



U.S. Forest Service/Eastern Region Aviation and Fire Management Driving Guidance



Date: April 26, 2010

Driving Guideline references that apply to the Guidance:

- Interagency Standards for Fire and Aviation Operations, Chapter 7:
 - “Multiple drivers in a single vehicle may drive up to the duty-day limitation (16 hours) provided no driver exceeds the individual driving (behind the wheel) time limitation of 10 hours.” (i.e. when on incidents using a P-code or F-code, etc.)
 - “No driver will drive more than 10 hours (behind the wheel) within any duty-day.” A resource order must authorize government- provided transportation for personnel at the incident, including the type of specialized equipment requested. It is recommended that the length of the trip for multiple drivers generally should not exceed 2 days.
- Forest Service Manual, 6160.3: “Limit hours of duty to not more than 12 hours per day except in emergencies.”
- Forest Service Handbook 6109.11 Chapter 20: “Limit hours of duty to not more than 12 hours per day except in emergencies or when extenuating circumstances warrant, with supervisory approval. (i.e., prescribed burns, pre-positioning, planned events, training, etc.)”

Background:

- Driving is nearly the most dangerous activity our employees perform. According to wildland firefighter statistics, driving accidents are the highest cause of non-aviation fatalities. Between 2008 to 2009, the total number of reportable vehicle accidents in R9 increased by 39%. Mitigating this known hazard in a reasonable manner is a responsibility that each employee, particularly supervisors, should consider.
- Long distance driving contributes to employee fatigue even when adhering to driving guidelines in the National Interagency Mobilization Guide Chapter 13.2. Employees who drive long distances to incidents may not be as alert or cognizant of surroundings, potentially jeopardizing their safety or the safety of others.
- The wear and tear on vehicles is not readily evident but can be significant; i.e., engines are not designed for long distance driving. The current replacement cycle for a Type 6 engine is 10 years, FY 2009 replacement costs are \$115,000, and a set of tires for a Type 6 engine typically costs \$1200. These expenses contribute to higher Fixed Operating Rates, and are normally a home unit responsibility. Some partner agencies have a standing policy to lowboy fire equipment if traveling long distances.

Driving Guidance:

The Eastern Region Driving Guidance consists of this briefing paper and the two attached spreadsheets. The guidance applies to emergency and non-emergency situations. It is intended as a reference to make informed decisions on the best mobilization and demobilization options for fire-funded resources traveling distances greater than 1 day for a single driver or 2 days for multiple drivers.

Documentation of the expense vs. driving exposure analysis is facilitated through pre-loaded formulas in the spreadsheet. In addition to cost, considerations should include, but not limited the following risk factors:

- Requirement for the vehicle to complete the assignment
- Type of vehicle
- Availability of public transportation
- Number of people traveling
- Driving fatigue and type of work required upon arrival at destination
- Number of days in travel status to arrive and subsequent return from assignment

We expect that decision makers will make prudent mobilization and demobilization decisions, with employee safety as a fundamental principle. Prior to travel, consult with EACC if travel/transport costs are excessive. The RO/AFM program is committed that costs will not be a factor in resource availability when the guidelines are accurately applied. EACC may request cost analysis information.

Forest Supervisors are encouraged to consult Fire Management Officers, District Rangers, or other appropriate personnel prior to making a mobilization determination. The cost vs. driving exposure analysis will help address the management of costs, work/rest guidelines, and crew capabilities.

Single Resource; single driver:

It is highly recommended that emergency and non-emergency assignments with driving greater than 10 hours should have a documented risk vs. driving exposure analysis completed to facilitate travel decisions. The enclosed analysis can estimate the average time and distance to destination. It is recommended that the length of the trip should not exceed 1 day of driving.

Single Resource; multiple drivers:

It is highly recommended that driving to emergency and non-emergency funded assignments should not exceed two days. For emergency travels only, multiple drivers in a single vehicle may drive up to the duty-day limitation (16 hours) provided no driver exceeds the individual driving (behind the wheel) time limitation of 10 hours. If the trip requires more than two (2) driving days, a cost vs. driving exposure risk analysis should be completed.

Crew Resources when vehicles are mission essential:

For emergency and non-emergency funded assignments requiring more than two (2) days of driving, transporting vehicles is recommended, unless a need to drive is clearly identified. A cost and risk analysis is highly recommended. A pre-trip estimate can be used in determining the average time and distance.

Weight of vehicles:

- To increase the life expectancy of our vehicle/s and for the safety of our employees, we recommend that vehicles with the potential for transport are weighed at the beginning and at mid-season to ensure you are not over the gross vehicle weight. This will also facilitate the transport process.
- Consider transporting equipment/vehicles back to home unit when crew has had a long, arduous assignment regardless of how they travelled to the assignment (generally, 7 or more days).

Transport of vehicles:

The Eastern Region uses a national contract to procure lowboy transports. Specific instructions for ordering transports have been provided to local dispatch units. It is important to remember that all loading/unloading of transported vehicles is the responsibility of the contractor.

It is the responsibility of Forest Service personnel to inspect and document the vehicle condition and/or any vehicle damages before initial loading and after unloading at final destination.

If you have any questions with this guidance, please contact the Jim Thomas, Regional Fire and Emergency Operations Specialist. Local units may negotiate and implement a more specific policy that adheres to these guidelines in accordance with Master Agreement Article 11.

Contact:

Jim Thomas/Eastern Region/Fire and Emergency Operations (414) 297-3682, or jthomas@fs.fed.us