



National Wildfire Coordinating Group

## National Interagency Aviation Committee

---

NIAC 21-03

19 April 2021

TO: Chairmen, Interagency Fire Unmanned Aircraft Systems Subcommittee, and  
Interagency Aerial Supervision Subcommittee

FROM: John Buehler, Chair, National Interagency Aviation Committee

JOHN  
BUEHLER

Digitally signed by JOHN  
BUEHLER  
Date: 2021.04.19  
15:43:59 -06'00'

SUBJECT: Review Recommendations from Incident with Potential at Point Reyes. Evaluate  
Current Safety and Risk Management Standards and Develop Communication Plans  
and Provide Guidance for Future Operations.

**Tasking and Deliverable:** This memorandum tasks the IFUAS and IASS Subcommittees with the following:

1. Develop separation standards between small Unmanned Aircraft Systems (sUAS) and participating manned aircraft operations. Determine a minimum nautical mile separation that will help reduce the risk of a midair collision.
2. Determine if current risk management considerations within the *NWCG Standards for Fire Unmanned Aircraft Systems Operations*, PMS 515 is adequate. **(IFAUS only)**
3. Provide guidance to IMTs (AOBDs) on developing communications plans that allow remote operators to communicate problems/issues (e.g. lost link, etc.) with other participating aircraft in real time.
4. Examine if AOBDs possess adequate training in managing mixed use operations.

**Background:** In August 2020, an sUAS and a Type 2 Helicopter came near one another while on the Woodward Fire within the National Park Service, Point Reyes Seashore. Contributing factors were human factors; including decision error, poor crew resource management, and crew supervision, and poor departmental policy that does not adequately address misuse and separation standards with UAS and manned aircraft. The OAS Aviation Safety and Program Evaluations Branch put together a report on the IWP and came forth with seven recommendations, four of which involve NIAC and are addressed in this memorandum.

**Contact:** John Buehler, NIAC Chair, [john.buehler@nps.gov](mailto:john.buehler@nps.gov), 208-387-5227  
John Waddell, OAS, [john\\_waddell@ios.doi.gov](mailto:john_waddell@ios.doi.gov), 208-433-5073

**Distribution:**

NWCG Committee Chairs

NWCG Staff

Others as appropriate