

INTERAGENCY HELICOPTER OPERATIONS GUIDE
Chapter 4 - Flight Following, Resource Tracking, and Communications

CHAPTER 4: FLIGHT FOLLOWING, RESOURCE TRACKING, AND COMMUNICATIONS.

- I. **Introduction.** Flight following, resource tracking, and communications are key components in promoting employee and aircraft mission safety and efficiency. Flight following, whether performed from a dispatch office or other facility, or at a remote location in the field, must be given a high priority by all personnel involved.

The purposes of flight following and resource tracking procedures are to:

- Ensure the safety and welfare of flight crew and passengers
- Perform resource tracking to promote effective utilization of aircraft
- Provide information for the administrative processing of aviation-related documents.

Pilots, Dispatchers, and Helicopter Managers must be knowledgeable of the differences between flight following and resource tracking and of the different methods and options of flight following and resource tracking. It is understood that frequently the two intermix (for example, a flight following check-in accomplishes resource tracking, and vice versa).

- A. **Definition of Flight Following.** Flight following is the knowledge of the aircraft location and condition with a reasonable degree of certainty such that, in the event of mishap, those on board may be rescued.
- B. **Definition of Resource Tracking.** In order to facilitate cost-effective use of aircraft and planning of resources, scheduling offices and ordering offices may request Pilots or the government representative on board an aircraft (that is, the Helicopter or Flight Manager) to relay flight status information at designated intervals.

These notifications are performed to coordinate changes in assignments or update time frames for mission completion. They may be performed via radio or phone calls to dispatch offices. The need for and method of resource tracking should be planned and documented on the Flight Request/Plan or Resource Order. The use of aircraft radios for resource tracking is at the discretion of the Pilot and shall not interfere with air traffic control or the safe operation of the aircraft.

II. **Flight Following.**¹

- A. **Identification of Flight Following Requirements.** At the time the flight is planned or during morning briefings at incident helibases, flight following requirements should be clearly identified by either the Dispatcher, unit Aviation Manager, Helicopter or Project Flight Manager, Helibase Manager, or other responsible party.

¹ The flight following procedures outlined below are more restrictive than the national flight following procedures contained in the NIFC Fire Mobilization Guide.

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This individual should identify check-in procedures, including time and locations, dispatch office(s) or other flight following facilities involved, individuals responsible for flight following, frequencies to be used and any special circumstances requiring check-ins (for example, to military facilities within Special-Use Airspace).

- B. **Methods of Flight Following.** There are several methods of flight following. Refer to Chart 4-1 for a summary of these methods, those that are appropriate for point-to-point flight, and those appropriate for mission flight. Flight following methods include:
- An Instrument Flight Rules (IFR) flight plan. This method is not usually utilized for helicopter point-to-point or mission flights.
 - A Visual Flight Rules (VFR) flight plan with radio check-in to an FAA facility or agency dispatch office at intervals specified. This method should be utilized for helicopter point-to-point missions, especially long-distance ferry flights to and from projects or large incidents.
 - An agency VFR flight plan maintaining radio contacts at intervals specified in the flight plan, but not to exceed agency minimums (minimums vary for point-to-point and mission flight) (see Chart 4-1).
 - Systems with automated reporting via satellite whose reporting frequency meets agency minimums.

For specialized flight following procedures during law enforcement operations, see Chapter 16.

- C. **Documentation of Flight Following.** The following requirements apply to agency flight following only, and are not applicable to flight following performed through the FAA system. In the event of a mishap, the speed and effectiveness of search-and-rescue effort is dependent upon the accurate transmission and recording of flight-following information by Dispatchers.
1. **Dispatch Flight Following Log For Project Flights.** Flight-following from dispatch offices is accomplished utilizing local forms and procedures for project missions. An example is depicted in Exhibit 4-1 at the end of this chapter.
 2. **Helibase Flight Following Log.** Form HBM-9, Helibase Flight Following Log, shall be used for all flight following during project or fire helibase operations. See Appendix B for a instructions on use.

