

**Forest Service Handbook
National Headquarters - Washington Office
Washington, DC**

**Forest Service Handbook 5709.16 – Aviation Management Handbook
Chapter 10 – Aviation Business**

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Responsible Staff:

Explanation of changes: Following is an explanation of the changes throughout the directive by section.

10 - This amendment substantially revises the entire chapter to better align with the Forest Service mission.

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10 – Aviation Business

Forest Service (agency) aviation business is structured around plans; agreements; contracts; reports; inquiries; reviews and audits; and policy. Aviation business components provide standardized structure, organization, and accountability to the overall Forest Service Aviation Program.

For further direction, refer to FSM 5700 and FSH 5709.16.

10.1 – Authority

Refer to FSM 5701.

10.2 – Objectives

Refer to FSM 5702.

10.3 – Policy

Refer to FSM 5703.

10.31 – Civil and Public Aircraft Operations

Forest Service aviation activities include both “civil” and “public” operations.

10.31a – Civil Aircraft Policy

All Forest Service aircraft operations are civil unless specifically designated public. All aircraft other than public aircraft are considered civil aircraft per 14 U.S. Code of Federal Regulations (14 CFR), Part 1.1. Civil aircraft operations must comply with FSM 5703.2, 5703.3, and 5703.4.

10.31b – Public Aircraft Operations

Public aircraft operations (PAO) will be the exception. The definition for Public Aircraft can be found in the FSM 5705 and 14 CFR, Part 1.1. The Forest Service will comply with all 14 CFRs in the operation and maintenance of public aircraft with the few exceptions outlined in the Grants of Exemption in FSH 5709.16, Chapter 30.2. Public aircraft operations must comply with FSM 5703.2, 5703.3, and 5703.4.

The FAA considers all contracted aircraft operations to be civil aircraft operations, subject to all Federal aviation regulations, unless certain criteria are met. PAOs are determined under the terms of the statute, 49 U.S.C. 401102 (a) (41) and 40125. Public aircraft status is not automatic. Many of the missions conducted by the Forest Service may be PAO as defined by the statute and include firefighting, law enforcement, and biological or geological resource management.

PAO flights must be conducted in compliance with applicable 14 CFR (Federal Aviation Regulations) as directed in Forest Service policy and applicable contract requirements. The FAA

retains total oversight and enforcement authority for any Civil Aircraft Operation that may also be conducted under contract.

10.32 – Grants of Exemption

The FAA granted Exemption No. 392 and 392A to permit the Forest Service to deviate from the provisions of the 14 CFRs, to the extent the Chief of the Forest Service finds necessary, for the expeditious conduct of operations subject to limitations stated in this specific exemption.

Refer to FSH 5709.16, Chapter 30.2.

10.4 – Responsibility

10.41 – Washington Office, Branch Chief, Aviation Business Operations

Refer to FSM 5704.

10.42 – Washington Office Aviation Management Specialists

The Aviation Management Specialist(s) report to the Washington Office Branch Chief, Aviation Business Operations and has the responsibility to:

1. Manage the complete portfolio of the aviation budget, and develop processes to bring more transparency and oversight to individual project expenditures to prevent fiscal overspending.
2. Lead or participate with other FAM leadership and aviation managers to develop and recommend aviation related programs, plans, studies, and specific actions.
3. Participate in FAM program and activity reviews to evaluate conformance with Service-wide direction, responsiveness of aviation programs, management needs, opportunities, cost-effectiveness, and safety.
4. Represent aviation management to assure that aviation concerns and interests are adequately provided for in activities as affirmative action, recruitment, safety, and interagency cooperation.
5. Respond or coordinate responses to aviation-related correspondence, appeals, protests, congressional inquiries, audits, and requests for information, analysis, or comment.
6. Initiate and coordinate development of aviation management data systems to track costs and utilization of aviation operations.
7. Participate in the development and implementation of aviation policy, guides, and decision memos.

8. Meet the training requirements for aviation managers as defined by current Forest Service Aviation Policy and the Interagency Aviation Training Guide.

10.5 – Definitions

Refer to FSM 5705 and the National Aviation Safety Management System Guide (NASMSG).

10.6 – References

Refer to FSM 5706.

10.7 – Quality Assurance

Refer to FSM 5717.

