

San Bernardino National Forest
Night Aerial Firefighting Guidelines
San Bernardino National Forest

A night capable ATGS and a water dropping helicopter are or may be available for night operations on the BDF.

Operational Time Period is defined as Civil Twilight (30 minutes after sunset and 30 minutes before sunrise)

Engagement Criteria

One of the following engagement criteria must be met before night helicopter water dropping missions can be performed:

- 1. Lives are or will be threatened**
- 2. Structures are or will be threatened**
- 3. Resources of significant economic value are, or will be threatened**
- 4. Excessively high suppression cost will be prevented**

Night Initial Attack Response

1. ATGS and night flying helicopter will be on all BDF run cards for automatic nighttime response.
2. When a night flying aircraft (fixed wing or helicopter) has been sent as an automatic response at night: FICC will notify the Forest Duty Officer.
3. Forest Duty Officer will notify the Forest Supervisor, Deputy Forest Supervisor, appropriate District Ranger, Public Affairs Officer and Fire Aviation Officer.
4. IC and/or the night aerial resources will discuss if **one** of the four engagement criteria is met for water dropping mission to commence.
5. The pilot will conduct an aerial recon prior to water dropping mission.

Extended Attack Operations

1. The Incident Commander, Forest Duty Chief and the Agency Administrator should start planning for night missions as early as possible.
2. A night flying ATGS or water dropping helicopter may be available upon request.
3. **One** of the four engagement criteria must be met prior to engagement.
4. When ordering a helicopter for night flying operations, specifically state when placing the order.
5. The pilot will conduct an aerial recon prior to water dropping mission.

Night Time Aerial Firefighting Operations Guidelines

1. A delayed response may occur due to required weather/ crew briefings and risk assessment/analysis (go/no-go checklist) completion.
2. Pilots evaluate the safety of all night time aerial firefighting missions and make appropriate recommendations.
3. Pilots will not be expected to fly at night in terrain that they are not familiar with due to unseen hazards.
4. All Known Hazards will be relayed to the ECC when requesting night time aerial firefighting operations.
5. Only pre-designated and approved night helispots or airports will be utilized for initial attack water-fill operations.
6. Production rates during night time operations can be estimated at 50% of comparable day time operations.
7. IC and general staff should make contact with the responding aircraft to relay the incident objectives.
8. An agency representative, BDF PAO will be dispatched to any incident outside of the BDF administrative boundary.

