Initial Attack Type II Helicopter
And
Large Fire Support Helicopter
National Operations Plan

United States Department of Agriculture Forest Service
Initial Attack Type II Helicopter
And
Large Fire Support Helicopter
National Operations Plan

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background
The intent of this Plan is to establish standards and operational procedures for the aircraft and personnel of nationally contracted Type I and II Exclusive Use Helicopters. The helicopters are “hosted”, and agency helitack personnel are hired and employed by various National Forests throughout the United States. Regional and Forest Level helicopter operations and safety plans supplement this plan.

This plan encompasses the aircraft and helitack personnel that operationally staff the original 7 National Type II, the 26 Initial Attack (IA), and 30 Large Fire Support (LFS) helicopters located within the regions to assist regional suppression efforts. Helicopter resources are strategically located in areas of high historic fire occurrence and are available for utilization nationally.

Each aircraft shall have an assigned host base, located preferably at a pre-established helibase.

Each aircraft will have assigned and qualified agency helitack personnel to manage and support operations. All aircraft will be staffed throughout the aircraft contract mandatory availability period (MAP).

1.2 Objective
The objective of this operating plan is to identify standards for utilization by staff, supervisors, specialists, and managers for the purpose of planning, administering and conducting aviation operations. These standards are to be used as a measure of qualifications and performance.

1.3 Approval
The Forest Service Director Fire & Aviation, approves this plan and any revisions thereof.

1.4 Review and Revision
Review and/or revision of this Plan will be accomplished biennially, or when significant changes or revisions to policy documents, aircraft contracts, funding levels, national plans, mobilization guides, etc. are made, or immediately as situations may require.

1.5 Policy
All aviation operations shall comply with the applicable provisions of the Federal Aviation Regulations (FAR), Forest Service Manual (FSM) 5700, Forest Service Handbook (FSH) 5709.16 Flight Operations Handbook, FSH 5109.17 Fire and Aviation Management.
Qualifications Guide, Interagency Standards for Fire and Fire Aviation Operations (Redbook), Interagency Helicopter Operations Guide (IHOG), Forest Service Health and Safety Code Handbook, and other applicable fire and aviation handbooks and guides. When the aircraft and crews are performing operations for agencies where policy may differ, the more restrictive policy shall be followed.

**Safety:** Operating at the lowest risk is the number one priority in all aviation, fire and project operations. Aviation operations should utilize the agency’s Safety Management System (SMS) components (policy, risk management, safety assurance and promotion) from planning through implementation and review to achieve our goal of zero accidents. All aviation missions should be planned in accordance with operational safety planning standards identified in Chapter 3 of the IHOG.

**1.6 Program Management**

Agency program helitack personnel are hired, trained, supervised, and provided administrative support and oversight at the local level.

Programmatic and operational oversight shall be provided by the National Helicopter Operations Specialist (NHOS), Regional Aviation Officers (RAO), Regional Helicopter Program Managers (HPM), Regional Helicopter Operations Specialists (HOS), Regional Aviation Safety Managers (RASM), Regional Aviation Maintenance Inspector (AMI), and Unit Aviation Officers (UAO) or designated aviation program manager.

The National Helicopter Coordinator (NHC) shall work with the National and Geographic Area Coordination Centers regarding the placement and movement of national helicopter resources for incident support to assure efficient utilization.

Helitack Managers provide leadership and supervise their crew and operations.

To ensure standards identified in this plan are met, an evaluation of crews and bases should be conducted on a regular basis by host regions as per Appendix E of IHOG.

**1.7 Communication Standard Operating Procedures**

All helitack personnel will communicate with their unit aviation officer (UAO) or designated aviation program manager.

The UAO/aviation program manager will communicate with their regional HOS, HPM, RASM, and or RAO depending on the extent of issues.

The HOS will consult with the RAO prior to communicating with the NHOS or NHC. The RAO will communicate with the National Aviation Operations Officer (NAOO).
The designated aircraft contract project inspectors (PI) will communicate with their assigned contracting officers’ representative (COR) or alternate COR (ACOR). The COR/ACOR will then communicate with the contracting officer (CO).

