



NATIONAL WILDFIRE COORDINATING GROUP

National Coordination System Committee

NCSC Memorandum 25-03

April 29, 2025

TO: National Interagency Aviation Committee (NIAC)
FROM: Sean Peterson, Chair, National Coordination System Committee (NCSC)
SUBJECT: Finalizing the Standardized National Aircraft Flight Schedule Form

**SEAN
PETERSON**

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Purpose: This memorandum is in response to NIAC Memorandum 24-02.

Issue/Action: NCSC and a representative from the Flight Schedule Modernization Working Group (FSMG) requested feedback on the draft Flight Schedule Request Form from the Interagency Helicopter Operations Subcommittee, Interagency Aerial Supervision Subcommittee and the Interagency Airtanker and Scooper Operations Subcommittee. Minimal feedback was received from all three groups as most of the groups supported the form in its current draft. NCSC would therefore like to move forward with the formal NWCG approval of the attached Flight Schedule Request Form with NIAC's support. The attached Flight Schedule Request Form will be disseminated through the dispatch and aviation communities as the recommended form for use while working towards formal NWCG approval and adoption of the document as the national standard.

Concerning formalized flight following processes, the 2025 National Interagency Standards for Resource Mobilization has updated the policy in Chapter 50. This revision, reviewed by interagency aviation leadership, including members of NIAC and its subcommittees, aims to align, and enhance policy for flight following and flight request schedules. This includes:

Flight Following:

- *The process(s) through which an aircraft is actively monitored, at regular intervals, using approved flight following methods from departure point to destination. This results in the knowledge of aircraft location and condition providing a reasonable degree of certainty such that, in the event of a mishap, search and rescue may be initiated.*
- *For point-to-point flights across dispatch or geographic area boundaries, it is preferred and recommended that the pilot operate IFR or flight follow with the FAA, alleviating the need for local dispatch agency flight following. Flight following with the FAA does not negate obligation to complete a flight schedule when required.*

Resource Tracking:

- *An approved method by which the intended movement of a resource is documented and coordinated prior to departure, at completion of each leg, and upon arrival at destination. This results in the reasonable confirmation of a resource's status and location.*
- *GACC's and NICC complete resource tracking, neither are a flight following entity except for North Ops and South Ops.*

NWCG standards are interagency by design; however, the decision to adopt and utilize them is made independently by the individual member agencies and communicated through their respective directives systems.

Aircraft Flight Request/Schedules:

- *Tool used between aviation crews and the dispatch system to share flight information critical for resource tracking, identification on intended method of flight following and, if warranted, mishap response.*
- *Aircraft Flight Request/Schedules will be completed by the pilot or flight manager (regardless of type of flight plan filed) and shared with the originating dispatch center when the flight meets all the following criteria.*
 - *Under agency operational control,*
 - *Applies to CWN aircraft hired on resource orders and mobilizing to requested delivery location. Does not apply to CWN aircraft released back to the vendor “provided no government personnel or cargo on board.”*
 - *Applies to all government owned aircraft.*
 - *Does NOT apply to contracted aircraft relocating in preparation for the beginning of a mandatory availability period (MAP) for an exclusive use contract. These aircraft are not under agency operational control until beginning of their exclusive use MAP.*
 - *Leaving the local area (dispatch zone), and*
 - *Admin/non-tactical/point-to-point flight OR tactical/mission flight that is leaving the local area and includes a scheduled stop for a tactical briefing, fuel stop, or passenger pick-up/drop-off enroute to an incident.*

NCSC will continue to explore opportunities to leverage technology to modernize the flight schedule dissemination process and streamline the workflow with the goal of minimizing workload impacts to both users and the dispatch community. NCSC will also keep NIAC informed on the progress of this process.

Background: Local Dispatch Centers and Geographic Area Coordination Centers have experienced an increased workload associated with flight schedules on a national scale. Currently, there is no standardized national form, leading to conflicts between interagency standards and agency-specific policies regarding submission requirements and the implications of the information contained within the form for flight following. As a result, training and completion practices are inconsistent, causing users—such as aviation crews, pilots, and flight managers—to either fail to submit or submit them incomplete or inaccurately. This inconsistency negatively affects the dispatch coordination system. Adding to the confusion, the term “flight strip” is used interchangeably with various names including agency flight plan, aircraft flight request, or flight schedule, which creates further confusion. Furthermore, it is often mistakenly equated with a pilot’s FAA flight plan.

Flight following is the process of actively monitoring an aircraft at regular intervals using approved methods from its departure point to the destination. This ensures awareness of the aircraft’s location and condition, providing a reasonable degree of certainty that enables prompt search and rescue operations in the event of a mishap. The flight schedule plays a vital role in facilitating the exchange of critical information and flight following requests between aviation crews and dispatch offices.

Contact: For additional information please contact Sean Peterson, NCSC Chair, speterson@blm.gov.

Attached: Final Draft of the Aircraft Flight Schedule

Distribution: NIAC Chair