11 – Planning

Reserved.

11.1 –Aviation Safety and Management Plans

The National Aviation Safety and Management Plan (NASMP) serves as a first tier document for Forest Service programs, Regions, Forests, and Units with aviation activities. Regions, Forests, and Units must create annual supplements to responsibilities and administrative procedures. These supplements may be more restrictive, but they must not make responsibilities and administrative procedures less restrictive.

The Regions/Area must supplement the NASMP. The Forests/Stations, FHP, LEI, and other Forest Service programs that utilize aviation must supplement the NASMP/regional aviation supplements.

The color codes below are used by aviation programs while supplementing this document:

1. Washington Office (Black)
2. Regions/Area (Red)
3. Forests/Stations (Green)
4. Forest Health Protection (Brown)
5. Law Enforcement and Investigations (Blue)
6. Other Forest Service program areas that utilize aviation (Purple)

All supplements, except for National, must be reviewed by the relevant Regional/Area Aviation Officer and Regional/Area Aviation Safety Manager. For minimum plan requirements, refer to FSM 5711.2.

11.2 – Aircraft Acquisition

Aircraft (fixed-wing, helicopter, and unmanned) transfer and acquisition must be approved by the Washington Office Director, Fire and Aviation Management (FAM).

1. The Regional Aviation Officer must request acquisition of aircraft to the Assistant Director, Aviation Management. Acquisition of an aircraft requires an Aviation Business Case initiated by Washington Office Aviation Management.
2. The Washington Office Aviation Management must initiate all aircraft transfers and acquisitions using an Office of Management and Budget, OMB Circular A-11, Business Case (Aviation Business Case).
3. An Integrated Project Team will be designated to develop Aviation Business Cases.
4. Aviation Business Cases will be recommended by the Director, FAM and approved by the Deputy Chief, State and Private Forestry. Additional review and approvals may be required by the agency, the Department of Agriculture, and OMB.
5. Aviation Business Cases for all Forest Service aircraft must be formally revalidated every 5 years.

11.21 – Replacement Aircraft Aviation Business Cases

Aviation business cases for replacement of current WCF aircraft, using WCF funds and/or program funds, must be approved by the Deputy Chief, State and Private Forestry, and must be kept on file for OMB review.

11.3 – Homeland Security Response Plans

11.31 – Regional Homeland Security Response Plan

Each Region must develop a Homeland Security Response Plan that details the security actions that each Region will implement, based upon the Homeland Security threat level. The Regional Homeland Security Response Plan must be reviewed by the Fire and Aviation Management staff, Washington Office. The Regional Homeland Security Response Plans are approved by the Regional Fire Director.

Refer to FSH 5709.16, chapter 38.33.

11.32 – Facility Homeland Security Response Plan

Each aviation facility must develop a Facility Homeland Security Response Plan that is specific to that aviation facility and details the security actions the facility will take for each Homeland Security threat level. The Facility Homeland Security Response Plan must be reviewed by the FAM staff, Washington Office. The Facilities Homeland Security Response Plan is approved by the appropriate Forest Supervisor annually.

Refer to FSH 5709.16, chapter 38.34.

11.4 – Aviation Mishap Response Plans

Forest Service local units must establish procedures to respond to an emergency, documented in an Aviation Mishap Response Plan. The Interagency Aviation Mishap Response Guide and Checklist (PMS 503) must be used as the template for Forest Service aviation mishap response planning. Contact information in the Interagency Aviation Mishap Response Guide and Checklist will be updated annually by April 1st of each year. Forest Aviation Officers utilizing aircraft must develop and annually update the Interagency Aviation Mishap Response Guide and Checklist specific to their unit.

11.41 – Aviation Crash Rescue Plan

Locations with aviation activity must have a formalized Crash Rescue Plan appropriate to the size and scope of their specific operations. This plan must include, at a minimum:

1. Objectives;
2. Locations including remote operating areas;
3. Responsibilities;
4. Equipment;
5. Emergency Communication Plan;
6. Staffing; and
7. Training – for simulated emergencies.

11.5 – Programmatic Aviation Operations Plans

The Washington Office Branch Chief, Aviation Operations, is responsible for developing and maintaining these aviation operational plans, with supplements from the Branch Chiefs, Pilot Standardization, Airworthiness, Aviation Safety Management System, and Aviation Business Operations.