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D. Check-In Facilities.

1. **FAA Flight Following.** If on an FAA flight plan, check-ins are made with FAA facilities upon departure, en route and when arriving at destination.
2. **Agency Flight Following.** Check-ins may be made with either the Dispatcher or with trained personnel or other aircraft at the project site (e.g., helibase, Incident Commander, etc.). When field (on-site) flight following is approved, ground personnel performing the flight following must have contact with dispatch to allow timely reporting of any accidents, incidents, hazards, or problems encountered.

Chart 4-1: Flight Following and Resource Tracking Options and Requirements

	Flight Following	Resource Tracking
Point -to- Point	<p><u>OPTIONS</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. FAA IFR Flight Plan 2. FAA VFR With Check-in Every ____ Minutes To FAA 3. Agency VFR With Check-in <u>via radio</u> Every ____ Minutes To Agency Dispatch Frequency(s): 4. Satellite 	<p>Resource Tracking may be performed by PHONE or RADIO (if aircraft is equipped with VHF-FM)</p> <p>Check-ins are made</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. With Scheduling Dispatcher @ _____ (PHONE NUMBER) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> () Prior to Takeoff () Each Stop En route (optional; negotiated with Dispatcher) () Arrival At Destination 2. As specified by the Dispatcher, Check-ins may also be made with another office: _____ OTHER OFFICE @ ----- (PHONE NUMBER)
Mission	<p><u>OPTIONS</u> (Flight Following and Resource Tracking Become The Same)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Agency VFR With Check-in <u>via radio</u> Every ____ Minutes Frequency(s): 2. Satellite 	

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E. **Check-In Requirements.** Check-ins differ between point-to-point-type flight and mission-type flight.



EXCEPTION: Exceptions must be made in Alaska due to long distances and incomplete FAA and agency communications facilities. 60-minute interval check-ins for point-to-point flight and 15-minute interval check-ins for mission flight are not always feasible. It is therefore imperative that FAA and/or agency flight plans be filed for point-to-point flights, and that the resource tracking check-in/check-out system be strictly implemented.



1. **Point-to-Point Flight.** Check-ins shall be made at 60 minute intervals (maximum) and at every fuel stop.
2. **Mission Flight.** Check-ins shall be made as follows:
 - Unless alternative flight following intervals have been identified in advance for areas of incomplete coverage or due to valid mission requirements, check-ins at intervals not to exceed fifteen (15) minutes are the standard.
 - Prior to and immediately after landing. If it is anticipated that terrain will interfere with check-in at the landing site, call in while still at altitude, giving a reasonable estimate of time-on-ground. Helicopter Managers and Pilots should be aware that the Dispatcher will expect a check-in at the end of the on-ground time identified.
 - Prior to and immediately after takeoff. The takeoff check-in should be made as soon as communications can be established.



EXEMPTION: Law enforcement personnel on sensitive missions may request an exemption to the above requirements from their unit Aviation Manager. If flight following cannot be performed without compromising mission integrity, a detailed flight plan will be submitted in a sealed envelope to the Dispatcher. Check-ins can then be made by referring to nonspecific "points" (for example, Point A, Point B, etc.) that are identifiable only on the flight plan itself. If no mishap occurs, the envelope is returned unopened to law enforcement. If a mishap occurs, the envelope is opened, and aircraft emergency locating procedures can proceed.

