGS: “Objective is direct line, tag, and extend, coverage level eight, full load, exit straight out, caution
21 power lines along the road”

22 Airtanker: “Tanker one-four has the target”

23 **Table 6. Clearance to Maneuver Script**

ATGS Script	Airtanker Script
“Clear to Maneuver”	
Observe: Acknowledge when able	*Call “Downwind”
Observe: Acknowledge when able	*Call “Base”
Observe: Acknowledgment required	Call “Final”
“I have your final.” “Clear to drop”	

24 * When approved for non-standard right-hand patterns the airtanker will preface each flight leg call with
25 “Right.”

1 **Note:** The ATGS is required to clear airtankers to “maneuver” and airtankers to “drop.” ATGS are not
2 required to acknowledge downwind and base legs. Every attempt should be made for the ATGS to
3 visually observe and acknowledge airtankers flight patterns once an airtanker is cleared to maneuver
4 until drop sequence is complete.

5 **Definition**

6 Clear to Maneuver

7 The pilot is cleared to leave the orbit altitude and maneuver the aircraft as needed for the drop.

8 Clear to Drop

9 On line for target, line is clear, and clear to drop.

10 Go Around

11 At any time, a “go around” may be communicated by anyone (aerial supervisor, ground personnel,
12 airtanker, helicopter, etc.) for the safety and/or efficiency of the operation. During a “go around” the
13 airtanker should:

- 14 • Re-establish downwind, or
- 15 • If load was released, exit the FTA following the exit brief.

16 **Note:** If the aerial supervisor does not affirm the final; or call clear to drop; a “go around” should be
17 done. At any time, the airtanker may need to release the load for safety-of-flight.

18 Example:

19 ATGS: “Tanker one-four, you are cleared to maneuver.” or “Tanker one-four, you are cleared right-
20 hand-maneuver.”

21 Airtanker: “Tanker one-four is downwind.” or “Tanker one-four is on a right-downwind.”

22 Airtanker: “Tanker one-four is base.” or “Tanker one-four is on a right-base.”

23 Airtanker: “Tanker one-four is on final.”

24 ATGS: “Tanker one-four, I have your final; clear to drop.”

25 **Right-Hand Drop Pattern**

26 Right-hand patterns will never be executed at the airtanker entry/orbit altitude. When in right-hand drop
27 patterns, airtankers will call “right-downwind,” “right-base.”

28 **Departure Briefing**

29 Drop Evaluation:

- 30 • Start.
- 31 • Line.
- 32 • End.

1 Instructions:

- 2 • Load and return/hold/release.
- 3 • Location.
- 4 • Special instructions.

5 Example: “Tanker one-four, half load late, off one wingspan right, load, and return.”

6 **Emergency Brief**

- 7 • Consider load.
- 8 • Acknowledge/maintain visual.
- 9 • Communicate.

10 Example: “Tanker one-four, consider load, I have you in sight, helicopter five oh two hold position,
11 tanker traffic; I’ll notify dispatch.”

12 **Leadplane Scripts**

13 **Lead Plane Training Scripts**

14 Lead plane training scripts are the foundation of communication between LPIL trainees and airtanker
15 pilots. The lead plane mission is very complex. The ability to communicate information at the right time
16 is essential to becoming a qualified Lead Plane Pilot. It is expected that mission Evaluators will use the
17 scripts until students demonstrate mastery, and that students will memorize script/leg associations to
18 maximize training. Additionally, Evaluator/student utilization of the scripts will minimize leadplane
19 mission Evaluator inconsistencies when students move from one Evaluator to another. For more
20 information on leadplane scripts and the lesson plans associated with the scripts please refer to the
21 NWCG N-9065 National Interagency Leadplane Pilot Training Course.

22 **Initial Clearance To Enter (Standard Script Refer To Chapter 6 Aerial Supervision On-Scene 23 Responsibilities).**

- 24 • Altimeter Setting “2992”
- 25 • Clearance Altitude “Cleared in at 7000”
- 26 • ATGS Altitude “Air Attack is at 8000”
- 27 • Other Aircraft Altitudes “2 copters 6000 and below”
- 28 • Hazards “Power lines south side of ridge”
- 29 • Other Aircraft Altitudes “2 copters 6000 and below”

30 **Join Up**

31 The join up is the maneuver that initiates positive communication and separation between the leadplane
32 and the airtanker. As the two aircraft will be converging, it is imperative that the join up be conducted at
33 a minimum of 500’ of vertical separation and that location and altitude of the leadplane are briefed until
34 separation responsibilities fall to the airtanker pilot.

35 Visual Contact:

- 36 • Tanker _____ “Tanker 123”

1 • Clock location “At your 11 o’clock”

2 • Altitude “6500”

3 At 2 Miles:

4 • Tanker _____ “Tanker 123”

5 • Clock location “At your 11 o’clock”

6 • Altitude “6500”

7 • “Here is a wing and smoke” (positive confirmation)

8 **Tactical Brief:** occurs on the leg from the join up to the drop

9 • Brief drop objective “Working direct, left shoulder, tagging, and extending existing retardant,
10 coverage level 4”

11 **Down Wind**

12 Establish the leg. This contributes to being predictable and aids in target description. If no Show Me is
13 required brief speeds and the exit on this leg.

14 • LEG/Profile “Downwind for show me / live run”

15 • Drop Heading “Drop Heading is 165”

16 • Drop Altitude “Drop Altitude 4300”

17 • Speeds “What speeds would you like”

18 • Exit “On the exit I’ll be up and left, you be straight out.”

19 **Abeam** - This call is to aid in target description and situational awareness.

20 • “Abeam”

21 **Turning Base**

22 After establishing a leg, subsequent calls will communicate intentions

23 • Turning Base/Profile “Turning base for show me / live run”

24 • “Start at the buckskin snag”

25 **Turning Final**

26 • “Turning Final”

27 **Final**

28 • “This Is the Line, start here”

29 • “At the Snag, start here”

30 **Exit**

31 For show me profile re-establish positive communications and separation

32 • “On the Exit I’ll be up an left and your straight out.”

33 • “Keep me in sight and I’ll meet you at 6500.”

- 1 • “What speeds would you like?”
- 2 (Off the run with 20* of bank and flying the requested speeds set you up for the correct downwind)

3 **Downwind** – re-establish the leg

- 4 • “Downwind”
- 5 • “Abeam”

6 **Turning Base**

- 7 • “Turning Base”

8 **Turning Final**

- 9 • “Turning Final”

10 **Final**

- 11 • “This is the Line”
- 12 • “Start here”

13 **Aircraft Separation**

14 Terrain, visibility, number, and type of aircraft, TFR dimensions, and other factors influence
15 requirements for maintaining safe separation.

16 **Working Area/Area of Operation (WA/AO)**

17 WA/AOs are areas where an identified project or task is being accomplished i.e., (crew support, recon,
18 logistics, retardant delivery, ground firing support, aerial ignition, troop shuttle, jump operation, UAS,
19 etc.) with one or more aircraft. Because incidents often have several active WA/AOs with different
20 operating altitudes (based on terrain) aerial supervision resources assign routes, patterns, checkpoints,
21 fences, initial points (IP), holding areas and altitudes to deconflict travel routes between WA/AOs and
22 aircraft bases.

23 **Common Principles of Aircraft Separation**

- 24 • Use standard aviation ‘see and avoid’ VFR.
- 25 • Utilize the appropriate air-to-air frequency for position reporting.
- 26 • Adhere to FTA procedures.

27 Aerial Supervisors Ensure Aircraft Separation By:

- 28 • Structuring the incident airspace and briefing pilots.
- 29 • Monitor radio communications for:
 - 30 ○ Pilot-to-pilot position reports.
 - 31 ○ Blind call position reports.
 - 32 ○ Tracking aircraft.
 - 33 ○ Giving specific directions to pilots as needed.
 - 34 ○ Advising pilots on the location and heading of other aircraft.

1 **Note:** The coordinates of the incident or IP must be verified, updated, and communicated to dispatch to
 2 ensure that inbound incident aircraft can determine the appropriate points at which to initiate initial
 3 contact and/or hold if communications with controlling aircraft are not established.

4 **Vertical Separation**

5 500 feet is the minimum vertical separation for missions in the same airspace. 1,000 feet is preferred and
 6 should be used whenever possible.

- 7 • Assign helicopters a hard ceiling (i.e., at or below 4,500 feet). Do not assign them 500 feet AGL
 8 or “low-level.”
- 9 • Vertical stacking of airtankers is discouraged. Utilize an orbit altitude racetrack pattern.
- 10 • It is common practice to put media helicopters above the ATGS to keep them away from
 11 firefighting aircraft.
- 12 • Standard operational altitudes and patterns are:

13 **Table 7. Standard Operational Altitudes and Patterns**

Mission	Standard AGL (feet)	Standard Pattern
Media	3,500	Right or left
ATGS – Fixed-Wing	2,500	Right
ATGS – Helicopter	500 to 2,500	Left
HLCO – Helicopter	500 to 1,000	Right or Left
Airtanker Orbit	1,500	Left
Airtanker Maneuvering	150* to 1,000	Left
LPIL	150 to 1,000	Left
Helicopters	0 to 500 (hard ceiling)	Left or right
Smokejumper Ram-Air Chute	3,000	Left
Smokejumper Round Chute	1,500	Left
Paracargo	150 to 1,500	Left
Streamers	1,500	Left

14 **Horizontal Separation**

- 15 • Aerial supervision must ensure there is adequate visibility to conduct operations safely regardless
 16 of the airspace classification.
- 17 • Flight patterns must be adequate.
 - 18 ○ Consult pilots before finalizing patterns and routes.
 - 19 ○ Advise pilots on location of other aircraft if visual contact has not been reported.
 - 20 ○ Air-to-air frequency must be clear for pilots to give position reports.
 - 21 ○ Geographic references, such as a ridge or a river, can be used as a virtual fence to separate
 22 aircraft provided aircraft maintain assigned flight patterns.

- 1 ○ No-fly zones must be established to ensure safe separation when simultaneous missions at
- 2 the same elevation are within close proximity.
- 3 ○ Below ridges: For operations separated by a ridge, a “no-fly zone” 500 feet vertically below
- 4 the ridge top can be established to ensure separation.
- 5 ○ Near geographic dividing lines (virtual fence): If simultaneous operations near the dividing
- 6 line conflict, a horizontal “no-fly zone” must be established, or missions must be sequenced
- 7 to ensure adequate separation.

8 **Virtual Fences**

9 Effective for managing airspace with minimal radio traffic on the air-to-air frequency.

10 Pilots may be required to report arrival at a virtual fence and wait for clearance from ATGS before

11 proceeding. Geographic locations that make effective checkpoints and virtual fences include:

- 12 ● Roads.
- 13 ● Power lines.
- 14 ● Ridges.
- 15 ● Lakes.

16 **Helicopter Routes**

17 Established point-to-point flightpaths for repetitive missions from helibase to helispots or sling sites,

18 from dipsites to targets, etc. For safety, efficiency, and monitoring, the ATGS, in consultation with the

19 helibase manager and/or helicopter pilots, will ensure flight routes and communications procedures have

20 been established and are known:

21 Well Defined Routes

22 Up one stream and down another, up one side of drainage and down the other side, up one side of a spur

23 ridge and down the other, etc.

24 Helicopter Routing Clearances

- 25 ● “Cleared to target.”
 - 26 ○ Denotes a helicopter is cleared to a target/drop area.
- 27 ● “Cleared to transition.”
 - 28 ○ Denotes a helicopter is cleared through the area (on way to helispot/slingspot, back to
 - 29 helibase, on a recon, etc.).
- 30 ● “Cleared unrestricted.”
 - 31 ○ Denotes to a helicopter that the active sequencing has stopped and no longer a need to call
 - 32 for clearances at the designated checkpoint.

33 **Note:** By using this specific language the situational awareness for all aircraft in the FTA will be

34 improved. The sequencing clearances should not be confused with “cleared in” which denotes the

35 clearance for an aircraft to enter into the FTA/TFR.

36 **Helicopter Daisy Chains**

1 Two or more helicopters can be assigned to the same targets and dipsites for repeated waterdrops. The
2 ATGS, in consultation with helicopter pilots, will establish a “daisy-chain” flight route for these
3 operations ensuring helicopters maintain the same orbit direction and separation.

4 **Helicopter Recon Flights**

5 These flights can be difficult to monitor. Consider the following procedures to maintain safe separation
6 of aircraft:

- 7 • Schedule recon flights during slow periods.
- 8 • Assign a specific route for the recon (clockwise, maintain assigned altitude).
- 9 • Establish Check Points and clearance protocol with recon aircraft.

