



## National Wildfire Coordinating Group National Interagency Aviation Committee

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NIAC-20-04

**Date:** 18 May 2020  
**To:** Leon Ben, Chair, Fire Management Board  
**From:** Joel Kerley, Chair, National Interagency Aviation Committee  
**Subject:** Aviation operations permitted to operate and travel during COVID-19 restrictions

Based on the work of our Interagency Aviation Preparedness Task Team (IAPTT), the National Interagency Aviation Committee (NIAC) recommends that either the Fire Management Board (FMB), the National Multi-Agency Coordinating Group (NMAC), or each individual agency provide aviators and associated support personnel travel authorization letters that state the following:

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, a growing number of states and localities have issued workplace restrictions as part of their efforts to prevent the spread of the disease. These “shelter-in-place” or “stay-at-home” orders vary in scope and duration, but generally require businesses not considered “essential” to close their physical offices and continue their operations remotely.

The federal government has identified 16 critical infrastructure sectors whose assets, systems, and networks, whether physical or virtual, are considered so vital to the United States that their incapacitation or destruction would have a debilitating effect on security, economic security, public health or safety, or any combination thereof.

Wildfire response falls under the Emergency Services Sector and therefore should be considered exempt from the “shelter-in-place” or “stay-at-home” orders and therefore, are permitted to continue to operate. Responding to wildfire incidents may require interstate travel by aircraft, support vehicles, support personnel, and/or relief crews.

Aerial firefighting services including crews, support personnel, vehicles, and equipment are necessary to protect land, property and lives from wildfire risks.

This letter shall provide proof in writing to anyone inquiring whether the holder of this letter is classified as essential. Any further inquiries to the classification of the individual or aviation resource can be directed to the National Interagency Coordination Center Aircraft Desk at 800-994-6312.

Contractors and agency personnel should carry a copy of this exemption while in travel to and from wildfire incidents.

**Background:** As the COVID-19 pandemic continues and restrictions become even more constricting, travel to and from home bases, incidents and utilization of airports in support of wildfires may be difficult. Having a letter from NMAC or FMB may help alleviate some potential issues.

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