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- F. **Check-In Information.** The check-in made by the Helicopter Manager or Pilot for mission flight shall consist of:
- Current location (use Loran or GPS latitude/longitude if available; otherwise legal or geographic descriptions are acceptable)
 - Current direction of flight
 - Next destination or area to be surveyed
 - Estimated time on ground (if landing)
- G. **Failure to Meet Check-In Requirements.** The dispatch or other flight following facility shall immediately implement emergency response procedures for overdue or missing aircraft.
- III. **Resource Tracking.** On point-to-point flights, including ferry flights, it is required that the Helicopter Manager or Pilot to make resource tracking check-ins, usually via telephone, at en route stops and at final destination. Refer to Chart 4-1.
- IV. **Communications Requirements.** It is important that a line of communications be established and maintained throughout the aviation and dispatch organizations. Communications at all levels should be encouraged to resolve situations before they become a problem.
- A. **General.** Local units should ensure that the existing communications network is adequate to meet both fire and project flight needs. Unit Aviation Managers or Dispatchers should identify, through submission of an agency incident/hazard report, any discrepancies in the flight following system. These discrepancies may involve human performance problems (for example, failure to adhere to check-in requirements) or failures or limitations in the system (for example, inoperative equipment, inadequate coverage areas, etc.). Corrective action shall be given a high priority.

Personnel must be furnished and aircraft must be equipped with sufficient radio capabilities and maps to meet safety objectives.

- The Pilot is required to carry sectional aeronautical charts of the area(s) of operations.
- On all non-point-to-point, mission flights, it is recommended that the Helicopter Manager carry topographic maps (1:250,000 AMS suggested) of the area(s) of operations.
- Contract aircraft, and where possible, local vendor aircraft used on a recurring basis, should be equipped with agency-compatible radios.

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- Special use missions require communications equipment that will allow radio check-ins to be made without removal of the approved flight helmet. Agencies should obtain avionics equipment that provides for this requirement.



NOTE: During in-flight operations, if check-ins cannot be made due to equipment failure, the aircraft shall return immediately to departure point or to the closest facility where a check-in can be made via telephone. Flight must not proceed until the problem is corrected and positive communications are established. Dispatchers are instructed to institute "Overdue Aircraft" procedures when check-in requirements are not met.

- B. **Aircraft VHF-AM Radio.** All agency-owned, contract, and rental aircraft have a VHF-AM radio for communication with FAA facilities. Some VHF-AM radio frequencies are available for incident or project use on either a nationally- or regionally-assigned basis.

Aside from the use of VHF-AM frequencies to perform flight following check-ins with FAA facilities, communication functions of the VHF-AM bandwidth include helicopter takeoff and landing coordination and air-to-air tactics. Incident or project functions should be combined on one frequency only if radio traffic will not be excessive.

Unless 122.925² is utilized, these frequencies must be ordered from the local dispatch facility. The order must specify the function for which the frequency is intended (for example, TOLC, air-to-ground, air-to-air, etc.).

Large helibases with numerous aircraft should have separate frequencies assigned to takeoff and landing control and air-to-air tactics for the entire incident or project. A checkpoint should be established at which the Pilot should change frequencies from air-to-air tactics to TOLC, and vice versa.

- C. **Aircraft VHF-FM Radio.** Since most if not all aircraft now functioning on incidents or projects have VHF-AM radio compatibility, the main possibility of incompatibility lies with all aircraft being able to operate on the FM bandwidth.

However, this potential problem is being encountered with less and less frequency with the increasing use of 9600-channel and other multi-channel programmable radios, as well as contract and rental requirements for an FM "pigtail" adapter for hookup to a handheld programmable radio.

² VHF-AM frequency 122.925 is a frequency designated for use by all natural resource agencies. It may be used on both incidents and projects for air-to-air and air-to-ground communications. The hazard in utilizing this frequency for any extended period of time is that anyone can use it; an incident or project cannot restrict its use by others.

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D. **Tones.** Tones have been established to reduce interference and allow the selective use of more frequencies. Transmitters and receivers alike may be tone-guarded. Tones can be programmed into most recently-produced radios. They are designated in Hertz (Hz), such as 110.9 Hz, etc. Refer to the NIFC Aircraft Radio and Communications Frequency Guide for more information.

V. **Helibase Communications.** There are two major factors to consider regarding helibase communications:

- The system itself, consisting of hardware, frequency assignments, and the location at which communications with aircraft are performed; and,
- The individuals who are responsible for helibase communications.

