



DNR AVIATION PROGRAM UPDATE

09-26-2014



WASHINGTON STATE DEPARTMENT OF
Natural Resources

FLIGHT HOURS:
Total Hours
Flown 2014:
*1090 Flight Hours

Water Buckets
Delivered 2014:
*Total 7,996

Total Gallons of
Water
Delivered:
*1.9 million
gallons

Total Cargo
Loads Delivered:
*16

*Stats as of 08-28-2014



Helicopters are dispatched using the following criteria:

- Wildfire threat to human life
- Wildfire threat to natural resources
- Wildfire threat to developed property

Though the top priority is initial attack, DNR helicopters can be used for extended attack or large wildfire incident support provided that they can immediately be reassigned to initial attack duties when the need arises. The initial attack is key to DNR's goal, which is keeping the wildfires less than ten acres in size.



Staging Details

Throughout the summer, crews are detailed in staging locations throughout the state based on fire danger, red flag warnings, lightning, and general pre-suppression needs. Crews must be ready and available to be staged away from the Ellensburg base for up to 14 days at a moment's notice. Some of these locations have in the past included: Omak, Colville, Deer Park, The Dalles, Pomeroy, Wenatchee, and Olympia.

About us

The Mechanic and Pilot staffs reside within the Resource Protection Division of DNR, whereas the Helitack base of operations is within DNR's SE Region located in Ellensburg. During the summer, five helicopters are fully staffed for interagency initial attack (IA) fire response throughout the state. Each day personnel are assigned to one of the five aircraft or one of the fuel support trucks.

Crew staffing is different for each helicopter, so flexibility and communication are a crucial part of operations. A daily schedule is updated as to the availability of aircraft and the order in which ships will be dispatched.

Each crew takes responsibility for making the helicopter fire response ready. Helicopters are inspected and washed, tools and equipment are inventoried and repaired, and readiness and bucket drills are performed. When a dispatch is received, the helicopter crew(s) is notified to report to the flight line.

Our maintenance staff performs annual maintenance inspections and performs major repairs at our main hangar facility in Olympia. During the summer months our mechanics become mobile and perform routine inspections and repairs in the field.

Pilots

DNR pilot staff consists of 8 full-time pilots and 1 Chief Pilot during fire season or on an as-needed-basis outside of fire season. Pilots typically perform a range of missions including: long and short line bucket operations, long line cargo sling load, internal cargo loads, crew transportation, and reconnaissance/aerial observation.

Maintenance staff

DNR maintenance staff consists of 5 professional helicopter mechanics and 1 maintenance supervisor. Our maintenance staff maintains our fleet of 7 UH-1H Hueys and one Department of Fish and Wildlife Partnavia P-68 fixed wing aircraft.

Historical Fire Response

DNR Aviation staff responds to an average of 125 incidents per year and flies an average of 627 hours per season (based on ten-year average).

Training

Training is taken very seriously within the Aviation Program. It is an important way to instruct new members in procedures as well as providing a safe work environment. Each member of Helitack is trained at the basic firefighter (FF2) and Helicopter Crewmember (HECM) standard. Returning crew members are trained at Squad Boss (FF1) and/or Helicopter Manager (HMGB) Level. Crew Supervisors and Managers occasionally receive training at the Helibase Managers (HEB2) level, as well as a wide range of fire behavior and incident commander training opportunities.

DNR Pilots receive various refresher type trainings each spring in addition to recurrent flight training. Each spring the Pilot and Helitack staff engages in a one week field training session. This training session includes but is not limited to; Bucket operations, long line operations, fueling operations, fire operations and Helibase procedure operations.

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