

DIRECTOR’S ORDER #60: AVIATION MANAGEMENT

Approved: /s/ Fran P. Mainella
Director

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This Director’s Order and Reference Manual 60 (RM-60) supersede and replace NPS Guideline 60, “Aviation Management” (Release No. 1, May 1989), and any other previously issued NPS policy or procedural statements relating to aviation management.

- 1. Background and Purpose
- 2. Applicability
- 3. Authorities
- 4. Operational Policies and Procedures
 - 4.1 General
 - 4.2 Personnel
 - 4.3 Safety
 - 4.4 Passengers
 - 4.5 Environmental Considerations
 - 4.6 Aircraft Acquisition and Disposition
- 5. Responsibilities

1. BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

Aviation resources provide land managers with specialized tools to accomplish management objectives efficiently, effectively, and safely when other means are unavailable or less appropriate. However, aviation programs are expensive to conduct and the potential for catastrophe is high when proper levels of risk management are not applied. Furthermore, aviation activities can have adverse effects on resource values and visitor experiences. For these reasons, a superintendent’s decision to conduct an aviation program is significant and subject to management oversight and multiple technical requirements.

The purpose of this Director’s Order and its companion reference manual, RM-60, is to provide park managers the direction they need to conduct a legal, safe, and cost effective aviation program, and to minimize adverse impacts that National Park Service (NPS) aviation activities may impose on park resources and visitor enjoyment.

2. APPLICABILITY

2.1 Requirements contained in this Director’s Order and RM-60 will apply whenever NPS management has operational control of aircraft. Operational control exists when a Department of the Interior (DOI) entity exercises authority over crewmember approval and qualifications, determination of aircraft airworthiness, maintenance requirements, and dispatching. NPS does not have operational control for flights when a SEAT FARE is used for transportation via a scheduled air carrier, or when flights take place in conjunction with end-product service contracts (i.e., contracts to provide the NPS with a product,

such as aerial photos, that will incidentally require the use of an aircraft) or when they are operated by a cooperating agency pursuant to a memorandum of understanding issued by the Aviation Management Directorate (AMD) within the Department of the Interior. (That office was formerly known as the Office of Aircraft Services.) See RM-60 for further guidance on end-product services.

2.2 All NPS aviation activities will follow the requirements in this Director's Order and RM-60. These activities and programs include but are not limited to: Aerial Capture, Eradication, and Tagging of Animals (ACETA); Emergency Medical Service; Search and Rescue; Law Enforcement; Maintenance; Resource Management; Fire Management; and all administrative uses.

2.3 This Director's Order authorizes United States Park Police aviation operations to be conducted under the aviation guideline manual approved by the Department of the Interior. Those guidelines provide an alternate method of compliance with NPS and DOI policy.

2.4 The related concepts of preserving natural sound and managing noise are addressed in more detail in Director's Order #47 and its companion reference manual (RM-47). Those documents also provide guidance on air tour management planning.

2.5 Any Park Service area administering a concession agreement or commercial use permit to provide visitor access or transportation to park areas using aircraft must coordinate the permit process with the Regional Aviation Manager to ensure that applicable Departmental and NPS Aviation Policy is included. (This is included to address the arrangements at Dry Tortugas and Isle Royal, et al.)

2.6 As is the case with all components of the NPS directives system, this order is intended only to improve the internal management of the NPS and it is not intended to, and does not, create any right or benefit, substantive or procedural, enforceable at law or equity by a party against the United States, its departments, agencies, instrumentalities or entities, its officers or employees, or any other person.

3. AUTHORITIES

Authority to issue this Director's Order is found in 16 USC 1-4 (National Park Service Organic Act), and delegations of authority in Part 245 of the Department of the Interior Manual.

Other Federal laws and policies that govern the NPS Aviation Management Program include:

3.1 Federal Statutes

Federal laws have been enacted that affect aviation management in units of the national park system. These laws require that park aviation management plans and specific mission planning consider potential impacts on a full range of resources and values, including but not limited to wildlife, historic and cultural scenes, Native American sacred sites and traditional practices, and wilderness. Specifically, aviation in wilderness has been addressed in the Wilderness Act and the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA).

Section 4(c) of the Wilderness Act (16 USC 1133(c)) provides:

“Except as specifically provided for in this chapter, and subject to existing private rights, there shall be no commercial enterprise and no permanent road within any wilderness area designated by this chapter and, except as necessary to meet minimum requirements for the administration of the area for the purpose of this chapter (including measures required in emergencies involving the health and safety of persons within the area), there shall be no temporary road, no use of motor vehicles, motorized equipment or

motorboats, no landing of aircraft, no other form of mechanical transport, and no structure or installation within any such area.”

Section 1110 of ANILCA (16 U.S.C. 3170) provides:

“Notwithstanding any other provision of this Act or other law, the secretary shall permit, on conservation system units, national recreation areas, and national conservation areas, and those public lands designated as wilderness study, the use of snowmachines, motorboats, airplanes, and non-motorized surface transportation methods for traditional activities...and for travel to and from villages and home sites. Such use shall be subject to reasonable regulations by the Secretary to protect the natural and other values of the conservation system units, national recreation areas, and national conservation areas, and shall not be prohibited unless...the Secretary finds that such use would be detrimental to the resource values of the unit or area.”