Studies of listening comprehension show that most people listen with low efficiency even when consciously attempting to remember what is heard. A person's mind wanders when hearing anything unexpected or difficult to understand. The individual is inclined to be more concerned with what he or she is about to say, than with the content of what is being said.

These deficiencies, which are inherent to most individuals' listening capabilities, are intensified on a busy helibase that is supporting a high activity and/or complex operation. The Aircraft Base Radio Operator (ABRO) and Takeoff and Landing Coordinator (TOLC) need to be prepared to listen well, and to transmit messages in brief, distinct, and clear terms. This is vital to orderly coordination of helicopters.

The course titled "1990 Aircraft Base Radio Operator" is the recommended training package and should be used to train Aircraft Base Radio Operators and Takeoff and Landing Coordinators.

A good helibase radio communication system, staffed by trained personnel, should result in an effective, safe operation. Appendix K, Aviation Publication And Helicopter Operations Ordering List, contains a listing of most radio kits that may be needed for either incident or project helibase operations.

A. **General Considerations.** The following general rules of thumb should be consistently followed:

- Operations must not be conducted if flight following requirements cannot be maintained.
- Communication between the helibase and helispots is required.
- Helicopters with avionics problems that don't allow positive communications must return to the helibase (or other directed location) and should be shut down until the problem is rectified.

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- A review of the Communications Plan shall be conducted during the morning review of the Daily Helicopter Operations Briefing/Debriefing Checklist, ensuring that all helibase personnel and Pilots are aware of frequencies to be used, flight following requirements, and, most importantly, any changes to the Communications Plan since the last shift. A critique of communications should be conducted at the post-operations debriefing.
- Frequency changes in a well-planned project should be the exception rather than the rule. However, during large, complex incidents, or incidents that are in a transition stage from extended attack to team management, frequency changes may be the rule rather than the exception. Be flexible, but ensure that changes are made known to all.



IMPORTANT NOTE: One of the greatest problems air crews experience in contacting an incident is when frequencies have been changed on the incident, but not on the Aircraft Resource Order. It is incumbent that the Air Operations Director or other staff member ensure that Dispatchers relay new or changed frequencies and ground/air contacts when ordering additional aircraft for an incident.

- Ensure that problems are brought to the attention of the air operations staff or Project Aviation Manager. The Communication Unit Leader and/or local radio technician are resources to utilize in solving communications problems.
- B. **Organization.** All personnel working at the helibase are affected by how information is exchanged. Communication flow and how it is structured within the helibase organization will differ with each situation, but must be established with and understood by each member of the helibase organization.

The two key positions under the Helibase Manager that directly manage the communication flow are the Aircraft Base Radio Operator and Takeoff and Landing Coordinator.

1. **Aircraft Base Radio Operator (ABRO).** (Refer to Chapter 2 for duties, responsibilities, qualifications, and training.) The ABRO works for the Helibase Manager and in close coordination with the Takeoff and Landing Coordinator. This position needs to be knowledgeable of incident or project coordination, of information exchange processes, and of helicopter operations.

After the morning briefing, the ABRO should review the Incident Action or Project Aviation Plan in depth. The ABRO should post ICS Form 205, Incident Radio Communication Plan, for quick reference. The position is instrumental in recommending and establishing a communication plan for the helibase.

Information from the Communication Plan should be transferred to the Helibase Organization Chart, which lists aircraft frequencies, and to the Air Operations Communications Plan (see Exhibit 4-2 at the end of this chapter).

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The ABRO needs to take good notes in order to keep abreast of priority changes, helicopter missions, and incident objectives. This position works closely with the Helibase Manager on objectives and helicopter missions.

The individual filling the ABRO position should also have a complete understanding of both medevac and crash-rescue procedures. A good communication link with the Air Tactics Group Supervisor, if assigned, must be established before launching helicopters.