10 **Incident Entry and Exit Corridors**

11 Aerial supervision shall determine incident entry/exit corridors as needed. All aircraft must be notified
12 of corridors. If an entry corridor and exit corridor cannot be separated horizontally, then they must be
13 separated vertically.

14 **IPs, Checkpoints, and Holding Areas**

15 The aerial supervisor assigns incoming aircraft to non-conflicting airspaces, or holding areas, as needed.
16 Coordinates or a geographic reference work best.

17 IP

18 A fixed-wing reporting location clearly identified by the aerial supervisor. It may be a latitude/longitude
19 or geographic point (landmark). IPs are used to route incoming aircraft to a known location before
20 engaging in tactics.

- 21 • Aircraft entering IPs will announce their direction of approach and intended destination via call
22 in the blind script on the assigned primary air-to-air frequency.

23 Checkpoint

24 A helicopter reporting location clearly identified by the aerial supervisor. It may be a latitude/longitude
25 or geographical point (landmark). Check points are used to route helicopter to and from assignments.

- 26 • Helicopters using check points while transitioning an established route will announce their
27 direction and intended destination via call in the blind script on the assigned air-to-air frequency.
28 When sequencing aircraft helicopter check point should be set up close to the target area that is
29 not in the fixed-wing final/departure flight path. Helicopters should call off each dip, drop.

30 Holding Areas

31 Any known location can be used by aerial supervisors to hold aircraft. There can be multiple areas on an
32 incident being used at the same time for multiple aircraft at different locations.

- 33 • Pilots must be aware of other aircraft in their assigned holding area.
- 34 • Pilots must be able to communicate position reports to each other.
- 35 • Holding area must be clearly defined – by a geographic reference point or distance and direction
36 relative to the incident aircraft will normally establish a “race track” pattern where they are
37 flying at the same altitude and providing their own visual separation.

- 1 • Aircraft must receive clearance to depart the holding area once assigned.
- 2 • Helicopters can be held on the ground or in the air as needed to maintain adequate separation.
- 3 Considerations include:
 - 4 ○ Pilots should be able to maintain forward flight rather than constant hover.
 - 5 ○ Long periods of holding helicopters should be done on the ground.

6 **Sequencing**

7 Sequencing is a technique used to deliver multiple aircraft to a shared target area. Sequencing can be
8 done between fixed and helicopter aircrafts to the same target area but should be actively managed by an
9 aerial supervisor. Aerial supervisors should establish an order and provide clearance for each aircraft to
10 the target/drop area.

11 **Caution:**

12 Consider wake turbulence when sequencing any type of aircraft. VLATs require a minimum 3-minute
13 delay for wake turbulence.

14 Example:

15 Beaver Air Attack: “Helicopter five two five call your dips, drops, and call at Rock Check.”

16 Helicopter 525: “Helicopter five two five is off the dip”

17 Helicopter 525: “Helicopter five two five is at Rock Check”

18 Beaver Air Attack: “Helicopter five two five clear to target, number 2 behind tanker one zero one on left
19 base, caution wake turbulence.”

20 Helicopter 525: “Helicopter five two five has visual on tanker one zero one, clear to target number 2”

21 Airtanker 101; “Tanker one zero one is turning final”

22 Beaver Air Attack: “Tanker one zero one, I have your final, clear to drop. You’ll have a helicopter off to
23 your left with reported visual on you”

24 Airtanker 101: “Copy clear to drop, I have the helicopter on my left.”

25 Air-to-Air Communications

26 Pilots must monitor the assigned air-to-air frequency to receive direction and maintain aircraft
27 separation. If needed, separate air-to-air frequencies for helicopters and airtankers. The primary air-to-
28 air frequency should be retained for fixed-wing operations.

29 **Intersecting Routes**

30 Intersecting aircraft routes shall be clearly identifiable geographically. Intersections shall have a
31 minimum of 500 feet of vertical separation.

32 **Non-Standard Patterns**

33 Occasionally terrain, visibility, wind direction, or other factors require patterns that are modified or
34 reversed.

35 The mission pilot, airtanker, LPIL, or HLCO shall advise ATGS of situation and request a deviation
36 from standard procedures. The ATGS will advise other aircraft before granting the request and notify
37 appropriate incident aircraft of the deviation and when the non-standard maneuvers are complete.

1 **Coordination between Aerial Supervisors**

2 Each incident is unique and circumstances dictate that workload shifts between LPIL, ATGS, HLCO,
3 and ASM as their responsibilities overlap in several areas. Operational continuity is achieved by briefing
4 and positive hand off.

5 It is important that ATGS, ASM/LPIL, and HLCO work as a team and share workload commensurate
6 with fire complexity, training, and position authority.

7 **Positive Hand Off of Aircraft**

8 Anytime aircraft is handed off (whether requested or offered) to another aerial supervisor, both aerial
9 supervisors first must agree to that handoff, and a positive hand off will occur. A positive three step
10 process using call sign of those aircraft being handed off will be used.

11 Example:

12 (AA) “Bravo-four, I’d like to hand off helicopter one echo echo and helicopter five three one for you to
13 coordinate and sequence between airtankers.”

14 (B-4) “Roger. Bravo-four has control of helicopter one echo echo and helicopter five three one.”

15 (AA) “Affirmative.”

16 **Airtanker Mission Sequence Between ATGS and LPIL/ASM**

- 17 • ATGS and ground operations jointly determine tactical objectives.
- 18 • ATGS briefs LPIL/ASM on next target, coverage level, etc.
- 19 • Airtanker makes 12-mile check-in with ATGS or LPIL as agreed upon by the aerial supervisors.
- 20 • LPIL/ASM briefs airtanker on target, coverage level, etc.
- 21 • ATGS/ASM/LPIL clears conflicting air resources from the airspace and gives verbal clearance to
22 LPIL/ASM for low-level operations. The ATGS may also elect to hand off conflicting air
23 resources to LPIL/ASM to reduce radio traffic.
- 24 • ATGS/ASM/LPIL clears ground personnel from target area.
- 25 • ATGS will maintain radio silence on the primary air-to-air while LPIL/ASM and airtanker are
26 working, particularly when on final approach or exiting the drop area, unless the drop needs to be
27 called off.
- 28 • LPIL/ASM will do low-level recon to determine hazards, targets, elevations, location of people,
29 equipment, facilities, safe patterns, exit routes, etc.
- 30 • LPIL/ASM briefs airtanker on objectives, flight route, coverage level, drift potential, and
31 hazards.
- 32 • LPIL/ASM may make a “show-me” run with airtanker in tow on the intended target.
- 33 • ATGS/ASM/LPIL confirms ground personnel are clear of target area.
- 34 • Airtanker makes drop(s). Airtanker may or may not require a lead.
- 35 • ATGS pilot positions aircraft to monitor and evaluate drop.
- 36 • ATGS evaluates drop and gets ground feedback. LPIL/ASM may also be able to evaluate drop.

1 Evaluation includes accuracy, coverage level, coverage uniformity, etc. Evaluation may reveal
2 need to adjust to left or right, begin earlier, or later. These adjustments are expressed in wing-
3 spans or rotor-spans, not feet, or yards.

- 4 • ATGS/ASM/LPIL gives feedback to the airtanker after clear of drop area (LPIL/ASM and
5 airtanker may have already heard the same feedback from ground if they are monitoring assigned
6 air-to-ground frequencies).
- 7 • LPIL/ASM and airtanker make adjustments as needed on subsequent drops.
- 8 • LPIL/ASM gives airtanker reload instructions based on instruction from ATGS.
- 9 • ATGS/ASM/LPIL informs ground when clear to return to work area.
- 10 • Airtanker informs dispatch on status – load and return or hold.

11 **Maintaining Air Tactics Continuity**

12 Complex air operations or air operations involving a mix of air resources requires continuous
13 supervision by an ATGS, ASM, LPIL, or HLCO. To maintain continuous supervision, the following
14 procedures should be followed. Good planning will ensure continuity:

- 15 • Use ASM to fill gaps in ATGS coverage and manage air/ground operations in designated areas
16 on complex incidents.
- 17 • Stagger aircraft refueling so all aircraft are not down simultaneously.
- 18 • Monitor flight times. Anticipate the need for a relief pilot, LPIL, or other air resources. Notify
19 dispatcher or AOBD in a timely manner.
- 20 • Anticipate fuel needs.
- 21 • Recommend activation of portable reload bases to reduce turnaround time.
- 22 • Coordinate refuel and relief needs between aerial supervisors to ensure continuity of airspace
23 management/supervision.

24 **Relief Guidelines**

25 Aerial supervision is mentally demanding. Long flight hours result in mental fatigue and reduced
26 effectiveness. Consider the following staffing guidelines:

- 27 • If the aerial supervisor will fly more than 4 hours on any one flight, order a relief.
- 28 • On multi-day incidents, assign a second aerial supervisor and rotate.

29 **Diversion of Aerial Resources**

30 Higher priority incidents may require diversion of aircraft. A reassignment may be given through
31 dispatch or through IC/Operations. Incident tactics may have to be modified. Aerial supervision may
32 also be diverted to manage the new incident. Upon receiving a divert notice, the aerial supervisor must
33 release and brief the requested resources using the standard dispatch form information:

- 34 • Incident location.
- 35 • Air and ground contacts.
- 36 • Radio frequencies.

1 No Divert Request

2 The IC can request through dispatch a “no divert” for airtankers when an imminent threat to life exists.
3 This requires 30-minute re-evaluation with IC and dispatch. A no divert status shall be released as soon
4 as the threat is mitigated.

5 **Note:** Check with Geographic Area Mobilization Guide for specific guidance on “no divert” procedures.

6 **Coordination with Ground Personnel**

7 **Primary Contacts**

- 8 • On Type 1 and 2 incidents, aerial supervisors work with Air Operations, Operations, Division
9 Supervisors, and other line personnel.
- 10 • On Type 3 and 4 incidents, aerial supervisors work primarily with the IC, operations, ground
11 crews, or dispatch.
- 12 • Aerial supervisors provide intelligence to tactical personnel and dispatchers in order to facilitate
13 the briefing process.

14 **Sizeup the Fire and Get Oriented**

- 15 • Sizeup the Fire – Make initial assessment and communicate critical safety, strategy, and tactics
16 inputs to ground contact and/or dispatch.
- 17 • Get oriented – Develop a mental or sketched map of the incident that includes:
 - 18 ○ Cardinal directions.
 - 19 ○ Landmarks: Roads, streams, lakes, mountains, improvements, etc.
 - 20 ○ Fire flanks, head, etc.
 - 21 ○ Visible work accomplished: Dozer lines, handline, retardant line, etc.
 - 22 ○ Record GPS coordinates to identify reference points.
 - 23 ○ Review IAP map; note frequencies, aircraft assignments/availability, division breaks,
24 helispots, etc. Assign Air Resources.
- 25 • Make assignments based on Operations/ICs strategy, tactics, & mission priorities.

26 **Determine TFR Requirements**

- 27 • Vertical and horizontal dimensions.
- 28 • If needed, order through dispatch or AOBD.

29 **Check for Airspace Conflicts**

- 30 • Identify MOAs, MTRs, airports, etc.
- 31 • Values at risk: Life, property/structures, resources.
- 32 • Current fire size and potential size estimate.
- 33 • Fuel models and rates of spread.
- 34 • Fire behavior elements (wind, terrain, aspect, etc.).

1 **Recommend Strategies, Tactics, and Resources**

- 2 • Direct, indirect, or parallel strategies.
- 3 • Target locations and priorities.
- 4 • Access.
- 5 • Anchor points.
- 6 • Water sources.
- 7 • Potential helispots.
- 8 • Location of spot fires.
- 9 • Number and types of aircraft required.
- 10 • Use of specialized resources (helitack, rappellers, smokejumpers, and paracargo).

11 **Provide Airdrop Information to Ground Crews**

- 12 • Advise personnel airtanker, bucket, or paracargo drops in their work area and the need to clear
13 the area.
- 14 • If drops are near power lines, determine status of lines (live or de-energized?). Advise ground
15 personnel of danger of being near power lines during drops.
- 16 • Confirm with ground if run is to be dry or live.
- 17 • Notify ground when drop is complete, and personnel can return to work area.
- 18 • Solicit feedback from ground crews relating to drop effectiveness.
- 19 • Provide safety oversight to ground crews.
- 20 • Monitor personnel locations relative to fire perimeter, blowup areas, etc.
- 21 • Assist with locating safety zones and escape routes. Final determination must be made from
22 ground.
- 23 • Monitor weather – advises personnel of approaching fronts or thunderstorms.
- 24 • Advise personnel on adverse changes in fire behavior.
- 25 • Direct air resources, as top priority, to protect, and aid in evacuation of endangered personnel.
- 26 • Personnel and equipment in the flight path of intended aerial drops should move to a location
27 that will decrease the possibility of being hit with a drop.
- 28 • Personnel near aerial drops should be alert for objects (tree limbs, rocks, etc.) that the drop could
29 dislodge. The *IRPG* provides additional safety information for personnel in drop areas.