These lines of communications are established to keep all parties informed of pending or potential issues that may arise within the individual helicopter programs.

1.8 Crew Qualifications

The hiring unit Fire Management Officer, Unit Aviation Officer, and Helitack Manager will certify that all personnel assigned to the crew have appropriate aviation management training and experience in accordance with established policy. Qualifications will be documented through the Incident Qualification Certification System (IQCS).

1.9 Ethics and Conduct
Personnel perform only those services in which they are qualified, trained, and equipped, and will continue to educate themselves in order to improve their qualifications and performance. Professional conduct is expected at all times and is based on duty, respect and integrity. Operations are conducted within agency, state and federal policies. Helitack personnel are accountable to host unit fire and aviation staff, Incident Management Teams (IMT) other helitack crews and all units in which the aircraft and crews are operating as a safe and productive orientated resource.

2.0 Training
Training and experience provides the skill, knowledge, currency, and proficiency that allow personnel to perform safely and effectively in the wildland fire and aviation environment. Helitack personnel must be in place at least two weeks prior to the aircraft mandatory availability period to complete training needs in order to be available for assignment. Aircraft management will be fully operational after annual training, aircraft familiarization, crew briefings, and pre-use checklists are accomplished.

All Helitack personnel training needs will be identified on an individual development plan (Form FS-6100-2). Completed training will be documented and placed in the employees file.

2.1 Aircraft and Contracting
Aircraft include a complement of National Type I and II standard and restricted or limited category helicopters. These are procured as exclusive use contracts through the Washington
Office (WO) Acquisition Management (AQM) Incident Support Branch. Mandatory availability periods of the aircraft are set to coincide with geographic fire seasons. The Contracting Officer(s) (CO) for these National contracts will be designated by the WO AQM Incident Support Branch. The Contracting Officer Representatives (COR’s) for National programs/contracts are recommended by the Program Manager. Contracting Officer’s shall ensure that the recommended CORs are trained and certified in accordance with the most recent version of the Federal Acquisition Certification for Contracting Officer’s Representatives (FAC-COR) (see link below) and the CO shall issue a COR Designation Letter. COR Designations are contract specific as each contract has very specific requirements.

All designated CORs shall be certified in accordance with the most recent version of the Federal Acquisition Certification for Contracting Officer’s Representatives (FAC-C COR) at the time of designation.

CORs who do not report directly to a "WO/National" office shall be certified by their Regional AQM Director or their Regional Chief of the Contracting Office (COCOs).

The following web site contains FAC-COR certification information regarding training requirements, external training opportunities, and the Federal Acquisition Institute Training Application System (FAITAS): http://fsweb.wo.fs.fed.us/aqm

The COR, once officially designated as such, is responsible for designating any/all required Project Inspectors (PI) on the resultant contracts.

The COR and any designated PI’s shall follow all of the established lines of contract authority for the administration of the contract.

2.2 Mobilization
Mobilization will occur through NICC, the GACC, and forest coordination centers in which the resource is located utilizing a resource order through the Resource Order and Status System (ROSS). Type of resource to be mobilized will be based on incident needs, resource availability, location in relation to the requesting unit, and aircraft and crew capability. Complete mobilization and demobilization procedures are identified in the National Interagency Mobilization Guide (NFES 2092).

When an aircraft is ordered to an incident off the host unit Initial Attack Zone during regular duty hours, one hour will be allowed to prepare and depart with the aircraft. Two hours will be allowed during off duty time. Additional allowances shall be made should weather, sunrise/sunset, or other factors prevent a safe departure.

When mobilized for an assignment, Helitack Managers are responsible for obtaining a complete and thorough briefing from the receiving unit on local conditions, operations, and unit expectations of the Helitack crew. Work/rest, length of assignment, and days-off
policies found in chapters 10 of the Interagency Incident Business Management Handbook and the National Mobilization Guide will be followed.