2. **Takeoff and Landing Coordinator (TOLC).** (Refer to Chapter 2 for duties, responsibilities, qualifications, and training.) This position is responsible for providing coordination of arriving and departing helicopters and all helicopter movement on and around the helibase. The TOLC's responsibility is to provide advisories on the safe takeoff and landing of helicopters. It is not to be a radio operator for general messages.

The TOLC works with the Helibase Manager and must be proficient in radio use and flight route planning. Prior to the start of a shift, review the Helibase Facilities, Hazard, and Flight Route Map (see Appendix B). Identify all landing pads and their letter or number identifiers.

The TOLC needs to establish communications with deck personnel (Loadmasters and Parking Tenders) to inform them of incoming helicopters. This communication is often established on a VHF-FM or UHF-FM logistics frequency.

It is important to be open to suggestions and listen to the advice of deck personnel (Deck Coordinator, Parking Tenders, Loadmasters).

If the designated air traffic control frequency (TOLC frequency) is overused to the point helicopters cannot safely take off and land, consult the Helibase Manager on frequency discipline. This should not occur unless the frequency is being misused for non-TOLC communications.

A second frequency may be needed for on-site fire or project communications. However, a briefing of all users on better radio discipline may accomplish the same objective and maintain the need for only one frequency.

The TOLC should answer to the call sign of "CONTROL," while the Aircraft Base Radio Operator answers to the incident or project name (for example, "Blues Helibase").

- C. **Forms Utilized for Helibase Communications and Flight Following.** (See Appendix B.) The Aircraft Base Radio Operator utilizes the following forms to accomplish the duties and responsibilities of the position (note that ICS forms can be used effectively on projects):
 - ICS-220, Air Operations Summary that identifies aviation communications frequencies;

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- ICS-205, Incident Radio Communications Plan that identifies aviation and other communications frequencies and each's function (for example, air-to-ground);
- HBM-8, Helibase Mission Request Log that identifies requested missions;
- HBM-9, Helibase Flight Following Log that enables the ABRO to track and identify current location and intended destination of helicopters;
- HBM-11, Helibase Emergency Rescue Plan, which becomes part of Medical Plan (it identifies primary and secondary medevac helicopters in the event of injuries to personnel or in the event of an aircraft mishap);
- HBM-12, Emergency Medical Services - Helicopter Ambulance Request Information, which allows the ABRO to obtain additional information necessary to respond safely and efficiently to a request for Helicopter Emergency Medical Services (EMS) services.

D. **Incident Communications Plan and Frequencies.** Refer to Exhibit 4-2 at the end of this chapter for an illustration of an aviation communications plan.

During complex helicopter operations, there is no standard communication plan that will work in all situations for all agencies. For this reason, the following is a general discussion of helicopter communications in terms of communication functions, communication requirements, options, and radio discipline. These may be adapted to the specific situation encountered.

On an incident or project, the number of helicopter communication functions is dependent upon the complexity of the situation. One may use any number of these functions to meet the need. Refer to the NIFC Aircraft Radio and Communications Frequency Guide and the Incident Aviation Communications Functions And Frequency Guide for additional information.

1. **Helibase Air Traffic Control.** This function is commonly called the "TOLC" frequency. It is used to coordinate departing and arriving air traffic at the helibase with other aircraft, the Takeoff and Landing Coordinator (TOLC) and Aircraft Base Radio Operator, the Helicopter Coordinator, the Air Tactics Group Supervisor, and Helispot Managers.
2. **Flight Following.** This function is usually performed by the Aircraft Base Radio Operator. The Helicopter Coordinator, as well as the Air Tactics Group Supervisor, can be of assistance with this function, particularly when working the helicopters in remote areas of the incident or project out of VHF-AM, line-of-sight range.

Remember that a "human repeater" is an effective method of flight following when radio repeaters are unavailable or not working. This function may employ a Ground/Aircraft Radio Link system which translates VHF-AM aircraft transmissions to UHF frequencies via a repeater.