30 **Determine the Procedures for Ordering Tactical Aerial Resources**

- 31 • The authority to order retardant and helicopter support varies between dispatch centers,
32 ownership, and incident complexity. Determine the procedure before the mission begins and
33 confirm with the IC.
- 34 • On extended attack incidents, Division Supervisors are typically delegated the authority.

1 However, consult with AOB/OSC.

- 2 • On IA incidents, the IC makes aircraft orders. The IC may choose to delegate this to the aerial
3 supervisor. Confirm it before ordering.

4 **Coordination with Dispatch**

5 Provide dispatch the following information in a timely manner:

- 6 • A fire sizeup including a center point and resource needs.
- 7 • Horizontal and vertical dimensions of a TFR if needed. Remember that TFRs are based on
8 degrees, minutes, and seconds. Dispatch centers may assist with conversion of latitude/longitude.
- 9 • Airspace conflicts with civilian or military aircraft.
- 10 • The need for airtankers to load and return or hold.
- 11 • Aircraft incidents/accidents.
- 12 • Projected needs for next shift – number of aircraft by type, time requested, frequencies, TFRs,
13 etc.
- 14 • Aerial supervision flight/duty hours used and projected needs to complete the mission.
- 15 • Advise on need for aircraft maintenance and projected availability for next day.
- 16 • Advise if airtanker has in-flight difficulty, must abort load, and return to base.
- 17 • Request Aerial Supervision relief two or more hours before you need it.

18 **Transition Briefings**

19 The responsibility is on the current aerial supervisor to provide a quality transition briefing to the
20 incoming aerial supervisor. Incoming Aerial Supervision should listen to assigned frequencies in route
21 to gather situational awareness. During transition briefing, each pause should be acknowledged back
22 with affirmation that the message is received.

23 **Elements of a Transition Brief**

- 24 • Frequencies – Confirm all assigned frequencies.
- 25 • Operational Objectives – Priorities (first, second, third...), chain of command.
- 26 • Fire Anatomy – Hazards, DIVS/Branch, dip site/MRB, IP, checkpoints, routes, roads, helispots,
27 retardant avoidance, etc.
- 28 • Resource – Aircraft, engines, crews, airtanker bases, ground contacts, UAS, helibase, etc.
- 29 • Tasks – Point protection, aerial ignition, firing, direct/indirect, recons, repeater mission, etc.
- 30 • Questions – Open up for incoming ATGS to ask questions.
- 31 • Aerial supervision relief times – Local time will be used, and time is estimated time of arrival
32 (ETA) over the fire.
- 33 • Positive handoff – Incoming ATGS assumes fire name air attack and takes all fire frequencies;
34 outbound ATGS goes back to tail number air attack and communicates transition complete and
35 relief order to dispatch.

1 **Note:** Plan and order what is needed for briefing frequencies, tactical frequencies, etc. and include in
2 transition. Keep frequency open to Leads/ ASMs for Airtanker operations. Example:
3 Incident ATGS: “Air Attack one sierra alpha, Rock Air Attack on 122.925. Do you have the assigned
4 frequencies?”
5 Incoming ATGS: “Yes.”
6 Incident ATGS: “On scene is tanker one zero three and helicopter five four echo. One additional tanker
7 and helicopter on order no fill information. No observed hazards.”
8 Incoming ATGS: “Copy.”
9 Incident ATGS: “We have two divisions, Alpha, and Zulu. Priority is retardant and buckets in Division
10 Zulu working with Engine four-twenty-two.”
11 Incoming ATGS: “Copy.”
12 Incident ATGS: “Priority two is a sling load in Division Alpha to Crew three. They have not determined
13 a sling site yet.”
14 Incoming ATGS: “Copy.”
15 Incident ATGS: “Questions?”
16 Incoming ATGS: “No.”
17 Incident ATGS: “What time do you anticipate needing relief?”
18 Incoming ATGS: “If we need relief, plan on 1500, but we will confirm through dispatch.”
19 Incident ATGS: “Air Attack one sierra alpha if you have the fire, I will notify dispatch.”
20 Incoming ATGS: “Air Attack one sierra alpha is now Rock Air Attack.”

21 **Before Leaving the Incident**

- 22 • Coordinate with remaining LPIL, ASM, ATGS, or HLCO to ensure continuity of Aerial
23 Supervision and provide briefing.
- 24 • Notify Operations of Estimated Time of Departure (ETD), and who will supervise air operations
25 if not a relief ATGS.
- 26 • Notify air resources of ETD and whom they will report to if not a relief ATGS.
- 27 • Notify the IC, Operations/Air Operations, DIVS, helibase, LPIL, ASM, and HLCO when
28 departing.
- 29 • Notify dispatch of ETE to base.
- 30 • If you are on the last shift of the day:
 - 31 ○ Plan your release to allow for return within daylight hours (not necessary for twin-engine
32 aircraft).
 - 33 ○ Update Operations personnel on fire status.
 - 34 ○ Remind remaining aviation resources of daylight restrictions, if applicable.
 - 35 ○ Coordinate with dispatch the status of air resources – rest overnight (RON) or return to home
36 base. Inform air resources of RON locations.

1 **Emergency Procedures**

2 **Flight Emergencies for On-Scene Aircraft**

3 When a flight emergency is declared, possibly as “Mayday, Mayday, Mayday” the aerial supervisor
4 manages the emergency using appropriate procedures from the list below:

- 5 • Emergency is highest priority until aircraft lands safely.
- 6 • Determine pilot’s intentions for managing situation.
- 7 • Clear the airspace for the pilot as needed.
- 8 • Dedicate and clear a frequency for the emergency.
- 9 • Jettison load if feasible.
- 10 • If problem persists, assist aircraft to return to base or alternate landing site.
- 11 • Alert incident medevac units.
- 12 • Prepare for suppression of a fire associated with an aircraft crash.
- 13 • Notify dispatch or airport tower for necessary crash/rescue protocol.

14 **Incident Aircraft Mishap Considerations**

15 When a mishap has occurred or an aircraft is missing, on-scene aerial supervision manages situation
16 using appropriate procedures below:

- 17 • Consider ordering additional Aerial Supervision.
- 18 • Assign aircraft as needed to conduct search.
- 19 • Determine location. Check with dispatch for AFF last known coordinates and direction of flight.
- 20 • Monitor emergency frequency (121.5) if crash site is not known or if the aircraft is missing and
21 its status is unknown.
- 22 • Assign remaining aircraft to holding areas or return to base.
- 23 • Activate incident medevac plan through medical unit.
- 24 • Assign on-site aircraft and personnel to control aircraft fire and initiate life-saving measures if
25 they can do so without jeopardizing their safety.
- 26 • Advise IC/Operations.
- 27 • Consider suspending non-essential aircraft operations.
- 28 • Direct ground resources to crash site.
- 29 • Direct air support operations.

30 **Medevac of Incident Personnel**

31 Consider the following as appropriate:

- 32 • Serve as a relay between accident site, helibase, and medical personnel.
- 33 • Determine accident site location – latitude and longitude.

- 1 • Obtain Medevac helicopter frequency – may be listed in Medevac Plan.
- 2 • Assist rescue personnel with helispot location, etc.
- 3 • Provide helispot dust abatement with helicopter buckets as needed.
- 4 • Guide Medevac helicopter to accident site.

5 **Note:** IMTs and local dispatch centers typically have established procedures for incidents within the
6 incident.

7 **Post Mission Procedures**

- 8 • Confirm need for Aerial Supervision aircraft for next day and notify pilot of start of duty time,
9 etc.
- 10 • Debrief with available flight crews (ATGS pilot, airtanker pilots, HLCO, LPIL, ASM, and
11 helicopter pilots).
- 12 • Debrief with AOBD and dispatch.
- 13 • Attend or provide input to incident planning meeting for next day's operations.
- 14 • Request and review IAP and map for next day's operation.
- 15 • Complete payment documents.
- 16 • Submit SAFECOMs as required.
- 17 • Update ATGS logbook.
- 18 • Update contract daily diary.

1 Chapter 7 – Aerial Fire Suppression Strategies

2 Principles that apply to ground operations also apply to air operations (anchor, flank, and pinch, etc.).
3 Strategies are based on values at risk and resource management objectives, while tactics are based on
4 fuel type, fire intensity, rate of spread, resource availability, and estimated line production rate.

5 As an aerial supervisor, you will be making tactical decisions based on objectives developed by incident
6 command personnel. Aerial supervisors are obligated to assist the IC and Operations personnel with
7 strategic advice during multiple ignition events and extended attack incidents relating to aviation
8 resource capabilities and needs.

9 **Note:** Aerial application of suppressants and retardants should be used in support of ground resources
10 support and be anchored.

11 Aerial Fire Suppression Strategies

12 There are three general suppression strategies:

13 Direct Attack

14 Drops directly adjacent to fire edge for retardant and directly on the fire edge for retardant, water, and
15 suppressants, in support of ground forces. If you want retardant to land in or partially on the fire edge, it
16 needs to be specified (half in/half out, etc.); conversely if you want water/suppressants to land directly
17 adjacent to the fire edge, it needs to be specified (pretreat the green).

18 Parallel Attack

19 Parallel to and within a hundred feet of perimeter. Anticipate lateral fire spread, safety, and line
20 construction rates of resources assigned. This is a common practice for retardant use when ground fuels
21 are carrying the fire as it allows time to tag on and extend prior to individual drops being hooked around
22 by the fire.

23 Indirect Attack

24 Used to enhance control lines established by ground forces in advance of the fire. Also used for structure
25 defense and safety zones.

26 Aerial Fire Suppression Tactics

27 A single airtanker often can make multiple drops forming a retardant line around a small fire or “V” off
28 the head or heel.

29 Parallel or Stacking Pattern (Steep Ground)

30 When steep terrain precludes boxing a fire, flight routes must be contoured to the slope. Generally,
31 drops are started at the top and progress to bottom of the fire.

32 Full Coverage Drop (Delayed Attack Fires and Spot Fires)

33 To control fire intensity and spread, drops should blanket over the entire fire. Multiple drops may be
34 required to get a heavy coverage level. On small fires the chance of a partial hit on the first drop is
35 significant. It is wise to drop a partial load on the first pass. The experience of the first drop plus
36 feedback from the ATGS and the ground will likely increase the accuracy on the next drop.

1 **IA and Multiple Fire Operations**

2 **IA Mission Priorities**

3 During IA, aviation resources must comply with FTA protocol. Aerial supervisors should consider the
4 following:

5 IA Responsibilities with no IC

6 The ATGS, in consultation with dispatch, has the following responsibilities on IA incidents with no IC:

- 7 • Make initial fire sizeup.
- 8 • Recommend specific resources based on fire behavior, access, response time, resource
9 availability, and capability.
- 10 • Develop tactical plan.
- 11 • Give periodic status reports to dispatch or responding resources.
- 12 • Assist responding resources with locating the incident.
- 13 • Brief ground resources on potential safety concerns and fire behavior.
- 14 • Assign arriving resources based on tactical plan until a qualified IC arrives.

15 **Multiple Fire Situations**

16 An ATGS may be activated during multiple fire starts and are likely to assist with:

17 Fire Detection

18 Latitude/longitude coordinates, legal descriptions, etc.

19 Incident Priorities Are Based on the Following:

- 20 • Threat to life and property
- 21 • Ownership
- 22 • Fire behavior – current and expected spread
- 23 • Environmental sensitivity
- 24 • Political considerations
- 25 • Potential resource loss

26 Determine Access

27 Aerial delivery of firefighters, roads, trails, distance, and time requirements.

28 Recommend IA Resources

29 Based on resource capability, mode of access, probable availability, and response time.

30 Develop IA Strategy and Tactics

- 31 • Based on resource objectives, fire behavior, type, and numbers of air and ground resources
32 responding within specific time frames.

- 1 • Direct Resources per strategic and tactical plans until a qualified IC arrives.
- 2 • Report Intelligence to dispatch and IC.
- 3 • Reassign Resources – to higher priority incidents if they develop.