2.3 Mobilization Outside of MAP
Helicopters will be available for the aircraft MAP period as stated in the aircraft contract. Aircraft can also be ordered outside the MAP by shifting the MAP date forward, extending the MAP or utilizing the optional use period identified in the contract. When an aircraft is needed outside the MAP, the National Interagency Coordination Center will notify the NHC, NHOS, and CO. The CO/NHC will notify the COR. The COR will notify the host unit. If the designated helitack crew of the activated aircraft is not immediately available, the requesting unit will assign local available helitack until the designated crew arrives at the incident.

2.4 Facilities
The host unit is responsible for ensuring that all established facilities are maintained and operated per IHO and the Occupation Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) standards. Whenever possible, national helicopter resources should be co-located at established exclusive use helicopter bases to promote cost efficiency and quality assurance. Host units will have written facility agreements in place if the helibase is not agency owned.

Host units are responsible for development and approval of a base site plan and for scheduling any needed maintenance or construction projects. Locations with identified helibase facility needs will capture this on the project work plan and local unit Capital Improvement Plan. Helibase facility designs, layout, and estimated costs are located on the Washington Office engineering intranet website.

As a minimum, helibase facilities need to be equipped with the following:

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<td>Phone / Fax Service</td>
<td>Computer Access</td>
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<tr>
<td>VHF-FM/VHF-AM Radios</td>
<td>Heating/Air Conditioning</td>
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<td>Hot/Cold Running Water</td>
<td>Flight Planning Area</td>
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<td>Pilot/Crew Ready Room</td>
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<td>Fire Extinguisher(s)</td>
<td>Crash Rescue Kit</td>
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<td>Evacuation Kit/First Aid</td>
<td>Aviation bases utilized for helicopter operations shall meet the security requirements outlined in FSH 5709.16 Chapter.50</td>
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<td>Kits/Medical Equipment Commensurate to the Number of Personnel at the Base</td>
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2.5 Vehicles
Helitack vehicles should meet the needs of the helitack crew and accommodate the number of helitack personnel and necessary equipment for the scope of operations. Recommended vehicle standards are listed in chapter 9 of IHO. Local agency fleet managers can assist
and are the first contacts regarding vehicle needs. Agencies such as the General Services Administration (GSA) may be a source for procurement.

2.6 Program Development
The Type II IA and LFS exclusive use programs continue to develop and improve. The Washington Office, in cooperation with Regional Office Aviation Staff and host forests, are working to ensure a stable and efficient program. This will be accomplished by monitoring the current management approach for effectiveness to include program funding, permanent positions, contract specifications, contract length, facilities, specialized training, and placement of resources. Communication between the forests, regions, and national office regarding resources will be important in achieving an effective and efficient program to support land management operations.

3. INITIAL ATTACK TYPE II HELICOPTER OPERATIONS

3.1 Mission
The mission is to provide highly skilled, dedicated, self-sufficient professional aviation services to assist land managers in responding to incidents. Aircraft are equipped, and personnel are equipped and trained to provide safe, efficient and effective wildland fire initial and extended attack suppression and support capabilities. The helicopter and crews may also participate in all hazard incidents and land management resource project work as well as assist interagency cooperators with these same specialized services.

Capabilities of aircraft and personnel depend upon the individual program and aircraft; may include transporting personnel, equipment, delivery of liquid suppressants, and aerial delivery of firefighters including helicopter rappellers.

3.2 Program Emphasis
Designed to meet a variety of aviation tactical and logistical needs, the aircraft and crews are located in several geographic areas to provide a quick response, and are best utilized on initial attack and emerging incidents.

A. Wildland Fire Operations
Initial Attack – Personnel are prepared, trained and equipped for initial attack operations. Helitack operations may have rappel capabilities, which enhance initial attack operations, especially in continuous timber fuel models. During periods of heavy initial attack activities, aircraft and crews may be better utilized as initial attack platforms than in large fire support roles.

