



**National Wildfire  
Coordinating Group**  
National Interagency Fire Center  
3833 S. Development Avenue  
Boise, Idaho 83705

**Interagency Aviation Preparedness Task Team  
IAPTT**

**IAPTT to NIAC MEMORANDUM # 20-04**

**To:** Chair, National Interagency Aviation Committee (NIAC)

**From:** Chair, Interagency Aviation Preparedness Task Team (IAPTT)

**Date:** 04/6/2020

**Re:** IAPTT Best Management Practices for aviation operations

Purpose:

In response to the COVID-19 Pandemic, IAPTT has developed these best management practices (BMPs) to assist and provide guidance to all interagency aviation users. These BMPs should be used by all interagency aviation crews, airbases (all types of aviation bases), aviation managers, fire managers, IMTs, and contractors as a minimum standard for interagency aviation operations until determined otherwise.

Issue/Action Requested:

The IAPTT is requesting NIAC approval of the identified BMPs below as a standard for interagency aviation operations.

The IAPTT is also requesting that the BMPs be identified as a living document to allow changes as they are needed without confusing the aviation community. Recommend having the BMPs on the NWCG website.

Best Management Practices:

Plans (consult with your agency or company for more direction or templates to use)

- Contractors and agency personnel shall have a plan that identifies the procedures and frequency for disinfecting the aircraft and protecting personnel against exposure as well as what to do in the event of an exposure or suspected or confirmed case of COVID-19.
- Each airbase shall have a plan that identifies procedures and frequency for disinfecting, facilities, community surfaces, and equipment and protecting personnel against exposure as well as what to do in the event of an exposure or suspected or confirmed case of COVID-19.
- Wildland fire chemical [e.g. long term retardant, suppressants, water enhancers, including mobile retardant bases (MRB's)] contractors shall have a plan that identifies procedures and frequency for disinfecting mixing, loading and testing equipment and supplies and protecting personnel against exposure as well as what to do in the event of an exposure or suspected or confirmed case of COVID-19.

Prevention



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- Ensure implementation of the recommended wildland fire screening protocol by the NWCWG's Emergency Medical Committee (ETA, TBD) for everyone entering the airbase. Document and report findings for any individual(s) meeting sick criteria. Immediately isolate the individual(s) and coordinate treatment with the incident medical unit or local health authority.
- Contractors and agency personnel need to document daily activities and interactions (location, date, time, and names if possible) daily. This information may be requested if a known exposure has occurred.
- Contractors and agency personnel shall carry and use disinfecting supplies for protection of aircraft and personnel.
- Follow CDC guidelines for personal hygiene and social distancing on and off the base. <https://www.cdc.gov/>
- Refer to the FAA SAFO20003 for additional aircrew and pilot guidelines. [https://www.faa.gov/other\\_visit/aviation\\_industry/airline\\_operators/airline\\_safety/safo/all\\_safos/media/2020/SAFO20003.pdf](https://www.faa.gov/other_visit/aviation_industry/airline_operators/airline_safety/safo/all_safos/media/2020/SAFO20003.pdf)
- Restrict access to the bases and all aircraft to essential personnel only.
- Keep aircrews separate from other aircrews, contractors and base personnel. Recommend adding temporary facilities and supplies, such as: travel trailers, tents, mobile offices, portable toilets, wash stations, ice chests, etc. to reduce cross contamination.
- Minimize interaction with the general public and communities during times of standby, extended standby, and non-pay status.
- During periods of standby and extended standby, allow flight crews to isolate themselves in quarters and respond from quarters directly to aircraft with minimal person-to-person contact with public and base personnel.
- Wear a face covering as recommended by CDC.

#### Strategic Planning

- Evaluate Mandatory Availability Period (MAP) start dates to existing conditions to potentially allow vendors to either start the MAP later or to stage/standby at the contractor's base of operations.
- Identify and assign temporary home bases for those resources currently without permanent home bases, such as large, very large airtankers, and CWN aircraft.
- Work with contractor and appropriate agency personnel to consider preplanning and staging of wildland fire chemicals to ensure proper supply and availability without unnecessary delay.
- Align aircraft, aircrew, and crew days off to ensure the minimum use of relief crews and personnel.
- Program managers, contracting officers, and contractors are encouraged to create schedules to minimize or eliminate aircrew rotations, including the need for relief crews.