4 Delayed Attack Fires

5 When many small fires have started in a widespread area, resources are usually in short supply. An
6 ATGS may be assigned to assess and prioritize fires. Delayed attack fires, or fires that cannot be staffed
7 within a few hours, may require a holding action until ground resources are available. Timely drops
8 while the fire is small can be effective in holding or containing a fire temporarily. Retardant is much
9 more effective than water.

10 During these situations the ATGS will:

- 11 • Determine delayed attack fires requiring retardant. Request resources as needed.
- 12 • Set priorities. Consider flight time between fires. If priorities are equal, consider dropping on
13 fires that are in close proximity to each other before moving to fires some distance away.
- 14 • Direct retardant drops. Blanket covering of the entire fire is recommended when controlling both
15 fire spread and fire intensity on small fires. While drops covering the fire reduce fire intensity,
16 they also make burnout operations difficult if not impossible.
- 17 • Monitor status of fires and change priorities as necessary.

18 **Wildland Urban Interface**

19 During operations within the wildland urban interface consider the following:

20 **Policy and Regulations**

21 Fires in the urban interface are considered to be in “congested areas.” Refer to Chapter 3 for more detail.

- 22 • Order a LPIL/ASM – As required under FAR 91.119 – USDA Grant of Exemption 392. Refer to
23 Chapter 3 for specific requirements.
- 24 • Implement a TFR – Under 14 CFR 91.137 if the incident meets the criteria for implementation.
25 Refer to the Interagency Airspace Coordination Guide.
- 26 • Assign an aerial supervisor.

27 **Urban Interface Hazards**

28 The following hazards to aircraft are often associated with urban interface incidents:

- 29 • Dense smoke and poor visibility.
- 30 • Power lines (may have to be de-energized).
- 31 • Antennas.
- 32 • Tall buildings.
- 33 • Media aircraft.
- 34 • Propane tanks.

1 **Ground Safety**

2 Urban interface incidents often have many citizens and homeowners scattered through the operations
3 area. This can seriously impair tactical air operations and expose ground personnel to additional risk.

4 **Effectiveness of Resources**

5 It is critical that airtanker and helicopter drops must be closely supervised to prevent inadvertent drops
6 on non-incident persons and unnecessary damage to improvements. The aerial supervisor is responsible
7 for providing the best available resources that can:

- 8 • Minimize risk to people and improvements.
- 9 • Provide assignments to aircraft which have increased maneuverability, drop accuracy, and quick
10 turnaround times to targets.
- 11 • Drops are generally not effective on structures that are burning beyond the initial start phase.

12 **Urban Interface Tactical Planning Principles**

13 Apply the following principles in developing the tactical plan for air resources:

- 14 • Assess the situation and identify the following:
 - 15 ○ Identify air operational hazards.
 - 16 ○ Locate non-incident people in operations area.
 - 17 ○ Protection of evacuation routes.
 - 18 ○ Triage structures.
 - 19 ○ Identify possible dipsites and portable retardant plant sites.
 - 20 ○ Determine how air resources can best support suppression objectives.
- 21 • Request electrical transmission lines are de-energized. Don't assume that they will be. Warn
22 ground personnel not to be under or near power lines during drops.
- 23 • Determine where airtankers or helicopters can be most effective.
- 24 • Use airtankers in areas where visibility, hazards, flight routes, and target selection ensure
25 reasonable effectiveness and acceptable risk.
- 26 • Use helicopters on targets requiring more maneuverability and accuracy.
- 27 • When possible, avoid holding patterns with airtankers overpopulated areas.

Chapter 8 – Tactical Aircraft Operations

Coordination and Control

Aerial firefighting occurs in a very dynamic environment. Firefighting aircraft often work in close proximity to each other, ground personnel, and surrounding terrain. This is routinely accomplished under conditions that are less than ideal as aircrews contend with high temperatures, wind, turbulence, and visibility restrictions caused by smoke and terrain. Furthermore, firefighting aircraft, in contrast to most commercial aviation, must provide their safe separation. It is for these reasons that airspace coordination is of the utmost importance to safety. Though the aerial supervisor is responsible for overall control of aircraft on an incident, it is incumbent upon all aircrew personnel to participate in this endeavor by adhering to the rules set by policy and the instructions given by the aerial supervisor.

Operational Coordination and Control

The aerial supervisor is responsible for providing ATC and coordination at an incident.

The aerial supervisor will:

- Discontinue flight operation anytime conditions appear unsafe.
- Advise inbound aircraft of known hazards such as obstacles, power lines, turbulence, visibility restrictions, and other air traffic on the incident, etc.
- Issue a clearance to each inbound aircraft prior to their arrival utilizing the standard Clearance to Enter script. Include specific routing when applicable.
- Establish Traffic Patterns and control procedures.
- Ensure that during airtanker drop runs, the frequency used to direct the drops remains clear throughout the base, final, and release; communications during airtanker drops will be limited to transmissions between the dropping airtanker and the controlling aerial supervisor.
- Deconflict and approve all non-standard maneuvers as deemed necessary and as briefed to all other affected aircraft.

Pilots will advise the aerial supervisor:

- 12 nm from an incident – stating their distance, direction, and altitude.
Note: Aircraft inbound to an incident will not proceed closer than 7 nm until Clearance to Enter is received from controlling aerial supervisor.
- Arrival on scene.
Note: Depending on fire size and complexity, “on scene” may include areas as far as 5 nm from incident center coordinates.
- When lifting off for helicopter missions.
- When moving between operating/target areas.
- When departing or re-entering an incident area.
- When changing radio frequencies.
- When encountering any unusual or unsafe situations.
- Before performing a non-standard maneuver.

1 Pilots are responsible for maintaining aircraft separation, radio contact, and adherence to correct flight
2 patterns and altitudes.

3 Helicopter operations will be cleared and coordinated through the aerial supervisor. In absence of an
4 aerial supervisor, helicopters will establish communications and a control procedure with airtankers to
5 avoid possible conflicting flight paths.

6 **Non-Standard Maneuver**

7 A non-standard maneuver is an action by a pilot (and aircraft) performed in a way other than the
8 standard method. Non-standard maneuvers are necessary at times when the standard method would be
9 either unsafe or ineffective. It must be understood, however, that a non-standard maneuver may require
10 the suspension of other ongoing operations. Some examples of non-standard maneuvers are:

- 11 • A target identification pass (high show-me profile) by the ATGS aircraft.
- 12 • An airtanker drop performed out of a right-hand pattern.
- 13 • ATGS aircraft flying a left-hand orbit.
- 14 • A helicopter flying a new or unassigned route within the incident boundary or above the
15 helicopter ceiling altitude.
- 16 • Any aircraft deviating from the assigned or expected altitude.

17 Before a non-standard maneuver is executed:

- 18 • Non-standard maneuvers must be requested by the pilot intending to perform the maneuver.
- 19 • Non-standard maneuvers must be approved by the controlling aerial supervisor.
- 20 • All pilots of aircraft that may be affected by the maneuver must acknowledge that they are aware
21 of the maneuver about to take place.

22 **Low-Level Operations (LPIL/ASM)**

23 Low-level flight operations involve fixed-wing aircraft flying below 500 feet AGL. Low-level flight
24 operations require a clearance. LPIL/ASM will request low-level clearance from ATGS if one is on
25 scene. Low-level missions are performed by LPIL/ASM to increase airtanker drop effectiveness and
26 safety. Aircraft and flight crews are specially trained and authorized for low-level missions. Situational
27 awareness is the responsibility of each LPIL/ASM crew member to ensure safe flight operations. The
28 LPIL/ASM conducts these operations in the following manner:

29 **LPIL/ASM Tactical Flight Checklists**

- 30 • High-level reconnaissance.
 - 31 ○ A high recon pass is executed prior to descending to low level.
 - 32 ○ Look for aircraft over the incident including media and non-participating aircraft.
 - 33 ○ Analyze the terrain. Identify potential approach and departure paths while identifying
34 prominent target features. Fly the patterns at an altitude to detect hazards. Study the lay of the
35 land to establish emergency exits.

36 **Note:** The flight crew completes tactical checklist before conducting low-level flight.

- 37 • Low-level reconnaissance.

- 1 ○ Obtain clearance from ATGS for low-level operations.
- 2 ○ Check for turbulence, hazards to low-level flight, and low-level target identification features.
- 3 ○ Fly the emergency exit paths to locate potential hazards not identified from a higher altitude.

4 **Tactical Flight Profiles**

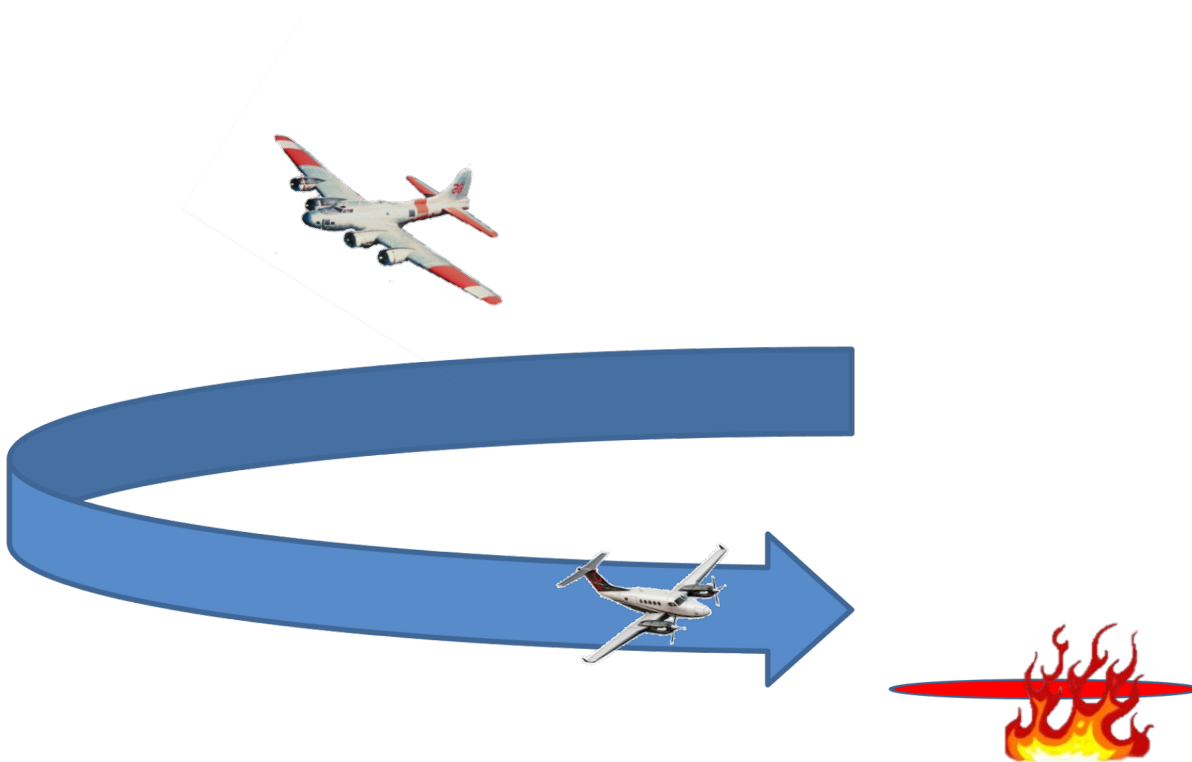
5 Show-Me Profile

6 A show-me profile is a low-level pass made over the target using the physical location of the aircraft to
7 demonstrate the line and start point of the retardant drop.

8 The show-me profile is normally used for the first airtanker on a specific run or when an incoming
9 airtanker has not had the opportunity to observe the previous drop. A show-me can be used alone or
10 before other profiles.

11 The pilot begins the run when the airtanker crew can visually identify the aircraft, hazards, line, start,
12 and exit point of the drop. The standard “show-me” is to fly the line you want the retardant on, not
13 corrected for drift.