The National Interagency Coordination Center (NICC), in conjunction with the National Helicopter Coordinator (NHC) and the Regional Geographic Area Coordination Centers (GACC) can position aircraft and personnel within areas expecting significant initial
attack activity, areas of increased initial attack response times, or areas with significant committed resources.

**Large Fire Support** – Personnel are equipped and trained to provide safe, efficient and effective aircraft and personnel for incident support across the nation. Support ranges from helicopter/helibase/helispot management to resources for line operations.

When assigned to a large fire, initial attack response will be coordinated through the assigned Incident Management Team (IMT) and the local unit(s).

**B. Disaster Assistance – All Hazards**
Within the limits of experience and qualifications, personnel are capable of providing a self contained, professional and adaptable workforce to meet the needs of incident managers during all hazard natural resource operations.

**C. Resource Management**
When not committed to an incident, personnel can provide assistance to accomplish a variety of forest resource management objectives while maintaining availability for incident mobilization

### 3.3 Program Funding
Funding of aircraft and personnel, with the exception of the helitack personnel and equipment of the 26 initial attack helicopters funded by the regions, is provided through the Washington Office (WO). Funding for aircraft contract daily availability will be held at the WO. The WO will provide the regions with a management and override code(s) of which to charge daily availability to.

Funding for personnel and equipment for the 7 national type II helicopters will be distributed to the regions annually. This funding shall be used for direct support of helitack personnel, equipment, and training. The Helitack Managers of each aircraft will track expenditures of these funds.

The NHOS will work with regional HOS’s and fire planners to identify and request the funding to support operations for these seven programs through an annual project work plan. The work plan should cover all aspects of the helitack crew for out-year budget planning. Included in costs should be local administrative support, unemployment costs, transfer of station, training, facility improvements, vehicles, equipment, etc.

### 3.4 Staffing and Personnel
Aircraft are staffed and available seven days a week during the MAP. The number of Helitack personnel required for each aircraft shall meet, on a daily basis, the staffing requirements stipulated in the IHOG for a type II helicopter.
The following are recommended staffing levels for each type II IA aircraft:

One Helitack Manager, one Assistant Helitack Manager, two Helitack Squad Leaders, two Helitack Lead Crewmembers, two Helitack Senior Firefighters and two Helicopter Crewmembers (10).

A minimum level of ten (10) and a target level staffing of fifteen (15) is identified for each aircraft. This staffing level supports national objectives, by providing on a daily basis the most cost effective and highly skilled aviation fire support platform of firefighting and aviation support personnel.

![Target Organization Diagram]

Target grade and tour duty of the module consists of one PFT GS-09 Helitack Manager, one PFT GS-08 Assistant Helitack Manager, two PSE GS-07 Helitack Squad Leaders, two PSE GS-06 Helitack Lead Crewmembers, two PSE GS-05 Helitack Senior Fire Fighters and seven 1039 GS-3/4/5 Helitack Crewmembers. At the discretion of the host Forest, additional crewmembers including trainees may be added to the extent funding is available.

3.5 Position Qualifications

In order to develop and advance Helitack personnel in fire and aviation position qualifications, it is important that opportunities be provided through advanced training and trainee assignments in order to accomplish this objective. Desired IQCS qualifications are as follows:
HELITACK MANAGER  
Air Operations: ASGS/HLCO  
Operations: DIVS

ASSISTANT HELITACK MANAGER  
Air Operations: HEB1  
Operations: TFLD

HELITACK SQUAD LEADER  
Air Operations: HEB2  
Operations: ICT4

HELITACK LEAD CREWMEMBER  
Air Operations: HMGB  
Operations: CRWB

HELITACK SENIOR FIREFIGHTER  
Air Operations: DECK  
Operations: ICT5

HELITACK CREWMEMBER  
Air Operations: HECM  
Operations: FFT1

3.7 Training

Annual Training
Training and fitness requirements are identified in PMS 310-1, FSH 5109.17 the Forest Service Fire and Aviation Qualifications Guide, and Interagency Standards for Fire and Fire Aviation Operations. This training is not completely inclusive of OSHA or other agency specific training requirements such as Defensive Driving, First Aid, Hazardous materials, chainsaw etc.

