

# National Multi-Agency Coordinating Group

3833 South Development Avenue; Boise, ID 83705

NMAC Correspondence 2020-14

May 4, 2020

To: Geographic Area Coordination Group Chairs  
From: National Multi-Agency Coordinating Group (NMAC)  
Subject: Airtanker Temporary Home Base Direction

Exposure and spread of COVID-19 poses a risk to national aerial firefighting resources. Forest Service contract airtankers are a strategic national aviation resource. Airtanker crews are at an increased risk of disease exposure in the current operational paradigm. Aircrews and mechanics are expected to be highly mobile, frequently changing lodging and rental vehicles, and work at airtanker bases populated with local and transient personnel. Airtanker crews are a small talent pool of pilots and mechanics whose health and well-being are paramount for airtanker availability.

Interagency direction is needed to mitigate COVID-19 hazards by dispersing contract aircrews and mechanics to temporary home bases.

National Multi-Agency Coordinating Group (NMAC) tasked three (3) National Area Command Teams to develop COVID-19 Wildland Fire Response Plan (WFRP) for their assigned Geographic Area. A standardized national template provides structure for Geographic Area Plans with general strategies and recommended best practices across multiple disciplines to include aviation.

The WFRP COVID-19 All Fixed Wing Aviation section states:

- ▶ For Prevention, consider multiple locations for aircraft placement in an effort to spread out resources and minimize large group gatherings of incident and aircrew personnel.

The National Interagency Coordination Center in conjunction with the Geographic Area Coordination Centers and the Forest Service Fixed-Wing Coordinator will determine the temporary home base(s) for each respective airtanker and will adjust the airtanker's temporary home base as activity warrants and the fire year progresses. This process will be in effect through December 31, 2020.

## Coordination Parameters

- An airtanker may have more than one temporary home base during the contract availability period based on fire activity and severity.
- As the fire year involves additional Geographic Areas, new temporary home bases will be assigned.
- This will increase flight time but at the same time reduce COVID-19 exposure.
- For Preparedness, evaluate allowing vendors to stage at their home bases with an approved delayed response time.
- For Incident Response, consider utilizing multiple bases even if other bases are farther from the incident



# National Multi-Agency Coordinating Group

3833 South Development Avenue; Boise, ID 83705

---

to mitigate large crowds.

- Airtanker temporary home base logistics model facilitates COVID-19 prevention and mitigation by limiting disease exposure and providing isolation in the event of infection.
- Aircrews and assigned aircraft mechanic(s) can maintain temporary living quarters and vehicles that provide a consistent, appropriately sanitized, and controlled environment.
- Aircrews can be more self-sufficient with access to known, quality restaurants and grocery stores for meals.
- At the end of the duty day and days off, the aircraft is co-located with the assigned mechanic and maintenance module.
- Airtanker temporary home base direction aligns Forest Service contract language and business practices with COVID-19 Geographic Area Wildland Fire Response Plans.
- Airtanker temporary home base strategy must be flexible to meet current and expected response requirements

/s/ Joshua Simmons  
Chair, NMAC