14 **Show-Me Profile Figure 4.**

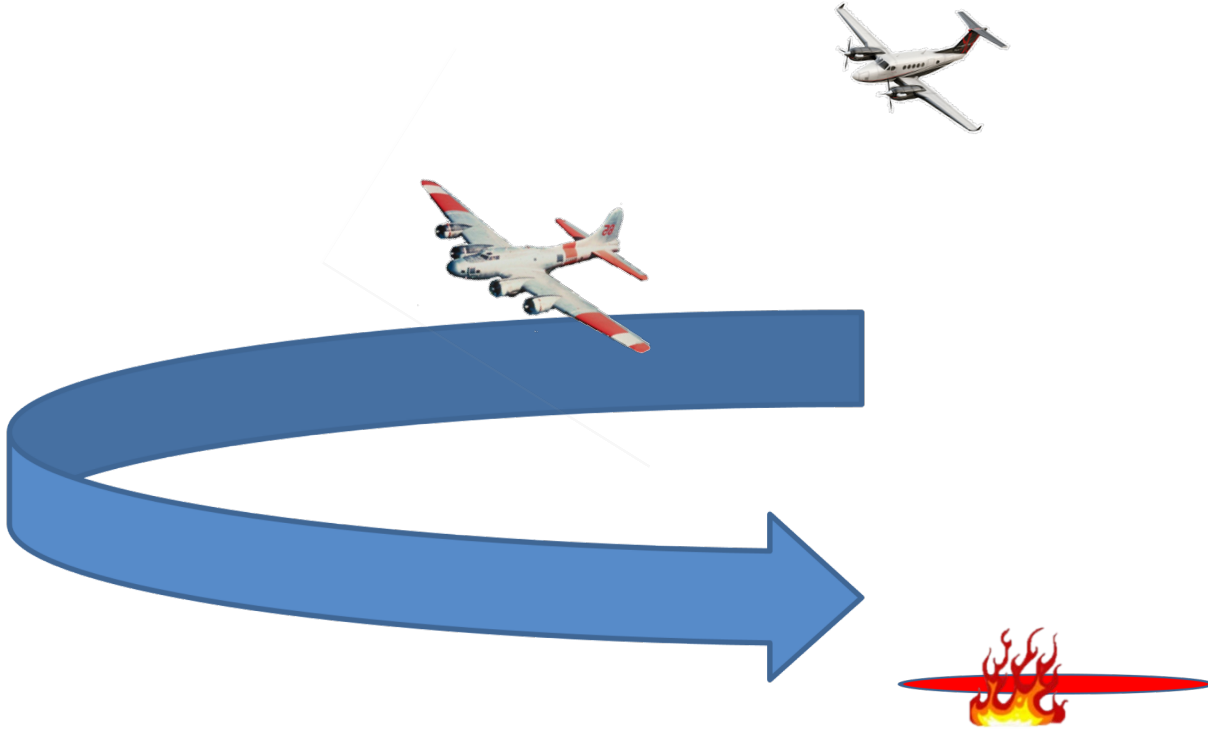


15

1 **Chase Position Profile**

2 The Chase Position Profile is an observation position in trail of, and above the airtanker, at a position of
3 5 to 7 o'clock. The Chase Position Profile is used to verbally confirm or adjust the position of the
4 airtanker when on final, and to evaluate the drop.

5 **Figure 5. Chase Position Profile**

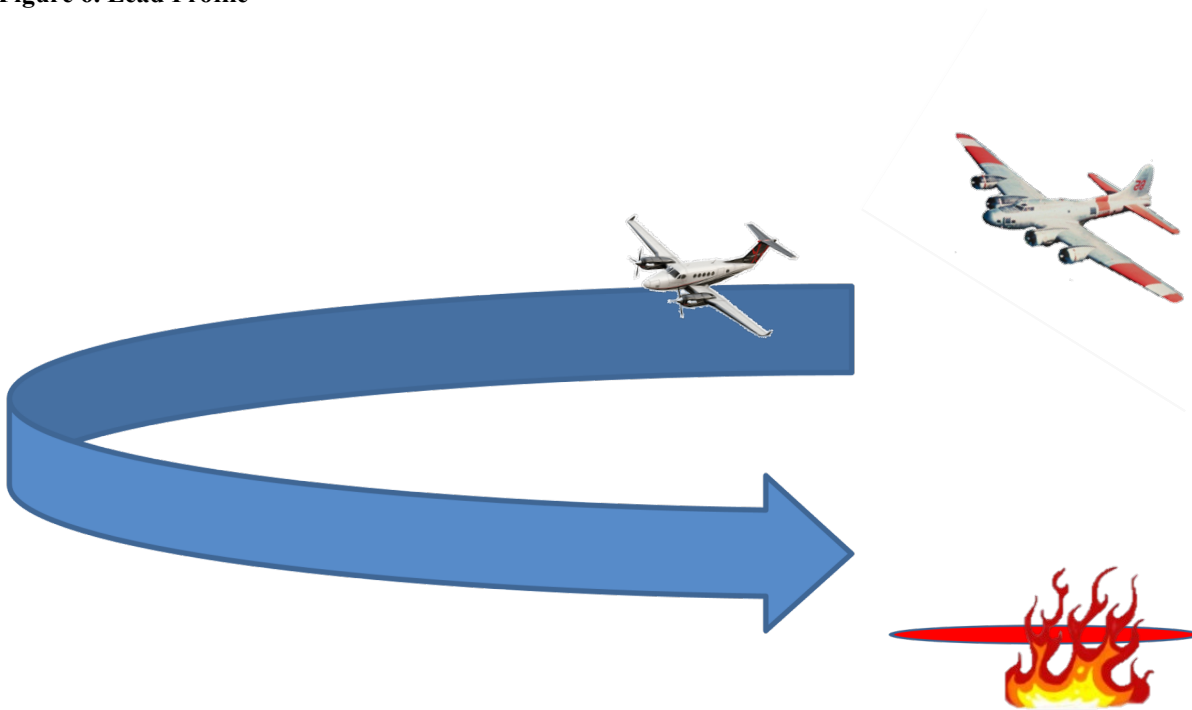


6

1 **Lead Profile**

2 The lead profile is a low-level (below 500 feet AGL) airtanker drop pattern, made with the lead plane
3 approximately 1/4 mile ahead of the airtanker. The lead profile is used at the request of the airtanker
4 crew, or when the line or start point is difficult to see or to describe due to lack of visibility or
5 references.

6 **Figure 6. Lead Profile**



7

1 **Maneuvering**

2 When leading airtankers, shallow to medium bank angles of 30 degrees should be used. When bank
3 angles exceed 30 degrees, the LPIL shall notify and brief the tanker. Bank angles will not exceed 45
4 degrees. Airspeed control is critical to a safe pattern. The shape, airspeed, and size of the pattern shall be
5 well planned to minimize the airtanker pilot's maneuvering workload.

6 Minimum Airspeed

7 Airspeed during normal operations shall not be flown below minimum controllable airspeed one engine
8 inoperative (V_{mca}).

9 Approach and Descent to the Target

10 The run should be downhill, down canyon, down sun with the greatest degree of safety in mind. Use the
11 agreed upon airspeed to maintain approximately ¼-mile separation between the LPIL and airtanker. A
12 descending approach with a constant rate of descent is desired, terrain permitting. Brief the airtanker
13 pilot ahead of time if special maneuvering is anticipated. Advise the airtanker of hazards (i.e.,
14 turbulence, down air, restrictions to visibility, obstacles, etc.).

15 Final Approach to the Target

16 Power up and clean up drag devices (when applicable) to cross the target area at the briefed airspeed. Do
17 not accelerate too soon and run away from the airtanker. The standard “live run” is to fly the expected
18 drift line.

19 Drop Height

- 20 • The minimum is 250 feet above the top of the vegetation for VLAT.
- 21 • The minimum is 150 feet above the top of the vegetation for LAT.
- 22 • The minimum is 60 feet above the top of the vegetation for SEAT.

23 It is important for the retardant to “rain” vertically with little or no forward movement.
24 The airtanker pilot is responsible for maintaining safe drop heights.

25 **Note:** Generally, drop heights should be increased when using higher coverage levels.

26 Over the Target

27 Identify the start point with a verbal, “Here.”

28 Exiting the Target

29 Comply with the briefed exit instructions. When possible, turn off the centerline of the run before
30 initiating a climb (be aware of the airtankers position at all times). Exiting is a critical maneuver at low
31 altitude. Take every precaution to ensure that airspeed and aircraft attitude are within safe limits. Safety-
32 of-flight has priority over the drop evaluation.

33 Emergency Overrun Procedures

34 In the event of an imminent overrun of the LPIL by the airtanker, the airtanker crew will attempt to
35 communicate the overrun and utilize the following standard overrun procedures unless otherwise
36 briefed:

- 37 • Straight out flight paths: Pass the LPIL on the right.

- 1 • Left or right turn flight paths: Pass the LPIL outside the turn.
- 2 • Terrain or visibility limitations: When the previous two options are not available pass above the
- 3 LPIL.

4 **Airtanker Operations**

5 **Airtanker Advantages**

- 6 • High cruise speed.
- 7 • Long range.

8 **Reload Bases**

9 Airtankers are loaded at either permanent or temporary retardant bases. When sending airtankers for
10 load and return consider the following:

- 11 • Turnaround time.
- 12 • Fuel available.
- 13 • Retardant available.
- 14 • Airtanker base approved for specific aircraft.

15 **Factors Influencing Drop Effectiveness**

16 A number of factors affect drop accuracy. These factors include:

17 Pilot Skill

18 Ability to make accurate, timely, and effective drops.

19 Aircraft Make and Model – Each aircraft make and model has advantages and disadvantages in different
20 operating environments. Elements include power, maneuverability, pilot’s visibility, and airspeed
21 control.

22 Tanking, Gating, or Door System

23 Quantity of liquid, tank configuration, flow rate, and door release mechanism.

24 Airtanker Drop Height

25 Increased height reduces coverage level and increases line width. The most uniform and efficient
26 retardant distribution is attained when near vertical fall of the retardant occurs. The optimum drop height
27 is when the momentum of the load stops its forward trajectory and begins to fall vertically.

28 Airtanker Speed

29 Airtanker drop speeds are variable depending on type of aircraft and environmental conditions. Faster
30 speeds generally reduce peak coverage levels, increase pattern momentum.

31 Visibility

32 Smoke, sun angle, shadows, etc.

1 Terrain

2 Drainage, steepness, etc.

3 Wind

4 The effect of wind is to deflect retardant and greatly increase the pattern's fringe area. The effectiveness
5 of retardant/waterdrops should be closely evaluated in high winds.

6 Headwind: The effect of dropping into the wind is to shorten the line length and increase coverage level.

7 Crosswind drops will result in increased line width and cover a larger area at reduced coverage levels.

8 Thunderstorms and downdrafts/updrafts.

9 Flame Lengths

10 Direct Attack with retardants at the prescribed coverage level is generally effective in flame lengths up
11 to 4 feet. Flame lengths from 4 to 8 feet require increasingly higher coverage levels. Retardant, unless
12 applied in heavy coverage levels and greater widths, is not generally effective when flame lengths are
13 greater than 8 feet. Retardant is most effective when applied to available fuels outside of the fire
14 perimeter.

15 Canopy Density

16 Drops in timber or fuel models with a dense concentration of tall trees are often ineffective. Canopy
17 interception significantly reduces penetration to ground fuels. An open canopy allows for better
18 penetration.

19 Availability of Ground Forces

20 Except in light fuels where extinguishing the fire with retardant may be possible, the ATGS must
21 determine if ground forces will be able to take advantage of the retardant within a reasonable time.

22 Retardant Coverage Levels

23 Coverage level refers to the number of gallons of retardant applied on fuels per 100 square feet. Fire
24 scientists have determined how many gallons per 100 square feet (GPC) it takes to effectively retard
25 flammability in fuel models under normal flame lengths. Coverage levels range from .1 to greater than
26 8. The ATGS instructs airtanker pilots to make drops at specific coverage levels.

27 Recommended Coverage Levels

28 The chart below identifies the recommended coverage level for each fuel model. The coverage level
29 may need to be increased under more adverse burning conditions or when retardant does not effectively
30 penetrate a heavy tree canopy.

1 **Table 8. Recommended Retardant Coverage Levels**

Coverage Level	NFDRS Fuel	NFFL FB Fuel Model	Fuel Model Description
1	A,L,S	1	Annual Perennial Western Grasses, Tundra
2	C H,R	2 8	Conifer with Grass, Short needle Closed Conifer, Summer Hardwood
	E,P,U	9	Long needle Conifer, Fall Hardwood
3	T	2	Sagebrush with Grass
	N	3	Sawgrass
	F	5	Intermediate Brush (green)
	K	11	Light Slash
4	G	10	Short needle Conifer (heavy dead litter)
6	O	4	Southern Rough
	F,Q	6	Intermediate Brush (cured), Black Spruce
Greater Than 6	B,O	4	California Mixed Chaparral; High Pocosin
	J	12	Medium Slash
	I	13	Heavy Slash

2 **Airtanker Flight Routes**

3 For route safety, the approaches, and exits must allow for a level or downhill flight maneuver.

4 **Airtanker Drop Patterns**

5 The ATGS must know the various drop pattern options and the coverage level required for various fuel
6 models.

7 Salvo Drop

8 Generally used on small targets such as spot fires or targets requiring heavy coverage levels.

9 Trail Drop

10 With multiple tank systems, two or more doors are open sequentially and at specified intervals giving
11 continuous overlapping flow over a desired distance at the required coverage level. The same result is
12 obtained with constant flow systems by opening the doors partially.