The Regions will supplement these plans where appropriate.

In addition to the minimum requirements listed above, the Fixed-Wing and Helicopter Operations Plans, and Aviation Base Operations Plans consist of the specific programs listed in FSM 5707.

All permanent locations conducting aviation operations must develop an Airbase Operations Plan, to be approved by the appropriate Washington Office/Regional/Forest Aviation Officer. Airbase Operations Plans must be developed and updated annually to address aircraft operations.

These plans should include, at a minimum:

1. Authority;
2. Objectives;
3. Aircraft (quantity, make/model, type);
4. Funding;
5. Contracts;
6. Aircraft Program Management;
7. Program sustainment;
8. Mission requirements;
9. Facilities;
10. Safety Management System;
11. Staffing; and
12. Logistics.

11.6 – Mission Aviation Safety Plan

Elements of a Mission Aviation Safety Plan are:

1. Supervision. Identify the qualified Mission/Project Aviation Manager.
2. Mission/Project Name and Objectives. Provide a brief description of the project and its objectives.
3. Justification. Indicate why the mission/project will require the use of aircraft in special-use flight conditions/environments and list the most practical alternatives for completion of the project.
4. Mission/Project Date(s). State the date(s) the mission/project will begin and end. These may be approximate, since exact dates of flight may not be known at the beginning of the year.
5. Location. Enter the descriptive location and include a map clearly showing the area where flight(s) will be made; aerial hazards must be clearly indicated.
6. Mission/Projected Cost of Aviation Resources. Enter cost coding, projected flight hours and cost, projected miscellaneous expenses (such as overnight charges or service truck mileage) and total cost of the project.

7. Aircraft. If known, identify vendor(s) that own aircraft to be used, registration number, aircraft type, aircraft data card expiration date and missions for which the aircraft is approved.

8. Pilot(s). If known, identify pilot(s), type of aircraft qualified in, type of missions qualified for and pilot card expiration date.

9. Participants. List individuals involved in flight(s), their qualifications (such as Helicopter Manager, Passenger(s), Helibase Manager, or Fixed-Wing Flight Manager), dates of their last aviation training and their project responsibilities.

10. Flight Following and Emergency Search-and-Rescue. Identify the procedures to be used.

11. Aerial Hazard Analysis. Provide an aerial hazard analysis for each flight with an attached map.

- a. Require a prior ground and/or aerial hazards survey for flights made in confined areas (such as deep, narrow canyons).

- b. Brief the aerial hazard map with the pilot and provide a copy to the pilot prior to any project flights.

- c. Accomplish necessary planning concerning temporary flight restrictions (TFRs) and coordination with the Federal Aviation Administration and military authorities (if appropriate) prior to project flights.

12. Protective Clothing/Equipment. Identify the protective equipment and clothing necessary for the particular operation and any survival equipment (such as extra water, flotation devices, or sleeping bags) beyond the normal Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) complement that may be required.

13. Load Calculations and Weight-and-Balance.

- a. Include the Load Calculations provided by the pilot, who is responsible for the accurate completion of load calculations.

- b. Ensure that trained aviation personnel have determined that the scheduled aircraft are capable of performing the mission(s) safely and within the capabilities of the type of aircraft needed.

- c. Ensure that manifests and load calculations/weight-and-balance calculations are completed and noted properly by the Helicopter Manager or Fixed-wing Flight Manager as appropriate per the contract, 14 CFR and FSH 5709.16, chapter 30.

14. Risk/Hazard Assessment. Complete a Risk/Hazard Assessment that identifies hazards associated with the operation and the mitigations and controls put in place to

reduce or eliminate them. The process for completing this assessment is found in the USDA Forest Service Operational Risk Management Guide.

11.7 – Approvals for Aviation Program Startup/Change Requests

All aviation program startup/change requests must be submitted to the appropriate Washington Office Aviation Branch Chief. Examples of aviation program startup/change requests are:

1. New or changed equipment (aircraft, parachute, and so forth.)
2. New contract change (such as, VLAT, LFS Helicopter, Master Spec, and so forth)
3. New or changed process or procedure (such as, rappel standardization, pilot standardization, and so forth)
4. Deviation from standards (such as, LEI exemption, Wire Strike Protection System, and so forth)
5. New or changed policy (for example, doctrinal policy changes, 100 hour, turbine single engine, and so forth)

For the specific steps required to initiate a startup/change request, refer to the National Aviation Safety and Management Plan, 3.20.