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3. **Deck Communication and Coordination.** Use of a Logistics Net frequency for ground-to-ground deck communications on large helibases can facilitate communications between the Parking Tenders, Loadmasters, Deck Coordinator, Takeoff and Landing Coordinator, and the Aircraft Base Radio Operator.
 4. **Air-to-Air Tactics.** This frequency is used by all aircraft, the Helicopter Coordinator, and the Air Tactics Group Supervisor to coordinate aerial activities. On large incidents or projects, helicopters and airplanes may have separate frequencies.
 5. **Air-to-Ground Tactics.** Several frequencies may be used to coordinate aerial activities with ground activities. Helicopters should have frequency compatibility for this function. If the helicopters do not, the Helicopter Coordinator or Air Tactics Group Supervisor must have compatibility with ground units in order to pass on the information to helicopters via the air-to-air frequency.
 6. **Command.** There is usually only one Command frequency assigned, although there may be more than one frequency for this function on large incidents assigned as "Air-to-Ground Command." This function is used to link the Incident Commander or Project Aviation Manager, air operations staff members, and the Air Tactics Group Supervisor. Its use should be strictly limited to "overhead communications" and should not be used for other traffic unless in an emergency.
 7. **Support/Logistics.** This function is used to handle status keeping, supply and support requests, and general non-tactical, non-command information. The Aircraft Base Radio Operator can be the central point for relaying information that falls within this broad function.
 8. **Air Guard.** Air Guard is a national frequency with specific designated uses: emergencies, initial contact at an incident by inbound aircraft, and long-range dispatch or rerouting. At no time should Air Guard be an assigned frequency, nor should it be used if other frequencies become overloaded.
- E. **Communication Requirements and Options.**
1. **Frequency Compatibility.** It is essential that all aircraft and ground personnel have compatible radios and frequencies in order to perform needed communication functions.
 2. **Radio Traffic and Radio Discipline.** Radio traffic must be disciplined and concise. If problems are encountered with overloaded radio frequencies, first examine whether radio discipline is being practiced. If not, take corrective action with Pilots, aircraft managers, and helibase personnel. If the frequencies remain overloaded, then an additional frequency or frequencies may be needed.

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Remember that at no time shall the Air Guard frequency be utilized for any function other than its intended uses.

Use the following guidelines in managing radio traffic:

- Agency requirements for sterile cockpit procedures shall be followed.
- Use clear text on all operations; do not use "CB" language.
- Keep messages brief and to the point.
- If the message is long, stop the transmission periodically to allow for emergency or other short messages to be transmitted.
- If a frequency has been designated for a specific function, do not allow radio traffic unrelated to this function on the frequency.
- On the takeoff and landing control frequency, encourage Pilots to actively participate in aircraft coordination on inbound and outbound routes. If the TOLC tries to coordinate all air traffic, the Pilots may be lulled into relying on the position excessively. Remember that the basic tenet of VFR flight is "see and avoid."
- If an individual (for example, the ABRO or TOLC) will be off the frequency or out of the area temporarily, ensure that all Pilots who might try to communicate with that function are aware of the out-of-service condition. Remember that the flight following function must always be staffed when aircraft for which it is responsible are airborne.
- Establish standard procedures for where and/or when helicopters contact the TOLC and Radio Operator.
- When making a radio call, identify the radio or frequency on which the message is being transmitted. Since Pilots and ground personnel are monitoring more than one frequency, this will enable them to identify which radio or frequency to use to respond.

Example: *"Blues Helibase, Copter 68X on Victor³. Send an additional Type 2 Copter with bucket to Division B."*
- Never use frequencies without prior authorization. Switching to an apparently unused frequency may have serious consequences for FAA air traffic control, other adjacent incidents, etc.

³ "Victor" is an abbreviation for VHF-AM Radio, as opposed to VHF-FM, which may be identified as "Fox-Mike."