13 **Heavy Airtanker Line Length Production**

14 This chart displays line production by coverage level and gallons dropped for drops made at the
15 recommended drop height and airspeed.

1 **Table 9. Airtanker Line Length Production Cart (feet)**

Volume Dropped (Gallons)	Coverage Level 1	Coverage Level 2	Coverage Level 3	Coverage Level 4	Coverage Level 6	Coverage Level 8
800	1,114	526	311	189	38	0
1,000	1,202	607	384	255	90	0
1,200	1,289	687	458	321	142	9
1,400	1,377	768	531	387	194	46
1,600	1,465	848	604	454	245	84
1,800	1,552	929	678	520	297	121
2,000	1,640	1,009	751	586	349	158
2,200	1,728	1,090	824	652	400	196
2,400	1,815	1,170	897	718	452	233
2,600	1,903	1,251	971	784	504	270
2,800	1,991	1,331	1,044	850	556	308
3,000	2,078	1,411	1,117	916	607	345

2 **Ten Principles of Retardant Application**

- 3 • Determine the strategy; direct, parallel, or indirect, based on fire sizeup and resources available.
- 4 • Establish an anchor point and work from it.
- 5 • Use the proper drop height.
- 6 • Apply proper coverage levels.
- 7 • Drop downhill, down sun, when feasible.
- 8 • Drop into the wind for best accuracy.
- 9 • Maintain honest evaluation and effective communication between the ground and air.
- 10 • Use direct attack when ground support is available, or it is feasible to extinguish the fire.
- 11 • Plan drops so that they can be extended or intersected effectively.
- 12 • Monitor effectiveness of retardant and adjust use accordingly.

13 **Water Scooping Operational Principles**

14 Water scooping aircraft are valuable resources in the support of wildland fire suppression and
 15 management. The current models include the following:

16 **Table 10. Water Scooping Aircraft Capabilities**

Type	Max Capacity (gal)	Cruise (kt)	Power (hp)
Fireboss	800	140	1600
CL215T	1,300	180	4760
CL415	1,600	180	4760

17 Many scooping aircraft are capable of injecting gel or foam to the scooped load. The Air Attack must
 18 determine if water enhancers are authorized for use on the incident as some agencies and/or contracts do
 19 not approve of their use. Some of the aircraft are equipped with infrared imagery systems that may
 20 provide a more precise drop.

1 Aerial supervisors need to understand the capabilities and limitations of these aircraft. Factors such as
2 invasive species, cross-contamination, scoop site length requirements, distance from scoop site to drop,
3 terrain, visibility, wind direction, and load pickup limitations will be considered when deciding if they
4 are an appropriate resource for the mission. The PIC of each scooping aircraft will have the final
5 determination regarding scoop site and drop feasibility.

6 Water scooping aircraft will be treated the same as standard land-based airtankers for purposes of the
7 FTA. After the drop-scoop pattern is established and only when safety for all aircraft allows, it may be
8 more efficient to clear scooping aircraft into the FTA at an altitude 500 feet above their drop altitude.

9 **Additional References Related to Water Scooping Aircraft**

- 10 • *NWCG Standards for Water Scooping Operations*, PMS
11 518, <https://www.nwcg.gov/publications/518>
- 12 • FS Standards for Water Scooping Operations: [https://fs.fed.us/managing-](https://fs.fed.us/managing-land/fire/aviation/publications)
13 [land/fire/aviation/publications](https://fs.fed.us/managing-land/fire/aviation/publications)
- 14 • *Guide to Preventing Aquatic Invasive Species Transport by Wildland Fire Operations*, PMS
15 4444, <https://www.nwcg.gov/publications/444>

16 **SEAT Operational Principles**

17 For additional information see *NWCG Standards for Single-Engine Airtanker Operations*, PMS 506,
18 <https://www.nwcg.gov/publications/506>.

- 19 • Minimum SEAT drop height is 60 feet above vegetation.
- 20 • When collocated with Aerial Supervision utilize both resources for IA.
- 21 • SEATs are most effective on small, emerging incidents.
- 22 • Reduce turnaround times by setting up portable retardant base(s) as close as possible to the
23 incident.
- 24 • Efficiency is maximized when time spent over the target is minimized. LPILs typically utilize
25 the show-me and chase profiles.
- 26 • Integrate SEATs with other resources – Use SEATs in conjunction with helicopters and large
27 airtankers. SEATs may be used in flights.
- 28 • Use retardant or suppressants with SEATs – Foam and gels work well for direct attack.
- 29 • SEAT pilots are trained to apply the ASHE acronym for safe operations:
 - 30 ○ Approach
 - 31 ○ Speed and Height
 - 32 ○ Horizontal Separation
 - 33 ○ Exit

34 **Flights of Single-Engine Airtankers and Scooping Aircraft**

35 Flights of aircraft are comprised of two or more SEATs or Scoopers of the same make/model in close
36 proximity to one another operating with a common objective. Flights are not authorized by CAL FIRE.

37 There must be enough distance between aircraft to allow Aerial Supervision to convey updated
38 directions to the airtanker considering the preceding drop or a change in objectives.

1 The trailing aircraft are responsible for separation between their aircraft and the aircraft they are
2 following.

3 The lead aircraft in the flight will be primarily responsible for communications. During the initial
4 transmission to the FTA, the lead aircraft will identify themselves with their scooper number (or tanker
5 number for flight of SEATs) followed by the phrase “flight of” and then the total number of aircraft in
6 the flight (i.e., “Fire Boss 209 flight of three, with 211, and 212, twelve miles west”). Aerial supervision
7 will then communicate FTA clearance to the flight lead. The flight lead should confirm the clearance
8 and each trail aircraft will acknowledge the clearance by transmitting their call sign and respective order
9 in the flight (i.e., “212 #2”). This protocol ensures all aircraft understand the clearance and serves as a
10 radio confirmation for all aircraft in the flight.

11 Further communications will be given to the flight lead unless specific instructions need to be given to
12 other aircraft. If the same directions are given to each aircraft in the flight, such as tag and extend from
13 the existing target, each aircraft in the flight will acknowledge by transmitting their call sign in the flight
14 as appropriate. If directions are unclear to any aircraft in the flight, the pilot shall seek clarification prior
15 to the drop.

16 Any change in-flight status shall be communicated to aerial supervision utilizing call signs.

17 **Flights of Single-Engine Airtankers or Fire Bosses**

- 18 • SEATs will be given clearance in the configuration (individual or as an established flight) in
19 which they check into the FTA.
- 20 • Flights of individual SEATs will not be created within the FTA.
- 21 • Aerial Supervisors may request individual SEATs form flights outside the FTA.
- 22 • Flights will be limited to four SEATs or Fire Bosses.

23 **Helicopter Operations**

24 **Helicopter Advantages**

25 Helicopters are often a very cost-effective resource on extended attack and project incidents because of
26 the following:

- 27 • Short turnaround times.
- 28 • A Type 1 helicopter with a 3-minute turnaround can deliver upwards of 45,000 gallons per hour
29 (Boeing 234, S-64). By comparison, a Type 1 airtanker will typically deliver 2,000 to 3,000
30 gallons per hour based on a one-hour turnaround.
- 31 • Low-speed and accurate drops.
- 32 • The ability to do hover or low-speed drops makes helicopters very accurate. Helicopters are an
33 excellent choice for targets in confined airspaces or steep and dissected terrain.
34 **Caution:** Drops on steep slopes may dislodge rocks onto crews below.

35 Dip Sites

36 For an effective helicopter operation, good water sources are required. Sources can include wide-mouth
37 portable tanks. The ATGS should inventory suitable dip sites.

38 Following are considerations:

- 39 • Approaches should be into wind. Determine if wind direction is the same at hover level as it is at

1 the dip site level when using a longline.

2 • Helicopters equipped with a tank and snorkel require water depth of 18 inches to 3 feet for hover
3 filling.

4 • Be aware of any local resource concerns and fire management plan restrictions – ask the local
5 fire managers and/or dispatch for specifics.

6 • Approach, departure, and dip site must be free of hazards.

7 • Avoid fast-moving streams and rivers.

8 • Avoid contamination of water resources from buckets or snorkels that have previously been used
9 in foam or retardant dip sites and/or any other resource contamination concerns (i.e., Whirling
10 disease).

11 • On private lands, attempt to secure permission from the landowner before using a private water
12 source. This may be addressed in a pre-attack plan. Anticipate the need and secure permission
13 before the need arises.

14 • Utilize dip site managers (when available) to provide an added margin of safety at established
15 dip sites.

16 **Longline Bucket Operations**

17 • Effective for dipping out of confined sources, e.g., dip site surrounded by tall timber.

18 • Reduced rotor wash on the fire.

19 • Effective for filling portable tanks.

20 Establish Direct Communications Between Helicopters and Ground Contacts

21 If air-to-ground is too congested, request an additional air-to-ground frequency.

22 Allow Pilots to Select Drop Approach

23 • Cross-slope, usually most preferred.

24 • Downslope, second choice.

25 • Upslope or downwind, least desirable approach.

26 **Helicopter Utilization by Type**

27 • Helicopters of all types can work together if all pilots involved are comfortable with the pattern
28 and separation.

29 • Type 1 and 2 helicopters can be effective for line production.

30 • Use Type 3 helicopters on isolated targets requiring lower volumes of water.

31 Helicopter Drop Height

32 Critical in terms of accuracy, effectiveness, and effect of rotor wash on fire behavior. Look for flare-ups
33 after drops.

34 **Helicopter Delivery Systems**

35 Some systems can regulate flow rate and are capable of multiple or partial drops.

1 Buckets

2 Three basic types of buckets are:

- 3 • Rigid shell buckets – Some capable of multiple drops.
- 4 • Collapsible buckets (and foldable) – Some capable of single drop only.
- 5 • Power fill buckets – Capable of multiple drops.

6 Fixed Tanks

7 Different operators and agencies have developed a variety of tank systems. Most can be quickly attached
8 to the fuselage. The tanks are generally filled using a snorkel while the helicopter is hovering over a
9 water source. The tank can also be filled on the ground using standard cam-lock hardware. Minimum
10 water depth requirements for the snorkel fill system are 18 inches to 3 feet. Example: S-64 Sky Crane
11 with a 2,500-gallon tank, hover fills from 18 inches in 45 seconds, and provides prescribed coverage
12 level from metered flow door system).

13 Helicopters

14 Height is critical in terms of accuracy, effectiveness, and effect of rotor wash on fire behavior.
15 Helicopters must be high enough to not cause flare-ups. Forward air speed results in less rotor wash.
16 Type 1 helicopters, even with a 200-foot longline, produce strong rotor wash.

17 **Note:** Caution when mixing multiple helicopters with dissimilar delivery systems (i.e., Belly Hooked
18 Bucket, Longline, and Tanked Aircraft). Different airspeed, maneuverability, flight profile, and pilot site
19 picture have potential to impact aircraft separation. To increase safety and efficiency of the operation,
20 the aerial supervisor may request long line bucket operations be belly hooked.

21 **Helicopter Drop Patterns**

22 In a hover, a helicopter can deliver a salvo drop, while in forward flight it can deliver a trail drop.

23 **Night Helicopter Operations**

24 See Night Helicopter Operations Plan.

25 **Smokejumper Operations**

26 Smokejumper aircraft are dispatched with a standard load of 8-12 smokejumpers and equipment to be
27 self-sufficient for 48 hours. A qualified smokejumper spotter (senior smokejumper in charge of
28 smokejumper missions) may “coordinate” with on-scene aircraft over a fire until a qualified ATGS
29 arrives. See the *Interagency Smokejumper Operations Guide* (ISMOG) for further information at
30 https://www.fs.usda.gov/sites/default/files/media_wysiwyg/ismog_fss_final_26feb2018signed.pdf.

31 **Approach to the Fire**

32 Smokejumper aircraft normally approach the fire at 1,500 feet AGL (streamer drop altitude for both the
33 BLM and Forest Service).

34 **Drop Mission**

35 The drop mission is a four-part operation:

36 1. Jump Spot Selection

37 Selecting a safe jump spot sometimes requires the smokejumper airplane to make a low-level
38 pass at approximately 500 feet AGL to identify potential hazards. Letting the smokejumper

1 aircraft orbit above other tactical aircraft to view the fire area if the lower airspace is being
2 utilized can save time. Jumpers can also be deployed a short distance from the fire in order to
3 conduct simultaneous tactical operations.