12 – Risk Assessments

Risk Management is a critical component of the agency's ASMS. Key risk management processes outlined below all work with and build off each other to allow for continual improvement. The Agency risk management process will strive for continuous improvement through proactive learning from the field. Identification of new hazards, determination of risk levels, and effectiveness of mitigations must be collaborated from the local level through the Regional aviation staff to the Washington Office.

Refer to the NASMAG Chapter 3.

12.1 – Strategic Risk Assessment

Strategic risk assessments examine system-wide design and functions as an interconnected process. Strategic risk assessments are conducted by the Washington Office with Regional, program, and subject matter expert involvement.

Strategic risk assessments produce a permanent record of findings and decisions used for long-term planning, organizational decision making, training, and aviation operations. These are maintained by the Washington Office Aviation staff.

The product representing strategic risk assessment is the Risk Management Workbook and the processes to keep that document relevant. Decisions on accepting or rejecting strategic risk are made at the Washington Office level by the accountable executive.

Refer to the NASMSG Guide Chapter 3.

12.2 – Deliberate Risk Assessment

Deliberate risk assessments focus on specific mission planning, hazard risk management and will be developed and reviewed prior to operations.

The product representing deliberate risk assessment is the MASP. This is where risk is evaluated at the Forest and regional level and an informed risk decision is made by a line officer to accept or reject the risk.

In developing the MASP, as new risk hazards are identified or new mitigation measures discovered, users should incorporate them into mission planning.

MASP should be reviewed by the RAO and RASM. If a user should encounter a new risk hazard at any point of the operation (including pre-planning), operations should be suspended until mitigations can be implemented.

The goals of deliberate risk assessment are to reduce the level of risk as low as reasonably practicable (ALARP) and to provide the approving Line Officer with information to make an informed risk decision.

Refer to the NASMSG Chapter 3.

12.3 – Time Critical Risk Assessment

Time critical risk assessment is the tool that pilots and managers use to assess actual risks specific to the day of flight.

The product representing a time critical risk assessment is a Flight Risk Assessment Tool (FRAT). FRAT is a general term encompassing multiple tools, examples are Green, Amber, Red (GAR), and Operational Risk Management (ORM) worksheets. Time critical decisions on accepting or rejecting risk are made at an operational level by those executing the mission.

A FRAT documents the time critical risk management process of mission planning. A FRAT must be completed at a minimum prior to the first flight of the day, and any time significant changes to any one of the five M's (man, machine, medium, mission, management) occurs in the mission.

While completing a FRAT, if an emerging hazard or higher than expected risk level is identified, the Aviation Manager (for example a helicopter manager, flight manager, project aviation manager, pilot in command), must follow up with the appropriate management level before a mission commences. A FRAT will be reviewed by all project participants and signed (including pilot) and will be retained after mission use and archived by Units for documentation and quality assurance.

While utilizing a FRAT, as new hazards are identified or new mitigation measures discovered, users should incorporate them into mission planning.

Time critical risk assessment and mitigation processes used to complete a FRAT must be conducted throughout the execution of the mission without necessarily recording the information.

Refer to the NASMSG, Chapter 3.

12.4 – Strategic Risk Assessment Close-Out Process

Once the Strategic Risk Assessment has been completed, the Assistant Director, Aviation, and Assistant Director, Risk Management will deliver the final product to the Director, Fire and Aviation Management. The Director will provide direction for the risk assessment report to be reviewed.

The Strategic Risk Assessment Close-out Working Group (SRACOW) will establish a Subject Matter Expert (SME) group of no more than five SMEs. The SME group will be given direction, parameters and timelines to review the report; identify mitigations that are one time effort and those that are on-going; assess individual mitigation's effectiveness and implementation cost and to develop a Quality Assurance (QA) checklist for long-range monitoring. The SME group will provide the SRACOW with these products in the established timelines.