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- Avoid the use of relief crews. If relief crews are used, CORs, COs and vendors shall develop a travel plan that avoids, as practicable, commercial travel and utilizes driving or chartering aircraft for crew transport to and from the home base or the alternate work location. Work with the contracting officers to identify applicable reimbursement costs and procedures.
- Work with local airbases to identify the number of resources appropriate to stage, with existing facilities, to maintain social distancing and separation.
- When proper separation at an airbase cannot be achieved, utilize alternate locations on the airfield or adjacent airports, to stage aircraft that do not require the infrastructure of an airtanker base (e.g. helicopters, light fixed wing etc.).
- If possible the aircraft and crews should recover nightly at the assigned permanent or temporary home base.
- Use long term rental or agency vehicles and long term lodging to reduce exposure. Sanitize both lodging and vehicles before, during, and after use.
- Evaluate R&R for the existing crew in place and/or reduce staffing for the duration of the assignment.
- Spread out resources and minimize large group gatherings through the use of multiple locations for aircraft placement, personnel and incident response.
- Reduce staffing numbers when approved and applicable such as:
  - Requesting 2 helicopters for each helicopter manager as appropriate (restricted/limited).
  - Expect to utilize and provide pre-approvals for extension of personnel to 21 days.
- Support contractor and agency personnel unavailability and emergency demobilization when coordinated through and approved by the supervisor and Contracting Officer.
- When military aircraft are activated, position them away from existing contractor aircraft, agency personnel and existing agency bases. Consider reloading MAFFS aircraft only at their activated MAFFS base using mobile retardant bases.
- Consider that resources ordered out of state may be required to quarantine for 14 days either upon arrival or return from assignment.

#### Operations

- Staff base with minimal personnel during standby periods allowing the remaining base personnel to work and respond from quarters.
- Airbase, flight crews, and/or contractors shall implement a daily log or checklist for identifying all personnel on base daily along with their health status.
- Helibase selection and mobilization should take into consideration all CDC, agency and FAA SAFO20003 guidelines and locations that maximize social distancing and separation of aircrews.



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- Utilize virtual briefings to minimize person to person contact. Utilize conference lines, email, Microsoft Teams or other similar agency approved multi-media resources with links to appropriate briefing materials.
- Aircraft dispatch forms shall be delivered to all resources electronically instead of person-to-person or information can be relayed over the radio.
- When available utilize additional agency vehicles to transport crews while maintaining social distancing. If agency vehicles are not available acquire long term rental vehicles. Contact local dispatch for assistance on emergency equipment rentals.
- Minimize transporting passengers as much as possible; clean each aircraft between flights in accordance to FAA direction. <https://www.cdc.gov/quarantine/air/managing-sick-travelers/ncov-airlines.html>
- Eliminate the use of shared personal protective equipment (e.g. headsets and flight helmets).
- Clean personal protective equipment (e.g. headsets and flight helmets) before and after utilization.
- All cargo being transported via aircraft will be handled by essential personnel only while utilizing proper PPE at all times.

**Exposure Procedures**

- All personnel that show any symptoms of illness are to immediately isolate as recommended by CDC/FAA and follow agency, CDC, and state guidelines for notifications, testing and quarantines.
- Airbases and/or aircraft may be unstaffed or closed due to COVID-19. Do not staff or open a contaminated airbase or aircraft without proper decontamination and approval. Notify controlling dispatch and/or coordination center of status changes.

COVID-19 risk mitigation shall not increase or transfer risk to flight crews. Flight crews will determine mission “go, no go” decision based on proper risk mitigation.

Contact Information: Leslie Casavan [leslie.casavan@usda.gov](mailto:leslie.casavan@usda.gov) or 909-289-4195

Attachments: None