4 2. Streamer Runs

5 The smokejumper aircraft will usually initiate a left-hand pattern over the selected jump spot at a
6 minimum of 1,500 feet AGL (measured from the jumper release point). One to three streamer
7 passes are conducted to verify the wind direction and speed.

8 3. Jump Runs

9 Round or ram-air parachute systems may be used. Jump runs may be conducted at 1,500 feet
10 AGL for jumpers on round canopies, or at 3,000 feet AGL for those on ram-air parachutes.
11 Loads may be mixed. When dropping mixed loads, the standard practice is to drop round
12 parachutes first then request clearance to climb to deploy the ram-air jumpers. Smokejumpers are
13 deployed in one to four person sticks depending on the size of the spot, wind, and the aircraft.

14 4. Cargo Runs

15 After the jumpers are verified safely on the ground, the airplane descends to drop the paracargo.
16 Cargo run patterns are similar in altitude to retardant drops, 150 to 200 feet over the drop point.
17 The number of passes depends on the number of jumpers deployed, size of spot, and equipment
18 needed. The spotter will notify the ATGS or LPIL of the number of passes anticipated and when
19 the mission is completed.

20 **Considerations**

21 Priorities vary on deploying resources on incidents but it is advisable to get the firefighters on the
22 ground as soon as possible. Unless extenuating circumstances dictate otherwise, let the smokejumper
23 airplane come in and perform the entire 4-part operation. If it is necessary to break into the mission to
24 deploy other tactical aircraft, interrupt the smokejumper operation between the jump spot selection and
25 streamer run, or between the last jump run and first paracargo run. Keep in mind that the jumpers need
26 their tools to be effective.

27 When other priorities and congested airspace are an issue, consider deploying the jumpers preferably
28 using non-conflicting flight patterns or when this is not practical, a short distance from the fire.

29 **Helicopter Rappel Operations**

30 Type 2 and Type 3 (National Park Service) helicopters are used for rappelling. Type 3s carry up to two
31 rappellers and a spotter; Type 2s carry up to four rappellers and a spotter.

32 **Arrival**

33 Rappel helicopters approach the incident at 200 to 500 feet AGL or the altitude assigned by the aerial
34 supervisor. Upon arrival at the incident site, they will survey the area to determine the best method to
35 deploy the firefighters. The helicopter may or may not arrive configured to rappel. Normally, the
36 helicopter is dispatched configured to rappel unless they know that a rappel is not necessary from
37 intelligence provided by personnel at the site.

38 If not configured for the rappel, the helicopter will survey the rappel location and then fly to a landing
39 site within a few miles of the incident to reconfigure for the rappel. It takes 5 to 10 minutes to
40 reconfigure.

1 **Suitable Landing Site**

2 Providing there is a suitable landing site close to the incident and the terrain, and vegetation between the
3 landing site and the incident will not inordinately delay the firefighters walking to the incident, this
4 alternative will be used versus rappelling.

5 **Rappel Operation**

6 If no landing site is available, the firefighters will rappel into the incident. The helicopter will approach
7 the selected rappel site and perform a high hover power check (above 300 feet AGL). Once this is
8 completed, they will descend to a stationary hover position at 250 feet AGL or lower (depending on the
9 height of the vegetation) and perform the rappel operation. Once all the rappellers are on the ground, and
10 their ropes released from the helicopter, the spotter deploys the cargo (cargo is sometimes deployed
11 before the rappellers).

12 **Note:** Density altitude may require the helicopter to make multiple trips to deploy partial loads. The
13 spotter will communicate this if it is a factor.

14 **Communications**

15 The pilot and spotter will monitor the Air Guard frequency at all times and the assigned tactical
16 frequency except on occasion when deploying personnel and cargo. When the tactical frequency is very
17 active, the rappel helicopter may request to not monitor this frequency because a sterile cockpit is
18 essential during the actual rappel phase. Do not communicate with the helicopter during this phase
19 unless there is an emergency.

20 **Considerations**

21 The rappel helicopter has limited fuel duration over the incident. It is helpful to survey the area prior to
22 the arrival of the rappel helicopter in order to point out potential landing sites or to relay that there are no
23 landing sites near the incident. If delays are anticipated or required, consider directing the helicopter to
24 land nearby to conserve fuel. Keep in mind that it is important to get the firefighters and their tools on
25 the incident.

26 **Water Scooper Operations**

27 **Scooping Site Requirements**

28 The water source should be free of obstructions and suitable to the PIC. The scooping path does not
29 have to be straight, as the aircraft is somewhat maneuverable while scooping. Factors such as wind,
30 elevation, and surrounding terrain will have a bearing on water source suitability. Less than a full load
31 can be scooped on slightly smaller lakes.

32 Refer to agency-specific information for additional requirements.

33 Consistency and Water Temperature

34 The consistency or aeration of the foam is affected by water temperature. A slightly higher concentration
35 may be needed for cold water and adjustments downward may be necessary for extremely warm water.

1 Evaluating Consistency

2 Foam consistency is best evaluated by ground personnel. Drops can be evaluated from the air using
3 visibility criteria. Wet foam is visible for about 5 minutes, dripping foam for about 15 minutes, and dry
4 foam is visible for 30+ minutes.

5 Environmental Limitations

- 6 • Foam is not recommended within 300 feet of lakes and streams.
- 7 • In steep drainages or sensitive areas, check local agency policy on foam use.
- 8 • When scooping during foam operations, some residual foam may flush out of the vent/overflow.
9 While very diluted, some foam may be visible on the water for a short time.
- 10 • Obtain a briefing from the IC or responsible agency on the limitations of foam use, if any, prior
11 to using.

12 Rinsing Tanks

13 Provide for two rinse loads of water before departing to a fire.

14 **USFS:** Per the contract, water scoopers shall not be loaded with chemical retardant, water enhancers, or
15 foam.

16 **Tactical Considerations**

17 Tank Configuration

18 The CL-215 has two compartments totaling 1,400 gallons, and the CL-415 has four compartments
19 totaling 1,600 gallons and Fireboss has one compartment up to 800 gallons. Loads can be dropped salvo,
20 in trail, or split into separate drops.

21 Drop Height

22 Drop height ranges from 60” to 150 feet, depending on factors such as foam vs. straight water and
23 direction of run (into wind vs. downwind).

24 **Flight Patterns and Turnaround Times**

25 Standard Flight Pattern

26 The standard flight pattern is an oval racetrack, with a scoop into the wind and a downwind drop on the
27 fire.

28 Scooping Operation

29 During the scooping operation, including approach, and departure from the lake, communications with
30 the airtanker should cease to allow the crew to concentrate on the pickup. The airtanker will call when
31 “up” or “off” the water, which will signify to the ATGS that it’s okay to transmit.

32 Traffic over the scoop area can be a source of conflict. Identifying approach and departure routes may
33 become important.

1 Chapter 9 – All Hazard Incidents

2 Fire incidents have long utilized Aerial Supervision for coordinating aerial resources. The same
3 principles of supervising and directing aircraft can be applied to other types of incidents commonly
4 referred to as “all hazard incidents.” All hazard incidents include volcanic eruptions, earthquakes,
5 search, and rescue operations, floods, oil spills, hurricanes, and spray projects.

6 Non-Wildfire Incident Aerial Supervision

7 On non-fire incidents when the level or complexity of air operations exceeds the supervisory capability
8 of the ATGS/ASM, the organization may be expanded to include a Helicopter Coordinator (HLCO). The
9 HLCO position reports to the ATGS/ASM. The roles and responsibilities are basically the same as fire
10 incidents.

- 11 • Large or complex incidents, which have a mix of fire and other disaster operations (earthquake
12 or volcanic eruption), require both an ATGS/ASM and a HLCO to coordinate and integrate the
13 mix of aviation assets.

14 Criteria for Assigning Aerial Supervision

15 Without adequate supervision and coordination air operations will very likely be less efficient, more
16 costly, and less safe. An ATGS/ASM should be assigned when an incident meets the criteria listed
17 below.

- 18 • Multiple aircraft operating in incident area airspace.
 - 19 ○ Mix of fixed-wing and helicopter operations.
 - 20 ○ Mix of low-level tactical/logistical aircraft.
 - 21 ○ Periods of marginal weather, poor visibility, or turbulence.
- 22 • Two or more branches utilizing air support.
- 23 • Mix of both civil and military aircraft operating in the same airspace or operations area.
- 24 • When conditions require airspace management, ATC, and air resource mission priority setting
25 and coordination.
- 26 • Ground stations have limited ability to communicate with flying aircraft due to terrain or long
27 distances.

28 Aerial Supervision Interaction and Communication

29 Although all hazard incidents retain the basic ICS organization and roles, there are incident specific
30 technical specialist positions added to the ICS organization to supervise, coordinate, and lead specific
31 incident functions. Aerial supervisor roles may be modified to fit the incident situation and they may be
32 coordinating directly with persons other than the traditional OSC, Division/Group Supervisor, or Strike
33 Team/Task Force Leader. It is critical that we understand the roles and responsibilities of the Technical
34 Specialist positions, how they are identified, and how our role interacts with them (chain of command,
35 communications protocol, authority, etc.).

36 Use of Military Aircraft

37 It is important to fully understand the military organization(s), their SOPs, military aircraft capabilities
38 and limitations, and how the ICS interfaces with military operations. An assigned agency Aviation
39 Military Liaison (civilian) and Military Air Operations Coordinator (civilian) will work with the AOBD
40 and Aerial supervisor in assigning and coordinating military air operations.

41 The availability of military air tactical resources may vary dramatically due to global defense strategies.
42 Refer to the *Military Use Handbook* for additional information and guidance.

Chapter 10 – Safety

Safety is the principal consideration in all aspects of Aerial Supervision. A safe aviation operation depends on accurate risk assessment and informed decision-making.

Risk levels are established by the severity of possible events and the probability that they will occur. Assessing risk identifies the hazard, the associated risk, and places the hazard in a relationship to the mission. A decision to conduct a mission requires weighing the risk against the benefit of the mission and deciding whether the risks are acceptable.

Examples of the Risk Management Process are available in the *IRPG*, the *Interagency Standards for Fire and Fire Aviation Operations* (Red Book), CAL FIRE 8300, and the *NWCG Standards for Helicopter Operations*, PMS 510, <https://www.nwcg.gov/publications/510>.

Factors to Consider During the Risk Assessment Process

- Any flight mission has a degree of risk that varies from 0% (no flight activity is conducted) to 100% (aircraft and/or personnel experience a mishap).
- The aerial supervisor must identify hazards, analyze the degree of risk associated with each, and place hazards in perspective relative to the mission or task.
- Hazards might not always be limited to the performance of flight, but may include hazards to personnel if the flight is not performed.
- The risk assessment may include the aerial supervisor, AOBD, Duty Officers, agency fire management staff, ICs, dispatchers, and Line Officers/managers.
- Ultimately, the PIC has the authority to decline a flight mission that they consider excessively hazardous.

USFS: All Forest Service flights require a risk assessment. Refer to USFS Manual 5700 and USFS Handbook 5709.16.

Mitigating Risks

In some cases the aerial supervisor may have to shut down air operations. Air operations must not proceed until risk mitigation measures are implemented. Risk mitigation measures to consider:

Modifying Air Operations

There is no way to define an exact trigger point for adjusting, downsizing, or completely suspending aviation operations. The factors listed below should be evaluated to determine whether additional Aerial Supervision resources are needed or tactical/logistical missions need to be modified/suspended:

- Complexity of aviation operations
- Communications
- Topography (fire size, position on slope, location, etc.)
- Firefighter and public safety
- Poor visibility
- Wind

- 1 • Turbulence
- 2 • Fire behavior
- 3 • Aircraft incident/accident
- 4 • Aircraft/aircrew performance

5 **Monitor the Overall Aviation Operation for Human Factors Related Issues**

- 6 • Task saturation
- 7 • Fatigue, burnout, and stress
- 8 • Normalization of risk
- 9 • Lack of situational awareness
- 10 • Mental and physical health

11 **Monitor Effectiveness of the Overall Air Operation**

- 12 • Ensure suppression objectives are truly obtainable.
 - 13 ○ Risk versus reward – Is the mission worth it?
 - 14 ○ Is there adequate ground support?
 - 15 ○ Are there adequate aerial resources?
- 16 • Is there enough time in the operational period?
- 17 • Monitor weather conditions for increasing winds, turbulence, thunderstorms, or decreasing
- 18 visibility.
- 19 • Be proactive in communicating current fire and fire weather conditions.
- 20 • Provide realistic input regarding resource needs commensurate with successful
- 21 completion/modification of incident objectives.