The SRACOW will review, and either accept the SME products, or a back-and-forth coordination will begin to develop acceptable products. Once the SRACOW agrees on an acceptable QA checklist, the SRACOW will provide the Assistant Director, Aviation and Assistant Director, Risk Management with documentation on the completion of the project. The Assistant Directors will deliver the final product to the Director of Fire and Aviation for Deputy Chief, State and Private Forestry signature. Strategic Risk Assessments should be closed out and formally completed no later than one year from the date of tasking to the SRACOW. A bulleted representation of the process is below:

1. Aviation Strategic Risk Assessment completed and assigned to the SRACOW with the expectation of being formally closed out within one year (Director FAM).
2. Develop SME Group and provide clear direction of assigned tasks (SRACOW). Identify on-going and one time mitigations and assess their viability. (SME)
 - a. Develop QA Checklist (SME).
 - b. Provide products back to SRACOW (SME).
3. Review, validate and either accept or return SME products (SRACOW). Pass Back Process if needed.
4. Once acceptable products are developed, formally complete and close out the risk assessment through documentation to the Assistant Director, Aviation and the Assistant Director, Risk Management (SRACOW).

13 – Cooperator Approvals and Agreements

The Regional Aviation Officer in coordination with the appropriate Office of Aviation Services Regional Director must send an annual pre-season letter under dual (Regional Aviation Officer and OAS Regional Director) signature to all Cooperators in their region using the approved interagency pre-season letter template.

The Regional Aviation Officer in coordination with the appropriate Office of Aviation Services Regional Director must send an approval letter under dual (Regional Aviation Officer and OAS Regional Director) signature to Cooperators who intend to provide aircraft, pilots and equipment for use on federally protected lands using the approved interagency approval letter template.

All cooperators must be under a Master Agreement or Memorandum of Understanding prior to conducting work for the Forest Service.

14 – Aviation Contracts

Refer to FSM 5714.

14.1 – Aircraft Contract Coordination

All Nationally-funded exclusive-use aircraft contracts will be coordinated between the Washington Office and the Regional Office. The Washington Office will have oversight and approval for all exclusive use aircraft contracts to ensure expenditure of the funds is aligned with leaders' intent and the agency budget.

Refer to the Washington Office Aviation Contracting Desk Reference for direction on the acquisition processes for aircraft and other aviation services contracts. The desk reference is available from Washington Office Aviation Staff or Washington Office Acquisition Management, Incident Support Branch staff.

14.2 – Flight Services Contracts

Exclusive Use contracts are used when the agency has a definite aircraft or aviation service needed for a specific period of time. During the Mandatory Availability Period (MAP), the aircraft or aviation service is made available for the exclusive use of the Government.

Call-When-Needed contracts, Basic Ordering Agreements, and Blanket Purchase Agreements are a way for the agency to have a ready access to a pool of aircraft and aviation services that meet a minimum standard. These assets are usually used for non-recurring missions or aviation services, or during periods of surge activity often related to wildland fire suppression. The disadvantages of these types of contract instruments are that the aircraft or aviation services may not be available when needed.

Indefinite Delivery, Indefinite Quantity (IDIQ) contracts are often used for aircraft or aviation services, such as transportation of cargo or personnel, seeding, wildlife surveys, or aerial

application of pesticides. Inherent in an IDIQ contract is an unknown component of usage while maintaining a minimum guarantee which limits the Government's obligation under the contract.

Use flight services contracts when appropriate as identified in 14.4 – Exhibit 1.

14.21 – Contract Aviation Master Template

All aviation contracts must use a Nationally-approved Aviation Master Template (also known as Master Spec). Regions may request supplement revisions through the appropriate Regional Aviation Officer to the applicable Washington Office Program Manager for consideration by the RAO/WO Branch Chief Council.

14.3 – End Product Contracts

An end-product contract is intended to efficiently and effectively accomplish certain projects with no internal operational controls or specifications from the Forest Service. An end product contract requires the project be completed, but does not specifically define how the project is to be accomplished. Certain aviation operations, such as aerial application of herbicides and insecticides, seed, fertilizer, prescribed burn projects, horses gathered, bridge building, and some Burned Area Emergency Rehabilitation (BAER) projects may be administered in a more efficient and less expensive manner if contracted on an end-product basis, instead of through an agency flight services contract. The end product project may be accomplished using aircraft or not.