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3. **Frequency Monitoring.** Pilots can usually monitor only two frequencies effectively. Experience has proven that the lesser the number of frequencies that need monitoring, and the lesser number of people from whom the Pilot is receiving direction, the better the Pilot will function. His/her understanding will increase, and fatigue factors will be lessened.

For this reason, it is essential that the Helicopter Coordinator, Air Tactical Group Supervisor, Aircraft Base Radio Operator, and TOLC monitor all incoming radio traffic directed toward the airborne helicopter operation.

4. **Switching from One Frequency to Another.** The necessity to manually switch frequencies affects the helicopter Pilot the most. Due to the normal short

turnaround times of helicopter missions, frequency changes are a source of distraction from monitoring air traffic and increase the already heavy workload.

To relieve this, helicopter Pilots should be required to monitor only one primary frequency at a time, with a secondary as a backup.

5. **New or Changed Frequencies.** If a new frequency is necessary, or frequencies are changed, coordination between the aviation management positions is essential in getting new information to all ground and air personnel. Frequency additions, changes, and deletions should be coordinated through the Communication Unit Leader. A specific time for the changeover to occur should be established to avoid confusion.

If at all possible, avoid switching frequencies and their functions in the middle of a shift.

6. **Combine Functions.** On smaller incidents, communication functions can be combined. A common method is to combine helicopter air traffic control, air-to-air traffic control, air-to-air tactics, and flight following on one frequency. Command, air-to-ground tactics, and support are often combined on another frequency.

The biggest drawback to combining functions is the resultant increase in radio traffic on each frequency, making this option usually usable only on smaller, less complex incidents or projects.

7. **Issuing Air Traffic Information and Advisories.** Safety is dependent upon adequate air traffic information and advisories being given, and that the information is received and acknowledged. Remember that interpretation can vary; monitor traffic for compliance and ask the Pilot to repeat if uncertain.

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Additionally, remember that only certified FAA Air Traffic Controllers can issue "clearances" and "control" the airspace. The function of TOLC's and Radio Operators is to provide information and advisories.

In most situations, Pilots need to know the following:

- Which helicopters are affected
- Identification of unit issuing the advisory
- What type of traffic (helicopter, fixed-wing, etc.)
- What traffic is doing
- Location of traffic
- Direction of travel
- Type, direction, and altitude of pattern; note that traffic pattern direction must change if wind changes
- Recommendations

Request acknowledgment. This is critical for safety. Helicopter Pilots may not receive the information due to being involved in radio traffic on other frequencies, their location, and helicopter noise.



EXAMPLE: Consider a sample traffic coordination advisory from the Air Tactics Group Supervisor on the Blues Incident:

"All Blues Incident helicopters, Blues Air Tactical, air tankers will be dropping on the ridge running north-south west of Helispot 7. Drops will be from south to north, clockwise pattern. Stay below 4000 feet on the north and east sides of the incident until further notice. Acknowledge."

Pass on new information. It is important that the Radio Operator and/or TOLC and the controlling aircraft on the incident or project relay new information to each other. This is critical on complex operations when there are separate frequencies for air-to-air and helicopter air traffic coordination.

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Once the previous message was acknowledged by all airborne helicopter pilots, the Air Tactical Group Supervisor should contact the helibase(s) to ensure that no missions are launched to the area of air tanker operations.

"Blues Helibase, Blues Air Tactics, air tankers will be dropping on the ridge that runs north-south to the west of Helispot 7. Drops will be from south to north, clockwise pattern. Helicopters have been instructed to stay below 4000 feet on the north and east sides of the incident until further notice. Acknowledge."

8. **Special Operations.** During special operations such as helitorch, plastic sphere dispenser, or longline, discrete frequencies are often established to avoid interference from other ongoing operations. In all cases where frequencies are needed, be sure to consult your Communications Unit Leader or local agency communications specialist before using any frequency. Radio signals sometimes "pair up" to produce a signal on a third frequency which might interfere with any number of other services.

Exhibit 4-2: Incident Communications Plan

