FLIGHT FOLLOWING PROCEDURES

Flight following or tracking was established primarily for safety reasons. A large amount of flying is done over mountainous terrain. Still other types of flying such as low level counting of animals or firefighting are hazardous. Some flights are to isolated and difficult landing areas. In other words, the type of flying that is done is dangerous and must be made as safe as possible for all employees.

Tracking also provides a way to be able to identify when an aircraft is overdue or missing as soon as possible. This may save lives.

Another reason to provide flight tracking is to make the most of the resource. Perhaps there is room on an aircraft for an additional passenger or two. Perhaps some cargo needs to be delivered to the same place that an employee is headed. Tracking provides the opportunity to coordinate such needs and to provide more cost effective use of aircraft.

An important thing to remember is that some day you may be in the air relying upon the tracking of a fellow dispatcher for your welfare.

A. Methods of Tracking

Methods of tracking can be one or a combination of the following procedures.

- Aircraft Tracking Form #_____
- Radio check-ins at a predetermined time interval.
- Telephone check-ins from destinations.
- Flight following using a computer to set time frames and identify check-in procedures. Timing device.
- Using third parties to keep advised. Such parties could be the FM, other agencies, the vendor, local tower, or field station.
- Satellite flight tracking.

B. Dispatcher Responsibilities for Flight Tracking

You will find written operating procedures for flight following in the unit's Mobilization Plan and in oral instructions given to you by the administrator. Whatever the source of your charge as a dispatcher, you will most likely be responsible for the actions identified below.

A typical flight following procedure includes:

- Initial contact: by aircraft or to aircraft, log time.
- Record aircraft type, N number, number of passengers
- Assure compatible radio frequencies. Identify which frequency or repeater you monitor.
- Record take-off time and location on aircraft tracking form, ETA. (Estimated Time of Arrival).
- Record location check: (If not on FM system; radar flight following)
  - Location.
  - Next anticipated location.
  - General flightpath by heading

- Use predetermined intervals for location checks or agency policy on check-in.
- Record landing location(s) and time(s) on aircraft following form.

It is necessary to document all interactions, or lack of, in your dispatch log. The dispatcher's log is considered a legal document and could be used in court cases.

1. Maintain current status of air operations on flight following form.

2. Relay flight information to all involved destinations to alert them to the presence of an aircraft in their area. Contact next receiving district by land line to confirm aircraft check in.

3. Monitor the flight progress by all means at your disposal to ensure that you know where the aircraft is at any reasonable interval of time.

4. When an aircraft is overdue, initiate overdue aircraft procedures following established standards. Each unit should have a checklist in the dispatch office which establishes the immediate actions to be taken in the event of an overdue aircraft, or an aircraft incident/accident. This document outlines the procedures
necessary to activate emergency search, crash and rescue services as well as associated support activities in as rapid and orderly a fashion as possible. As a minimum the dispatcher should:

- Gather all pertinent information
- Call ground units and other offices check airports on flight route.
- Pilot or observer may call by phone to discuss flights within District prior to take-off.
- Notify supervisor.
- Call local law enforcement officials
- Notify the FM

Most aircraft use some identifying feature when communicating on the radio, example "Lead 66, Tanker 61, Jumper 78Z" and so on. Listed below are the standard terms we need to use.

Air Tankers - Tanker #- for all air tankers. Tanker 61

Lead Plane - Lead # - for all lead planes. Lead 67

Helicopters - Helicopter # for helicopters. Helicopter 016

Helitankers – Helitanker # for the Type 1 helicopters with tanks.

Air Tactial Group Supervisor in an aircraft - Air Attack #

Fire Recon - Air Recon # Air Recon 520

Point to Point or other projects - Cessna 180 N2359E identify the aircraft Make, Model and the N number.

As you know most of these aircraft we will not be in to operate the radio and most of the pilots do identify what they are in. To avoid any confusion we need to be sure to use the identifiers when we are in an aircraft. We also need to be sure that the dispatchers are made aware of this and that it is implemented ASAP.

FLIGHT FOLLOWING

DATE:_____ **RESOURCE ORDER #:**_____

PILOT:_____ **A/C TYPE:**_____ **TAIL #:**_____

OBSERVERS/PASSENGERS:_____

TIME		LOCATION	DIRECTION
EST	ACT		

REMARKS: ANY SIGNIFICANT EVENT OR PROBLEM ENCOUNTERED DURING OBS FLIGHT/RECON. _____