Participation by Forest Service employees in end-product contracts is limited to contract administration and quality assurance of the end product goals only.

The decision to use an end-product contract removes the Forest Service from having operational control, thereby placing accountability for any aircraft accident with the operator/contractor.

Use end product contracts when appropriate as identified in 14.4 – Exhibit 1.

14.4 – Determination of Flight Services and End-Product Contracts

Determine if a project requires a flight services or an end-product contract using 14.4 – Exhibit 1.

14.4 – Exhibit 1 – End Product

If the answer is YES to any question below you must use the flight services process and contract. If the answers are NO, you may use the end-product contract.	Aerial photo remote sensing	Aerial application (spray/seed)	Aerial Ignition	Animal capture (net gun, dart, paintball, etc.)	Animal herding/gathering	Your project *
Are agency personnel going to be on the aircraft for this mission? (1)						
Is a helicopter manager required for this mission? (3)						
Is a “Fixed-Wing Flight Manager” or “flight manager” required for this? (4)						
Are you asking or requiring (written or verbal) the pilot/crew to wear PPE? (5)						
Are you asking for aircraft and pilot requirements (i.e. Cessna 206, or pilot must have PPE and Flight helmet)? (6)						
Are you requiring “pilot standards”? (7)						
Are you directing aircraft maintenance? (8)						
Are you controlling or directing aircraft “movement” (telling the aircraft where to go, how to do the project, how often to check in)? (9)						
Are you requesting exclusive control? Is the aircraft already under government contract? (10)						

14.4 – Exhibit 1 – End Product – Continued

* This may include incidental use of aircraft for various missions not identified in the exhibit. When evaluating such missions, local or regional aviation managers can assist in making decisions on type of procurement to use.

1. Agency personnel are assuming operational control of the mission from the aircraft.
2. The Agency has operational control of the mission if agency personnel are managing the aircraft. Helicopter Manager requirements are listed in the **NWCG Standards for Helicopter Operations**.
3. Fixed-Wing Flight Manager or Flight Manager requirements are listed in FSH 5709.16.
4. Requiring personal protective equipment (PPE) assigns operational control to the agency. This is a vendor decision for an end-product contract.
5. Asking for these requirements assumes operational control by the agency. This is a vendor decision for an end-product contract.
6. By placing “pilot standards” (for example, a pilot must have minimum 50 hours in make/model aircraft to be flown) the agency is not only asking for an aircraft to perform the mission, it is also assuming “operational control.” The vendors place their own controls on the mission for the end-product contract.
7. By directing aircraft maintenance (verbal or written) the agency assumes “operational control.” This is a vendor decision for an end-product contract.
8. Controlling or directing aircraft “movement” assumes operational control by the agency. For an end-product contract, simply state that the project starts by X date and finishes by Y date. Have vendor call before the start of the project and notify dispatch (to warn other aircraft working on forest/unit).

14.4 – Exhibit 1 – End Product – Continued

9. The aircraft cannot be under the exclusive control of the government for an end-product contract. For example:
 - a. Under an end-product contract, NEVER use any flight services contracted aircraft, such as an exclusive use or Call When Needed (CWN) helicopter, that is currently working under that contract. However, if the helicopter is released from contract, the end-product contractor could hire the same vendor to perform the end-product service.
 - b. Under an end-product contract, participation by agency employees is limited to end-product contract administration only.
 - c. Agency Grants of Exemption (Refer to FSH 5709.16, Chapter 30.2) from the Department of Transportation, Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) regulations, do not apply to end-product contracts. If departures from applicable regulations are necessary, the contractor is responsible for obtaining them.

15 – Aircraft Administration

15.1 – Working Capital Fund Aircraft

The purpose of the WCF is to provide a sustainable funding mechanism for the operation and replacement of agency owned aircraft that support fire suppression and non-fire aviation activities. WCF aircraft are subject to the same regulations regarding capitalization, de-capitalization, and depreciation as other WCF non-expendable personal property.

The Working Capital Fund Accounting Operations Handbook, FSH 6509.11f provides greater detail on how to accomplish day-to-day management, operations, and tasks. The WCF Aircraft User Guide will provide more aircraft specific information.

