

Aircraft Dispatching and Coordination during Night Aerial Firefighting Operations



Los Angeles County fire helicopter by Mark J. Terrill

Lessons Learned from South Ops

- Dispatch/ECC Center Managers were not initially included in operation planning meetings
- Night Air Ops affected 4 centers – LPF, ANF, BDF, CNF
- Only 3 centers operate 24/7 but couldn't support night flying ops at the time
- Only 1 center received extra funding to hire 3 PFT dispatchers the first year – ACDP trainees
- Staffing issues for other 3 centers were not addressed by the Region nor funding allocated in the first year

Lessons continued...

- Required dispatch qualifications were determined by local fire management due to lack of regional response or guidance
- At least 1 center added “Qualified ACDP on duty” to their Go/No Go Checklist
- Center supervision needed/required or not?
- Scheduling challenges to cover night shift with at least 2 dispatchers in regard to work/rest
- GACC Duty Chief approval prior to night ops & Aviation Duty Officer on-call for notifications

Consideration for Dispatching & Coordination Duties

- Ordering TFR - If already in effect, notifying FAA of night flying operations
- Military Airspace Deconfliction
- Additional A/A & A/G Frequency orders
- Flight Following protocol
- Communication Plan confirmed
- Aviation Mishap &/or Crash Rescue response
- Management Notification documentation

What are the roles going to be for CO Dispatch Centers & RMACC?

- Who flight follows? Dispatch or Helibase?
 - Helicopter & Air Attack resources
- What resource tracking system is needed?
 - ROSS? Another system?
 - To provide resource usage records
 - To provide possible billing info – charge codes
 - For documentation purposes

More Questions

- If the incident is non-federal & non-federal aircraft is being used, is the interagency dispatch center required to provide services?
- If so... How will funding &/or billing of dispatch center staff time be handled?
 - What minimum qualifications will be required?
 - What staffing impacts will occur?
 - How will staffing & scheduling issues be mitigated with regard to work/rest guidelines?

Wrap up

- Insight to lessons learned from Southern CA
- Begin to set the framework of roles & duties
- Recognition of impacts for staffing, workload, scheduling and budgets
- Handouts:
 - 2015 USFS National Night Air Operations Plan:
https://www.fs.fed.us/fire/aviation/av_library/night_air_ops_plan.pdf
 - Region 5 Night Air Operations Mobilization and Notification Procedures – available upon request

Discussion



Wildfires Today stock photo