



United States Department of the Interior
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Boise, Idaho 83706

DOI OPERATIONAL PROCEDURES MEMORANDUM (OPM) - 26

Subject: Interim Department of the Interior Policy for Continued Aviation Operations During the Transition to the U.S. Wildland Fire Service

Effective Date: June 24, 2026

Last Updated: April 8, 2026

Expiration: December 31, 2026

1. Summary of Changes.

Clarified USWFS Aviation and Bureau Aviation. Clarified project aviation safety plan review and approval process for fire and non-fire USWFS operations.

2. Purpose.

This interim aviation policy establishes governance, operational standards, and safety protocols for all aviation activities consolidated under Secretary's Order (SO) 3448. This policy provides direction during the transition to a single, integrated aviation organization within the U.S. Wildland Fire Service (USWFS), ensuring continuity of mission-critical aviation support for wildfire suppression, resource protection, and emergency response. It aims to streamline processes, reduce redundancies, and align aviation operations with modernization objectives outlined in SO 3448, while maintaining compliance with federal regulations and departmental safety standards. Further references within this OPM are;

- A. **U.S. Wildland Fire Service (USWFS) Aviation:** All fire and non-fire aviation programs from the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA), Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and National Park Service (NPS) as well as fire aviation from the Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS)
- B. **Bureau Aviation:** All aviation programs not unified under USWFS Aviation, these bureaus include FWS non-fire, Bureau of Reclamation, Bureau of Ocean Energy Management, Bureau of Safety and Environmental Enforcement, U.S. Geological Survey, Office of Surface Mining Reclamation and Enforcement, and Offices of the Secretary.

3. Authority.

This interim policy is established by the Deputy Director of Aviation Operations and Management, USWFS (formerly Director, OAS) in accordance with the provisions of Departmental Manual (DM) 112 DM 12, 350 DM 1; and Secretarial Order 3448 dated January 6, 2026. SO 3448 Sec. 7, Delegation; states, "This Order delegates all authority necessary to the Director, USWFS, to fulfill the Department's wildland fire mission, including any existing or future wildland fire related statutory authorities applicable to any DOI Bureau or Office." To the extent that this delegation may conflict with other delegations to Bureau and Office leadership with respect to wildland fire personnel or asset management, this delegation supersedes such contrary delegation.

4. Policy.

Except for the Project Aviation Safety Plan (PASP) Review and Approval Process outlined in Section 5 below, all DOI Aviation Operations will continue under the established DMs and Operational Procedures Memorandum (OPMs).

- A. Aviation Governance. Aviation governance will remain organized under the existing framework of the Executive Aviation Board, Executive Aviation Committee and Executive Aviation Subcommittee.
- B. Bureau of Indian Affairs (USWFS Aviation). Aviation operations, including operations under local Agency and regional plans will be consolidated under the National Aviation Manual and Management Plan dated December 2017/February 2026, and Indian Affairs Manual 57 (IAM57) as well as all referenced standards, guides, handbooks, etc.
- C. Bureau of Land Management (USWFS Aviation). Aviation operations will remain under the National Aviation Management Plan released via Instruction Memorandum FA-IM-2025-009 dated 3/24/2025 as well as all referenced standards, guides, handbooks, and applicable aviation policy. This interim policy suspends BLM requirement for annual revision of State and local aviation management plans.
- D. Office of Aviation Services (USWFS Aviation). Aviation operations and oversight will remain under established DMs, OPMs, and Instructions as well as all referenced standards, guides handbooks, and applicable aviation policy.
- E. National Park Service (USWFS Aviation). Policy and procedural guidance for aviation operations during the transition to the USWFS will continue under the direction of the DIRECTOR'S ORDER #60: AVIATION MANAGEMENT, Reference Manual (RM)-60 Aviation Management (September 2024), as well as all referenced standards, guides, handbooks, and applicable aviation policy.
- F. U.S Fish and Wildlife Service (USWFS Aviation). Aviation operations will remain under the National Aviation Management Plan dated January 2025 as well as all referenced standards, guides, handbooks, and applicable aviation policy.
- G. DOI Bureau/Office aviation programs not unified under the USWFS (Bureau Aviation). Aviation operations will remain under their existing national aviation leadership and doctrine; bureaus or offices without national aviation leadership shall adhere to established aviation policy and oversight framework.

5. PASP Review and Approval Process.

- A. **USWFS AVIATION (as defined above)**: PASPs developed after June 24, 2026 must be structured and submitted so that the review and approval signatures are commensurate with the level of post mitigation risk as outlined below.
 - 1) PASP submission: PASPs must be submitted for both **fire and non-fire aviation special use activities**.

2) PASP review(s)

a. Fire Aviation Projects:

1. First line Aviation Manager (i.e.. Unit Aviation Manager, Zone Aviation Manager)
2. Fire Chief (i.e.. Unit, Geographic, etc.)
3. *High/Extremely High-Risk* plans will be subject to a second review by the Geographic Area Aviation Manager or Designee.

b. Non-Fire Aviation Projects:

1. First line Aviation Manager (i.e.. Unit Aviation Manager, Zone Aviation Manager)
2. Jurisdictional Land Manager (i.e.. Superintendent, District Manager, Director)
3. High/Extremely High-Risk plans will be subject to a third review by the Geographic Area Aviation Manager or Designee.

3) PASP approval: USWFS Aviation Unit/Geographic/National Staff.

- a. Low: First line Aviation Manager
- b. Medium: Geographic Area Aviation Manager or Designee
- c. High: USWFS Aviation Operations Division Chief or Designee
- d. Extremely High: Deputy Director, USWFS Aviation

Note: In the absence of sufficient geographic area aviation staffing any plan, other than Extremely High, may be approved by USWFS Aviation Operations Division.

B. BUREAU AVIATION (as defined above):

Submission, review and approval will be in accordance with approved bureau aviation management plans.

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