Refer to US Forest Service Working Capital Fund User Guide for additional WCF information.

15.11 – Other Reports

Office of Management and Budget A-126 and Departmental Regulation (DR) 5400-4 require USDA agencies to annually review the continuing need for aircraft and cost effectiveness of aircraft operations. When the continued use of an aircraft is not fully justified, agencies should release underutilized aircraft. The Washington Office, Director of Fire and Aviation Management, is responsible for the review.

15.2 – Contract Aircraft

15.21 – Contract and Rental Agreement Requirements and Approvals

Requirements for contract or rental agreement pilot and aircraft approvals are as follows:

1. Obtain and utilize contract aviation services only from contractors properly certificated under 14 CFR for the type operation to be conducted.
2. If agency personnel are to be carried, the contractor shall be certified under 14 CFR, Part 135 or 121, as applicable.
3. Aircraft and pilots must be specifically approved by authorized agency or interagency aircraft or pilot inspectors.
4. All requirements and specifications in the contract must be adhered to and not conflict with policy.

15.22 – Contract Aircraft Requirements

Refer to FSH 5709.16, Chapter 40.

15.3 – Cooperator and Partner Aircraft

When utilizing cooperator and partner aircraft:

1. Use of Tribal, State, or local government and military aircraft must be approved with a Cooperator Approval Letter.
2. Proposed use of these aircraft should be requested through the Forest Aviation Officer to the Regional Aviation Officer.
3. Partner (DOI agencies) aircraft must be approved by an OAS Airplane, Helicopter, or Unmanned Aircraft System (UAS) Data Card.

For cooperator aircraft standards, refer to FSH 5709.16, Chapter 40.

15.31 – Cooperator Approval Letter

All cooperator approvals must utilize the approved Cooperator Approval Letter template. The template is available from the Washington Office Branch Chief, Aviation Operations.

15.32 – Equipment

Refer to FSH 5709.16, chapter 40.

15.32a – Smokejumper and Paracargo Aircraft

Refer to FSH 5709.16, chapter 40.

15.33 – Avionics

Refer to FSH 5709.16, chapter 40.

15.4 – Federal Excess Personal Property (FEPP) Aircraft

The FEPP program refers to Forest Service owned property that is on loan to cooperators for the purpose of wildland and rural firefighting. Once acquired by the Forest Service, it is loaned to eligible cooperators for firefighting purposes. Approximately 70% of FEPP is sub-loaned to local fire departments. For policy guidance regarding FEPP, refer to FSH 3109.12 (aviation specific FSH 3109.14, ch. 40), the FEPP Desk Guide, chapter 40.

The RAO may:

1. Review all State aviation operations plans for compliance with Forest Service and State excess property direction.
2. Help establish minimum standards for pilot qualifications and maintenance for excess property aircraft.

3. Coordinate and/or establish an approved source of parts for excess property aircraft, such as the Department of Defense (DOD).
4. Review State security risk assessments and mitigation plans.
5. Review all acquisition documents prior to transfer of aircraft.

The RASM may:

Review safety program documents.

15.5 – Aircraft Cost and Use Reporting

15.51 – Aviation Business System

Aviation Business System (ABS) must be used to electronically document and process all aviation costs and use. ABS can be accessed at <https://apps.fs.usda.gov/ibs>. ABS is a web based application used by the Forest Service to electronically document and process all contract aviation costs and use. A disconnected client, non-web limited component version, of the application is available for remote use. Some UAS operations may not utilize ABS. Refer to the UAS Operations Plan for direction regarding UAS costs and use.

Aviation Management Information System (AMIS), must be used to electronically document and process all Working Capital Fund (agency owned) aircraft by the unit responsible for managing that aircraft, until ABS is capable of accepting WCF aircraft. AMIS can be accessed at <http://famweb.nwcg.gov/>. Instructions are available in the FAMWEB Help Menu.

End-product contract aircraft costs and use will not be entered into ABS or AMIS.

It is expected that aircraft cost and use data will be entered daily into ABS to assure prompt payment to aircraft vendors.

Data entered into AMIS, reports from ABS, and working capital fund fiscal data from the National Finance Center must be used by the Washington Office, Fire and Aviation Management staff to submit the required inventory, usage, standby, and cost reports into the Federal Aviation Interactive Reporting System (FAIRS) on a quarterly basis.