22 **Utilize the Appropriate Aircraft for the Mission**

- 23 • Turbine vs. piston engine
- 24 • Pressurized vs. unpressurized
- 25 • VLATs, LATs, and/or SEATs
- 26 • Consider density altitude
- 27 • Helicopter types and delivery systems
- 28 • Single-engine service ceiling

29 **Communications Planning**

30 When discrete radio frequencies are used during incident operations, ensure contact frequencies such as
31 command and air-to-ground are monitored by appropriate ground personnel. Make sure that ground
32 personnel know how to reach the aerial supervisor.

1 **Order Additional Frequencies**

2 Order additional frequencies as needed for operations; as incident complexities increase, the aerial
3 supervisor must ensure adequate radio frequency coverage. Be proactive. There can be up to a 24-hour
4 delay from the time a frequency is ordered to the time it is assigned to the incident.

5 **Establish Positive Airspace Management**

6 Hold aircraft in the air or on the ground until structured traffic patterns can be established.

7 **Span of Control**

8 Limit number of aircraft working an incident based on visibility, routing procedures, and
9 communications capabilities.

10 **Obtain Input**

11 Discuss operations safety with LPIL, HLCO, and mission pilots. Mission debriefings are an excellent
12 source of information; Air crewmembers and support personnel will utilize an AAR to critique mission
13 effectiveness.

14 **System Safety Assessment**

15 The effectiveness of risk assessment and management can be increased through utilization of the current
16 System Safety Assessment for Aerial Supervision Operations.

17 The following assessment of Aerial Supervision operations has been developed for aerial supervisors. It
18 identifies hazards, the likelihood of encountering them and the risk associated with exposure to the
19 hazard. Mitigations are listed for each hazard as well as the post mitigation risk.

20 System Safety Utilization is a standard operating procedure and covers all aspects of aerial supervision.
21 It should be used for incident operations, training, and review by agency air crewmembers.

1 Table 11. System Safety Assessment for Aerial Supervision

2 **System – Aircraft**

Subsystems	Hazards	Pre-Mitigation Likelihood	Pre-Mitigation Severity	Pre-Mitigation Outcome	Mitigation	Post Mitigation Likelihood	Post Mitigation Severity	Post Mitigation Outcome
Avionics	Avionics failure.	Occasional	Marginal	Medium	Minimum Equipment List establishes minimum requirement. Mission requirements as determined by the flight crew. Integrate into Preflight Checklist.	Improbable	Negligible	Low
	Avionics package insufficient for mission complexity.	Probable	Critical	High	Contract specifications that recognize mission requirements. Ensure necessary type, configuration, and number of radios to complete mission safely. Reduce span of control. Limit operations.	Remote	Marginal	Medium
	Contract pilot unfamiliar with avionics. (Cannot run radios or GPS, etc.).	Occasional	Marginal	Medium	Release, replace the pilot, and enforce contract specifications.	Remote	Negligible	Low
Aircraft Type	Reduced field of view for the flight crew.	Occasional	Critical	Serious	Ensure aircraft is appropriate for the mission. Flight profile altered to maximize visibility. Use of TCAS. Clear communication with other aircraft. Alter interior configuration (headrest, seat, windows).	Improbable	Negligible	Low

Subsystems	Hazards	Pre-Mitigation Likelihood	Pre-Mitigation Severity	Pre-Mitigation Outcome	Mitigation	Post Mitigation Likelihood	Post Mitigation Severity	Post Mitigation Outcome
Performance Standards	Poor engine performance (single/twin, turbine/recip) for the ATGS mission.	Occasional	Catastrophic	High	Plan for high-density altitudes. Download cargo/fuel load. Relocate to favorable location. Alter the mission. Upgrade the aircraft. Ensure aircraft is appropriate for the mission. Perform preflight planning.	Remote	Catastrophic	Serious
Contracting	Contract pilot skill/fire experience leading to substandard performance (i.e., working avionics, flight skills) during flight operations.	Remote	Critical	Medium	Thorough briefing. Ride along with veteran fire pilot. Use contract evaluation process. Contractor training. Computer-based training. Give air attack pilots a check ride every 3 years.	Improbable	Critical	Medium
Fuel	Capacity and procedure, ground-fueling errors.	Frequent	Catastrophic	High	Verify adequate volume of fuel for mission. Ensure proper fueling procedures are followed for type of aircraft.	Remote	Critical	Medium

1 **System– Flight Operations**

Subsystems	Hazards	Pre-Mitigation Likelihood	Pre-Mitigation Severity	Pre-Mitigation Outcome	Mitigation	Post Mitigation Likelihood	Post Mitigation Severity	Post Mitigation Outcome
Mission	Restricted visibility.	Frequent	Catastrophic	High	Limit exposure. Determine effectiveness of the operation (risk vs. benefit) and discontinue if warranted. Limit number of aircraft in operating area. Increase vertical/horizontal separation of aircraft.	Occasional	Critical	Serious
	Wake turbulence.	Occasional	Critical	Serious	Situational awareness assists prevention. Communication helps to avoid wake turbulence areas. Wake turbulence avoidance procedures (altitude, time, distance).	Remote	Critical	Medium
	Weather (Turbulence/wind/T-storms).	Frequent	Critical	High	Adjust tactics or shut down air operations. Increase vertical/horizontal separation of aircraft. Utilize human aided technology (weather radar, etc.). Encourage dispatch to obtain/communicate weather information. Utilize and share pilot reports of severe weather.	Occasional	Critical	Serious
	Poor fuel management.	Occasional	Critical	Serious	Monitor fuel quantities. Follow fuel transfer procedures.	Remote	Critical	Medium
	Controlled flight into terrain due to low-level operations.	Frequent	Catastrophic	High	Ensure high-level recon is completed before commencing low-level flight. Manage radio communication. Proper aircraft configuration. Reduce exposure time in low level. Consult sectional chart/hazard map and ground personnel/other aircraft (AC). Obtain unit in-brief. Utilize local knowledge.	Remote	Catastrophic	Serious
	Operating in close proximity to other aircraft (collision potential).	Frequent	Catastrophic	High	Ensure communication is established with all aircraft. Use situational awareness. Use of TCAS. Establish clear and concise directions for simultaneous operations, (virtual fence, geographic separation, altitude separation, holding/timing). Establish IPs, ingress/egress route.	Remote	Catastrophic	Serious

1 **System– Flight Operations (Cont.)**

Subsystems	Hazards	Pre-Mitigation Likelihood	Pre-Mitigation Severity	Pre-Mitigation Outcome	Mitigation	Post Mitigation Likelihood	Post Mitigation Severity	Post Mitigation Outcome
Mission	Reliance on technology causes distraction, low situational awareness, division of attention in the cockpit.	Frequent	Catastrophic	High	Maintain situation awareness. Maintain see and avoid techniques Prioritize mission/cockpit workload. Utilize CRM practices.	Remote	Catastrophic	Serious
	Aircraft emergency (engine out, fire, bird strike, mechanical failure, etc.).	Occasional	Catastrophic	High	Crew cross training and familiarization with a/c systems and emergency procedure checklists (pinch hitter/simulator training).	Remote	Catastrophic	Serious
	Exceeded span of control.	Occasional	Critical	Serious	Ensure roles and responsibilities are assigned and understood within Aerial Supervision crew. Assign aircraft to common functions and tasks with a single point of contact. Hold aircraft at base to limit the number of assigned aircraft over the incident.	Remote	Critical	Medium
	Unclear objectives / tactics.	Frequent	Critical	High	Ensure strategy and tactics are clear and understood. Use common terminology, solicit/utilize feedback.	Occasional	Critical	Serious
	ATGS performance results in hazardous operation.	Occasional	Critical	Serious	Shut down the operation, deconflict the area. Return to base to debrief the mission. Coach, proficiency check ride, retrain/recertify.	Remote	Critical	Medium
	Unnecessary exposure due to inefficient operational use of tactical aircraft.	Probable	Critical	High	Use SOPs for all tactical aircraft types. Use the right tool for job. Training, feedback, brief/debrief.	Remote	Critical	Medium
	Aircraft operating without Aerial Supervision.	Frequent	Critical	High	When Aerial Supervision is readily available (within the dispatch area/GACC), they will be ordered for the safety, effectiveness, and efficiency of ground and/or aerial firefighting operations.	Occasional	Critical	Serious

1 **System– Flight Operations (Cont.)**

Subsystems	Hazards	Pre-Mitigation Likelihood	Pre-Mitigation Severity	Pre-Mitigation Outcome	Mitigation	Post Mitigation Likelihood	Post Mitigation Severity	Post Mitigation Outcome
Airspace	FTA: Aircraft not complying with procedures.	Probable	Catastrophic	High	Aerial supervision enforces FTA procedures.	Improbable	Critical	Medium
	Multiple IA incidents in same area cause confusion; near miss hazard.	Probable	Critical	High	Coordinate with dispatch and other aircraft. Ensure fire names, frequencies, locations, and aircraft assignments are communicated to all flight crews.	Occasional	Critical	Serious
	Special use airspace: Aircraft not having authorization to enter the SUA, not coordinating with controlling agency.	Probable	Critical	High	See and avoid. Know SUA areas. Establish communication with controlling agency. Conduct thorough briefings.	Remote	Critical	Medium
	Non-incident aircraft intrusion in TFR.	Probable	Catastrophic	High	See and avoid, inform other aircraft on scene. Re-evaluate TFR promotion.	Remote	Catastrophic	Serious
	Fires in proximity to airport/airstrip. Potential for midair collision or intrusion in FTA.	Occasional	Catastrophic	High	Implement/validate TFR as incident expands, deconflict SUA, establish communication with controlling agency, notify other aircraft. Provide TFR transition corridors for non-incident aircraft on large incidents. Increase awareness of General Aviation (GA) operators and other agency flight crews not assigned to incident.	Remote	Catastrophic	Serious
Communication	Radio frequency congestion.	Frequent	Critical	High	Exercise radio discipline/order additional frequencies as needed.	Remote	Critical	Medium
	State/County/Rural resources on different bandwidth.	Probable	Critical	High	Coordinate with cooperators to find a way to communicate with one another.	Remote	Critical	Medium
	Hazardous air operations resulting from inaccurate information disseminated through the dispatch system.	Frequent	Critical	High	Verify information at time of dispatch. Flight crews will brief/debrief with dispatchers. Provide aviation training for dispatchers. Maintain qualified dispatcher on the A/C desk.	Occasional	Critical	Serious

1 Chapter 11 – Job Aids and Resources

2 Required Job Aids (LPIL/ASM)

3 A full U.S. (Contiguous United States) approach and IFR chart coverage or approved Electronic Flight
4 Bag that is FAA and agency approved.

5 Aerial Supervision Kit

6 Each aerial supervisor should have and maintain a kit. The following items are recommended to be on
7 board the aircraft:

- 8 • Knee board – Leg board/clipboard.
- 9 • Headset, flight helmet, PPE.
- 10 • Frequency guide.
- 11 • Batteries.
- 12 • Flashlight.
- 13 • Camera.
- 14 • Overnight bag.

15 Consider electronic tablet with charging cables and or external power supply, which contain the
16 following items:

- 17 • Maps.
 - 18 ○ Current FAA sectional chart coverage area.
 - 19 ○ Agency maps.
 - 20 ○ Local hazard map (from Airtanker Base Manager or Dispatch).
 - 21 ○ Incident map (updated daily).
- 22 • Air Tactical forms – at <https://www.nwcg.gov/publications/505>.
 - 23 ○ Fire sizeup.
 - 24 ○ Mission Checklist.
 - 25 ○ ATGS/LPIL/ASM evaluation.
 - 26 ○ Initial Attack/Extended Attack ATGS form.
 - 27 ○ SEAT Pilot Mission Documentation Log.
 - 28 ○ Aerial Supervision Transition Checklist.
 - 29 ○ LPIL, ASM, or ATGS Mission Log.
 - 30 ○ Airtanker Briefing Checklist.
 - 31 ○ Aerial Supervision Cost Summary.
 - 32 ○ Pilot Flight time and Duty Day Tracking.
 - 33 ○ Scripts.
 - 34 ○ SAS.

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While they may still contain current or useful information, previous editions are obsolete. The user of this information is responsible for confirming that they have the most up-to-date version. NWCG is the sole source for the publication.

This publication is available electronically at <https://www.nwcg.gov/publications/505>.

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