



US Forest Service Aviation TRAINING BULLETIN



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Page 1 of 2

Subject: Talking Points for Wing Walkers and Ground Handling Operations

Distribution: All Aviation Activities

To ensure standardized training and consistent information sharing, the following topics were developed for USFS employees participating as wing walkers. These recommended topics were developed from lessons learned from recent quality assurance site visits, trainings, SAFECOMs, or qualifications. The objective is to read and discuss the following topics and find ways to implement the lessons and material into your operations and briefings.

Recommended Discussion Topics for 2026:

Topic 1: Roles and Responsibilities

Discussion: Wing walkers should understand their roles and responsibilities before undertaking the assignment.

- Qualified Ramp Managers (RAMP), Fixed Wing Parking Tenders (FWPT), and wing walkers shall brief on roles and responsibilities before performing operations requiring wing walkers.
- At airtanker bases, FWPTs and wing walkers are required to actively participate in aircraft ground operations by maintaining vigilant situational awareness, continuously monitoring clearances for the wing tip and tail, and immediately communicating any observed hazard or concerns of adequate clearance to the flight crew.
- These personnel serve as an essential safety mitigation measure and are expected to act decisively when aircraft clearance is reduced or compromised.
- Wing walkers do not direct, control, or assume operational authority over aircraft movement. The PIC retains sole authority and ultimate responsibility for the safe operation and maneuvering of the aircraft at all times, including obstacle clearance during taxi.
- Responsibility for any aircraft contact with objects during ground movement remains with the PIC.

- **Topic 2: Awareness and Communication:** Maintain constant radio contact with the pilots and ramp personnel and communicate any hazards immediately.

Discussion: Standardization of hand signals is paramount to any base operation's success. As well as ensuring adequate space between aircraft and obstacles (other aircraft, vehicles, buildings, light poles, etc.) Refamiliarize yourself with the following:

- [FAA AC 00-34B Aircraft Ground Handling, Servicing, and Marshalling](#)
- [A117 Fixed Wing Hand Signals](#)
- Aircraft will not be taxied where any part of the aircraft comes within 10 feet of an object over 3 feet in height. Ensure ample vertical clearance of wing and obstacles is observed (PMS 508, Chapter 7).
 - What are some best practices for measuring distance?
 - Know the dimensions of the aircraft on the ramp and familiarize yourself with aircraft that may be reassigned or load at your ramp.
 - For aircraft assigned, take the time to measure and discuss. Planning for movement of aircraft will pay off dividends.
 - Check on the availability of "handydandies," local checklists, or base specific operational direction.
- It is the wing walker's responsibility to inform the FWPT marshalling the aircraft or pilot when they believe any part of the aircraft will come within 10' of an object, prior to getting within the 10', or to stop the operation by signaling by crossing their arms in an Emergency Stop Signal. The use of the radio for communicating hazards and emergency procedures is also approved and likely the best practice.

****When in doubt, STOP & RE-ASSESS****

- **Topic 3: Positioning:** Stand or walk at the aircraft's wingtip during movement, staying alert for unexpected obstructions.
 - Wing walkers can be stationed at a fixed location or could be asked to walk with an aircraft. To ensure clearance from potential hazards, they need to remain within the eyesight of the FWPT marshalling the aircraft.
 - Wing walkers are independent positions and should not be utilized in a "dual role".
 - Maintain your depth perception and watch for wing growth and tail swing as aircraft turn.
 - <https://www.doi.gov/sites/default/files/documents/2024-07/iall-2024-01.pdf>
 - <https://skybrary.aero/articles/wingtip-clearance-hazard>

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