15.52 – Flight

FLIGHT is the mandatory agency Airtanker Base system of record. It must be used to electronically document and process all aircraft flight and retardant use. FLIGHT can be accessed by requesting an account on the National Interagency Fire Enterprise Geospatial Platform at <https://egp.nwcg.gov/egp>.

FLIGHT is a single program of record for reporting in a web-based infrastructure that meets department security and 508 requirements. It interfaces with the Integrated Reporting of Wildland-Fire Information (IRWIN) for incident information and allows for the capture of daily information in a standardized format with real-time data storage and recovery. FLIGHT also provides an avenue for aviation field personnel to document and share operational information.

It is expected that Airtanker Base aircraft flight and retardant use will be entered daily into FLIGHT as well as the necessary inputs also placed into ABS. Information from FLIGHT will assist agency personnel in validating retardant invoices prior to vendor payment.

15.6 – Documentation of Administrative Use of Aircraft

Refer to Administrative Use of Aircraft Desk Reference.

15.7 – Retention of Performance Planning and Manifest Documentation

As required by Federal Management Regulation, the following documentation requirements must be adhered to:

1. On incidents, helicopter managers must submit manifests and load calculations and/or any changes in manifests to the helibase manager, who will submit the documents to the Planning Section, Documentation Unit Leader. Documentation must be retained for 24 months.
2. On units, helicopter manifests and load calculations and/or any changes in manifests must be retained at the unit level for 24 months.
3. On incidents and units, fixed-wing manifests and/or any changes in manifests must be documented on the Aircraft Flight Request/Schedule or equivalent document by the originating unit and retained there for 24 months.
4. At the origin of each fixed-wing flight, a complete weight and balance computation and a cargo-loading manifest must be prepared. Units must retain weight and balance documentation for 30 days from the time of flight.

16 – Record Keeping

16.1 – Record Keeping Policy

Refer to FMR102-33.165 and FSH 6209.11_42_5000.

16.11 –Aviation Records

The originating unit must retain aviation records pertaining to aviation activities and operations, including manifests, load calculations, weight and balance, and aviation personnel qualifications.

16.12 – Record Keeping Requirements

Aviation records must be retained for ten (10) years per FSH 6209.11.

16.2 – Reports and Inquiries

Refer to FSM 5716.1 and FSM 5716.2.

17 – Reviews and Quality Assurance

Refer to FSM 5717 and FSH 5709.16, chapter 30.17.

18 – Awards

18.1 – Aviation Awards

Individuals and organizations may be recognized with awards for exceptional acts or service in support of agency aviation safety and aircraft mishap prevention. There are two categories of aviation safety awards: individual and unit. The award should be commensurate with the service or act (FSH 6109.13, ch. 30).

18.2 – National Aviation Award

The National Aviation Award is for individual(s) and/or group(s) whose achievements or high-quality performance, in support of aviation, merit recognition for their contribution to the Forest Service aviation management program. Accomplishments may include:

1. Innovation in aviation operations, technology, and equipment;
2. Application of doctrine;
3. Best practices which provide superior results to enhance safety and efficiency; and
4. Application of Safety Management Systems.

Individuals or groups may be nominated for the National Aviation Award at the National, Regional, Area, Forest, and Station levels. The nomination must include a justification statement and be submitted to the Washington Office Assistant Director, Aviation, for approval.

Award selections will be submitted by the Washington Office Assistant Director, Aviation, to the Washington Office, Office of Communications for the weekly report.

18.3 – Regional Aviation Award

The Regional Aviation Award is for individual(s) and/or group(s) whose achievements or high-quality performance in support of aviation merit recognition for their contribution to the Forest Service regional aviation management program. Accomplishments may include:

1. Innovation in aviation operations, technology, and equipment;
2. Application of doctrine;
3. Best practices which provide superior results to enhance safety and efficiency; and
4. Application of Safety Management Systems.

Individuals or groups may be nominated for the Regional Aviation Award at the Regional or Forest levels. The nomination must include a justification statement and be submitted to the RAO for approval.

18.4 – Aviation Safety Awards

Refer to FSM 5724 and FSH 5709.16, chapter 24.