**Aircraft3/Firehawk Support to Wildland Fire**

**Protocol Document**

**Introduction**

This document is a brief explanation of how Aircraft3/Firehawk requests and operational support are conducted during periods of extensive wildfire activity. Aircraft3/Firehawk is requested when the NIFC aircraft assets and commercial vendor assets are saturated and for major wildfire incidents that threaten life and property. Aircraft3/Firehawk support is typically activated when National Preparedness Level 4 or 5 (PL 4, PL 5) has been reached. The decision to activate Aircraft3/Firehawk resides with NIFC/NICC.

**Very Important**: What you can say about Aircraft3/Firehawk in an unclassified setting?

*The Aircraft3/Firehawk product is derived from multiple sources. The delivered products include an ArcGIS shapefile (WGS84, decimal degree), a GeoPDF map, a KMZ, and a readme file.*

**Support Initiation**

Aircraft3/Firehawk support is initiated when NIFC/NICC, in consultation with the GACC and the National IR Program Manager/Coordinator, has determined that national and commercial assets cannot cover all the incidents requesting mapping support. This typically occurs when PL 4 or PL 5 has been reached. Exceptions to this occur, as unique situations may result in Aircraft3/Firehawk activation with a lower national preparedness level.

* **Step one**: As directed by NIFC/NICC, the National IR Program Manager/Coordinator contacts GTAC requesting Aircraft3/Firehawk activation for incident support and supplies a list of incidents. A scanner order must be completed for all requests before any additional action is taken. GTAC is the liaison between Aircraft3/Firehawk, NICC at NIFC and the incident (the call to initiate support can come in anytime day or night).

**Note**: The requests from within a geographic area are prioritized by the GACC. NICC at NIFC then prioritizes all incidents at the national level for fire mapping support based on the assets available.

* **Step two**: GTAC contacts the Aircraft3/Firehawk staff and passes the request for support and the list of incidents to be covered. A courtesy email is sent to Emilee Blount, eblount@usda.gov (USFS – WO-ENG), Everett Hinkley, ehinkley@usda.gov (USFS-WO-ENG) to let them know a request has been initiated. A courtesy email needs to be sent to, pyoung@usgs.gov (USGS NCAC) with a list of the incident names and approximate latitude and longitude coordinates of the incidents. An additional courtesy email needs to be sent to the Aircraft3/Firehawk staff and their immediate supervisor. Once Aircraft3/Firehawk staff has been notified, it will be 24 hours before a shapefile product is available to the incident.

**Operational Support[[1]](#footnote-1)**

Once the Aircraft3/Firehawk staff has been notified and supplied with a list of incidents to be supported, the individual incidents are contacted by the GTAC liaison. Typically, the incident contact is the Situation Unit Leader (SITL). At the discretion of the SITL, the incident contact may also be the GISS. Listed below are the GTAC liaison actions and the approximate times they should occur:

* **Time Approx**: GTAC contacts the individual incidents’ SITLs to inform them that they will be receiving support from Aircraft3/Firehawk. The SITL and/or GISS is informed that the product will be posted on the NIFC ftp site (ftp.wildfire.gov/public/nirops/Aircraft3) in time for integration into the 0600 briefing. The product is ArcGIS shapefiles (WGS84, decimal degree) in a Winzip archive along with a GeoPDF map. There is also a “readme” file provided with the shapefiles which gives a brief synopsis of what was and was not mapped on the fire. The SITL has to be made aware of the “readme” file. The SITL also has to be informed that even with Aircraft3/Firehawk, scan orders must be submitted every night to NICC and an “A” number assigned. If receiving support from Aircraft3/Firehawk, the incident does not need to order an IRIN.
* **Time Approx. 0500(MDT)**: Firehawk staff contacts GTAC with status of previous night’s incident coverage. If an incident(s) is UTF, the Aircraft3 staff will post a notice in the Aircraft3 folder on the NIFC ftp site.
* **Time Approx. 0515(MDT)**: GTAC contacts the incident(s) to inform them that product is available.
* **Time Approx. 0800(MDT)**: GTAC contacts the incident(s) to obtain feedback from the incident regarding the Aircraft3/Firehawk product. Any change in area of interest and the predicted weather is also obtained from the incident contact.
* **Time Approx. 0830(MDT)**: The National IR Program Manager/Coordinator is contacted by GTAC and informed of the previous night’s coverage. If we are at PL 4 or PL 5, this call will go to the National IR Coordinator’s desk at NICC. GTAC is informed of any changes in incident priority for coverage, and if any new incidents need to be covered. If there is a new incident, the Aircraft3/Firehawk staff will need to know **no later than 0930 MDT** in order to obtain mapping support for that night. If the National IR Desk is not activated, NICC needs to be notified of the previous night’s Aircraft3/Firehawk coverage. A brief email is sent to the “coordinator on duty” at cod@blm.gov, the aircraft desk at NICC, the National Civil Applications Committee (NCAC) chair, NCAC cooperators, and other NIFC cooperators.
* **Time Approx. 0930(MDT)**: The Aircraft3/Firehawk staff is contacted by GTAC to update the next night’s priority list and any changes to incident coverage. Any issues identified by the incident are also passed on at this time. If Aircraft3/Firehawk has any upcoming coverage issues, GTAC will pass this information on to the National IR Program Manager/Coordinator or NICC and the incident.

**Firehawk support below National PL4:**

There are several situations where Aircraft3/Firehawk may be employed outside the norm. Each fire mapping request is unique, and the decision to activate Aircraft3/Firehawk in these conditions will be made by NICC at NIFC in close coordination and consultation with the affected GACC and the National IR Program Manager. Examples of exceptions are: a fire or fires geographically isolated from other fires receiving NIROPS coverage; the need to stage NIROPS aircraft in a particular region in anticipation of fire activity; or unavailability of NIROPS aircraft.

In addition to GACC and NICC priorities, the decision to activate Aircraft3/Firehawk support will be based on current and expected fire growth, values at risk, and availability of other fire mapping resources. Cost avoidance does not constitute a valid reason for activating Aircraft3/Firehawk.

It is the responsibility of the GACC IR Liaisons to relay these situations and needs to the National IR Program Manager, or to a designated NICC contact at lower PL levels, so that Aircraft3/Firehawk can be quickly initiated when appropriate.

1. All times listed are Salt Lake City local, Mountain Daylight Time (MDT) [↑](#footnote-ref-1)