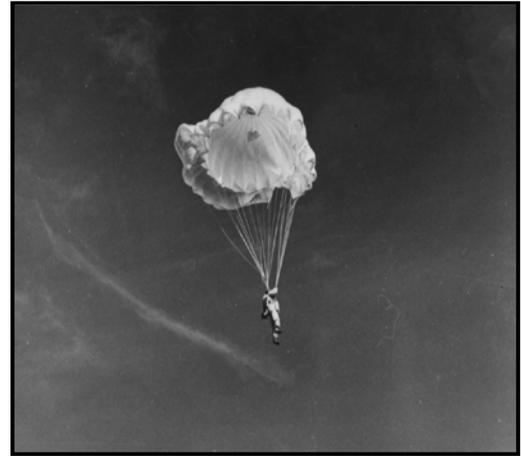


Smokejumping

Forest Service officials first began to think about dropping fire fighters by parachutes to fires in the 1930's, but the idea was discarded as being too dangerous and impractical. It wasn't long until the Forest Service decided to give it a try and in 1939 parachute-jumping experiments began. Before any live jumps were done, dummy drops were made into timbered areas to determine what problems the jumpers might encounter. Soon the stage was set for the first operational use of smokejumpers. The first actual fire jump in the history of smokejumping was made by Rufus Robinson and Earl Cooley from Moose Creek Ranger Station to Marten Creek on the Nez Perce National Forest on July 12, 1940.



Rip cord jump with an Eagle parachute at Moose Creek in 1940.
Earl Cooley photograph.

Twin Otter dropping smokejumpers on a fire, nd.
USFS photograph.



Grangeville Smokejumpers and a PB4Y2 at Grangeville Airbase, 1990's.
USFS photograph.



Smokejumper on Rattlesnake Fire, 2007.
USFS photograph.

An airbase was established at Grangeville in 1952. It became a permanent smokejumper base in 1972. Today there are about 30 smokejumpers stationed at the Grangeville Air Center. Aircraft have evolved over the years from the single radial engine powered Steerman to the twin turbine engine STOL Twin Otter used today.