

National Multi-Agency Coordinating Group

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NMAC Correspondence M2024-05

July 23, 2024

To: Geographic Area Coordination Group Chairs
From: National Multi-Agency Coordinating Group
Subject: Aviation Safety Tactical Pause

The aerial firefighting environment has inherent risks. To date, we have experienced the tragic loss of life, aircraft mishaps, record breaking heat, and an increased operational tempo in several geographic areas that is forecasted to continue.

On Thursday, July 25, 2024, the National Multi-Agency Coordination Group (NMAC) requests each airtanker/air-attack base, smokejumper base, helibase, or other locations where tactical aircraft are based, take a 30–60-minute tactical pause to consider and discuss the following:

- Crew Resource Management (CRM) and its effective application during high tempo operations,
- Cumulative fatigue and its effect on mission readiness and safety,
- Standard communication protocols for working in and around the Fire Traffic Area (FTA),
- Radio communications with both air and ground resources,
- Risk mitigations for operating in smokey and congested airspace environments,
- Proper use of turndown protocols (reference IRPG pg. 18-19),
- Mental and physical wellbeing of all those supporting aviation operations,
- Use of flight risk assessment tools, and
- Mechanic and pilot collaboration on scheduled and unscheduled aircraft maintenance.

Given the increase in tempo and fire activity across the country, fatigue has become a concern. Many personnel have been actively engaged for weeks or months. We must remain vigilant in identifying the signs of fatigue and properly managing it. We cannot allow fatigue to lessen our focus on safety. It is crucial for the fire and aviation community to be ever mindful of the risks we face and strive to mitigate the potential for accidents and loss.

Maintaining effective situational awareness is essential. If situational awareness is compromised, you should disengage from the operation. Do not operate on assumptions. Mitigate for distractions that may affect your situational awareness during critical phases of flight or operations.

Please take 30-60 minutes to pause and reflect on what has been working and how you can help ensure we continue to mitigate risks to get us through the rest of the year safely. Thank you for your work and your continued efforts.

/s/ Shane McDonald,
Acting Chair, NMAC