Specialized Training
This is annual training to be accomplished based on agency and helitack crew needs. Examples would be rappel and aerial ignition training. This training may include classroom training and field exercises, and on the job training. Training and qualifications will be accomplished in accordance with the specific policy document governing the training standards for the position.

3.8 Daily Staffing / Assignments Away From Host Units:
Minimum daily staffing of the helicopter will meet IHOG requirements for the type of aircraft. Crews will staff the aircraft seven days a week throughout the MAP. To maintain work/rest guidelines, length of assignment, days off requirements and staffing levels, as a minimum, a daily crew of six is recommended on standard category aircraft.

To maintain staffing levels, crewmembers will be given their days off on a rotation schedule. This may require travel back to their home unit for necessary days off during periods of extended assignments away from the host unit.

When the aircraft and helitack crew is dispatched off the host unit in support of incident activities, the entire module should expect to be mobilized to support operations unless ordering unit requests less personnel. This will normally benefit the receiving unit to assist in staffing helibase positions or provide additional firefighting capabilities.
3.9 Equipment
Necessary equipment varies by program. As an example, rappel capable crews are outfitted with rappel equipment identified in the Interagency Helicopter Rappel Guide. All equipment will meet requirements for wildland fire initial and extended attack and helicopter/helibase operations. Equipment is identified in chapter 9 of the IHOG.

Equipment for operations includes, but is not limited to:
- Personnel Protective Equipment Including Flight Helmets
- Firefighting Hand and Power Tools
- Fire Shelters
- VHF-FM VHF-AM Handheld Radios
- Helicopter Support Equipment i.e. Cargo Nets, Lead Lines, Swivels, Wind Indicator, Pad Markers, Weigh Scales, Helibase Display Charts, Helicopter Forms, etc.
- Crash Rescue / Evacuation Kit
- Fire Extinguisher
- Information Technology i.e. Lap Top Computer/Cell Phone/Handheld GPS and accessories
- Purchase/Travel Card

4. LARGE FIRE SUPPORT HELICOPTER OPERATIONS

4.1 Mission
The mission is to provide water or retardant for emerging fires or large fire support and suppression efforts. The helicopter and crews may also participate in all hazard incidents and land management resource project work as well as assist with these same specialized services to Interagency Cooperators.

4.2 Program Emphasis
Designed to meet a variety of aviation tactical and logistical needs, the aircraft and crews are located in several geographic areas to provide a quick response, and are best utilized on emerging incidents and large fires.

A. Wildland Fire Operations
Initial Attack – The National Interagency Coordination Center (NICC), in conjunction with the National Helicopter Coordinator (NHC) and the Regional Geographic Area Coordination Centers (GACC) can position aircraft and personnel within areas expecting significant initial attack activity, areas of increased initial attack response times, or areas with significant committed resources.

Large Fire Support – Aircraft are equipped to provide safe, efficient, and effective services for incident support across the nation primarily in the role of water or retardant delivery.
When assigned to a large fire, any initial attack response will be coordinated through the assigned Incident Management Team (IMT) and the local unit(s).

B. Disaster Assistance – All Hazards
Aircraft may be used for non-fire, all hazard operations in accordance with the aircraft certification.

C. Resource Management
When not committed to an incident, aircraft and helitack may be able to provide assistance to accomplish a variety of forest resource management objectives while maintaining availability for mobilization.

