For Immediate Release Contact: Name, phone number
Date:

**(BLM District or Fire Managers) Urge UAS, or “Drone” Operators to Avoid (Wildfire Name) Fire Area**

 **LOCATION** - (Unit Name or Fire Managers) urge individuals and organizations that fly Unmanned Aircraft Systems (UAS), often referred to as “drones,” to stay away from the (Wildfire Name) Fire area to ensure the safety of firefighters and the effectiveness of wildfire suppression operations. The (Wildfire Name) Fire is located approximately (#) miles (direction) of (nearest community).

Aerial firefighting aircraft, such as airtankers and helicopters, fly at very low altitudes,

typically just a couple of hundred feet above the ground – the same height as UAS flown by individuals and organizations. This creates the potential for mid-air collision that could seriously injure or kill aerial and/or ground firefighters. In addition, a UAS that loses its communication link could fall from the sky, causing serious injuries or deaths of firefighters on the ground.

Unauthorized UAS flights over or near the (Wildfire Name) Fire could lead fire managers to suspend aerial wildfire suppression operations – such as airtankers dropping fire retardant and helicopters dropping water - until the UAS has left the airspace and they are confident it won’t return. Suspending air operations could decrease the effectiveness of wildfire suppression efforts, allowing wildfires to grow larger, and in some cases, unduly threaten lives, property, and valuable natural and cultural resources. Suspended air operations can also delay transportation of firefighters to different locations and add to wildfire suppression costs.

“It may be hard for individuals and organizations who aren’t familiar with wildfire suppression operations to understand why it’s so dangerous for them to fly a UAS over or near the (Wildfire Name) Fire,” said (name), (title), (unit or incident management team name). “Firefighting aircraft typically fly in smoky, windy, and turbulent conditions. Safety depends on knowing what other aircraft are operating in the airspace and where they are at all times and this is compromised by the presence of unauthorized aircraft, including UAS.”

In 2017, there were more than 35 documented instances of individuals and organizations flying UAS without authorization over or near wildfires throughout the country. These incursions resulted in aerial firefighting operations being temporarily shut down on numerous occasions. In 2015 and 2016, similar numbers of unauthorized UAS incidents occurred.

The Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has imposed a Temporary Flight Restriction (TFR) over the (Wildfire Name) Fire area. Information about this TFR and others are available online at <http://tfr.faa.gov/tfr2/list.html> The TFR requires aircraft, manned or unmanned, that are not involved in wildfire suppression operations to obtain permission to enter specified airspace. The FAA and the Bureau of Land Management consider all UAS, including those flown by members of the public for hobby or recreation purposes, to be aircraft and therefore subject to TFRs.

Individuals and organizations who fly UAS without authorization over or near wildfires may be violating federal, state, and/or local laws, regulations, and ordinances, whether a Temporary Flight Restriction (TFR) is in place or not. All unauthorized UAS flights over or near wildfires on BLM lands will be reported to the FAA and law enforcement agencies. Individuals who have been determined to have endangered manned aircraft or people on the ground with a UAS and/or interfered with wildfire suppression may be subject to civil penalties, including fines and potentially criminal prosecution.

For more information on safe and responsible UAS operations, visit the Know Before You Fly website: <http://knowbeforeyoufly.org>.

###