4.3 Program Funding
Funding of aircraft and personnel is provided through the Washington Office (WO). Funding for aircraft contract daily availability will be held at the WO. Funding for personnel and equipment will be distributed to the regions. Regions will be notified annually by WO letter to fire and aviation management staff, as to how the funding is to be disbursed, total dollar amounts, and the appropriate management override code(s). This funding shall be used for direct support of helitack personnel, equipment, and training. The Helitack Managers of each aircraft will track expenditures of these funds. The NHOS will work with regional HOS’s and fire planners to identify and request the funding to support operations through an annual project work plan. The work plan should cover all aspects of the helitack crew for out-year budget planning. Included in costs should be local administrative support, unemployment costs, transfer of station, training, facility improvements, vehicles, equipment, etc. Every effort should be made to staff the aircraft with qualified personnel already in place and available to mobilize with the aircraft.

4.4 Staffing and Personnel
Aircraft are staffed and available seven days a week during the MAP. As a minimum, on a daily basis, the number of Helitack personnel required for each aircraft shall meet the staffing requirements stipulated in the IHOG for the type of helicopter.

The following are minimum staffing levels for each restricted or limited category LFS aircraft:

One Helitack Manager with one Assistant or relief Manager shall comprise the established crew. Each manager, as a minimum, must be qualified as a HMGB.

Target staffing grade, and tour of duty for these positions are a PFT GS-09 Helitack Manager and a PPT GS-08 Assistant Helitack Manager.
4.5 Target Organization

LFS Restricted / Limited Category Aircraft

4.6 Position Qualifications
In order to develop and advance Helitack personnel in fire and aviation position qualifications, it is important that opportunities be provided through advanced training and trainee assignments in order to accomplish this objective. Desired IQCS qualifications are as follows:

Restricted / Limited Category Aircraft:

Helitack Manager                        Assistant Helitack Manager
Air Operations: HEB2                    Air Operations: HEB2 (T)

Aviation and fire suppression qualifications beyond these standards are encouraged.

4.7 Training

Annual Training
Training and fitness requirements are identified in PMS 310-1, FSH 5109.17 the Forest Service Fire and Aviation Qualifications Guide, and Interagency Standards for Fire and Fire Aviation Operations. This training is not completely inclusive of OSHA or other agency specific training requirements such as Defensive Driving, First Aid, Hazardous materials, chainsaw etc.

Specialized Training
This is annual training to be accomplished based on agency and Helitack crew needs. This training may include classroom training and field exercises, and on the job training. Training and qualifications will be accomplished in accordance with the specific policy document governing the training standards for the position.
4.8 Daily Staffing / Assignments Away From Host Units
Minimum daily staffing of the helicopter will meet IHOG requirements for the type of aircraft. A manager will staff the aircraft seven days a week throughout the MAP. To maintain daily staffing, managers will be given their days off on a rotation schedule. This may require travel back to their home unit for necessary days off during periods of extended assignments away from the host unit.

When a restricted category aircraft is dispatched off the host unit Initial Attack Zone in support of incident activities, the Helicopter Manager will meet and manage the aircraft at the incident. During periods when the Helicopter Manager is mobilizing to meet the helicopter, delays associated with transportation are the norm. If the helicopter arrives ahead of the helicopter manager, the helicopter may not be utilized for tactical missions unless a qualified helicopter manager is assigned to act in the interim until the full time helicopter manager arrives at the base of operation.

4.9 Equipment
All helibase equipment will meet requirements for wildland fire and helicopter/helibase operations. Equipment shall be commensurate with the type of operations performed by the aircraft and crew. Equipment is identified in chapter 9 of the IHOG.

Equipment for operations includes, but is not limited to:

- Personnel Protective Equipment Including Flight Helmets
- Firefighting Hand and Power Tools
- Fire Shelters
- VHF-FM VHF-AM Handheld Radios
- Helicopter Support Equipment i.e. Cargo Nets, Lead Lines, Swivels, Wind Indicator, Pad Markers, Weigh Scales, Helibase Display Charts, Helicopter Forms, etc.
- Crash Rescue/Evacuation Kit
- Fire Extinguishers
- Information Technology i.e. Lap Top Computer/Cell Phone/Handheld GPS and accessories
- Purchase/Travel Card