3.2 Federal Aviation Administration Regulations

Federal Aviation Regulations (FARs) are issued by the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) and govern Department of the Interior pilot and aircraft operations. Exemptions are provided under those authorities for public use aircraft operations, which we operate under Department of the Interior policy.

3.3 Department of the Interior (DOI) Policy

The DOI Aviation Policy (Departmental Manual, [Parts 350-354](#)), which is based upon and supplemental to the FARs, is the aviation policy for all DOI agencies. The policy includes roles and responsibilities for the AMD, which supports the DOI Aviation Program in the NPS.

3.4 National Park Service Policy

The 2001 National Park Service *Management Policies* state:

“Aviation is a necessary and acceptable management tool in some parks when used in a manner consistent with the NPS mission. Aviation activities will comply with all applicable policies and regulations issued by the Department of the Interior Office of Aircraft Services, the FAA, and the NPS. In its administrative use of aircraft, the Service will:

Use, to the maximum extent possible, the quietest aircraft available for its aviation operations.

Limit official use of flights over parks to those needed to support or carry out emergency operations or essential management activities in cases where there are no practical alternatives or when alternative methods would be unreasonable. Full consideration will be given to safety; wilderness management implications; impacts on resources, values, or visitors; impacts on other administrative activities; and overall cost-effectiveness.

Plan, schedule, and consolidate flights to avoid or minimize adverse impacts on park resources and values and visitor enjoyment.”

3.5 Office of Management and Budget (OMB) Circulars

The OMB provides specific procedures on the acquisition or procurement of aircraft and services, and on official use of government aircraft.

OMB Circular A-76 / Performance of Commercial Activities

OMB Circular A-123 / Management Accountability and Control

OMB Circular A-126 / The Official Use of Government Aircraft

4. OPERATIONAL POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

4.1 General

AMD Primacy. In general, the AMD sets policies and standards that govern the aviation programs of bureaus within the DOI. Those policies and standards cover such things as aircraft maintenance, equipment, crew duty times, and certifications. To ensure a safe, efficient, and cost-effective program, all NPS aviation activities must be conducted in accordance with those policies and standards.

Aviation Management Plan*. A superintendent may not authorize aviation activities or services unless there is an approved aviation management plan (AMP) in place. (The use of seat fares in scheduled air transportation is not considered an aviation activity or service for the purpose of the AMP.) An approved park AMP must meet the criteria specified in RM-60 Appendix #2 to ensure that it provides operational direction to park management and staff on how to conduct a cost effective and safe aviation program. When appropriate, AMPs will include implementation of maintenance standards, security of equipment, and management of fueling systems. The AMP must meet resource and visitor management objectives and otherwise be in accordance with law and policy.

*Park Aviation Management plans must be reviewed to ensure compliance with this DO and associated Reference Manual within 12 months of the implementation date of this DO .

Evaluation. Aviation programs will be evaluated to ensure compliance with NPS and DOI policy. Safety will be a main emphasis in these evaluations. Procedures for evaluations will be outlined in RM-60. Other agencies with an interest in aviation safety may also conduct inspections of various components of an aviation program, with or without previous notice, i.e., FAA Ramp Checks.

4.2 Personnel

Pilot Classification. NPS employees who pilot aircraft to conduct government business are classified into one of three categories. After determining the level of an employee's piloting involvement, superintendents will place employee-pilots into one of these classifications:

Full-time, 2181 Series Pilots:

Piloting aircraft is the primary duty, and comprises more than 50 percent of the employee's duties.
Position descriptions are classified in the 2181 (Pilot) series.
Minimum pilot time requirements are higher than in other categories.

Dual-Function Pilots:

Piloting aircraft comprises a significant amount of employee's work, but is less than 50 percent of total duties.
Position may be classified into any job series.
Piloting duties are stated in employee's position description.
Minimum pilot time requirements are less than for 2181 series.

Incidental Pilots:

Piloting duties typically occur infrequently (e.g., travel to training or meetings).
Flights are only for point-to-point travel.
Position may be classified in any job series.
Piloting duties are not stated in employee's position description.
Minimum pilot time requirements are the same as for Dual-Function Pilots.
Requires a Letter of Authorization from the NPS Regional Director.

Training. All aviation programs must ensure compliance with certification and training requirements as defined in RM-60. These requirements apply to pilots, aviation program managers, helicopter managers, crewmembers, mission specialists, contracting officers, and, in certain cases passengers, regardless of aircraft ownership or employment status of pilot or crew.

Special recognition and compensation. Superintendents may submit pilots, crewmembers, and other employees in the NPS for special recognition through the Department's Aviation Safety Award Program. Criteria and categories can be found in RM-60.

Additional monetary compensation for duties that qualify for hazard pay, premium pay, etc. will follow established procedures in 5 USC 5545 (c)(1) and (2); 5 USC 5545 (d); 5 CFR 550.903; and 5 CFR 532.511.

4.3 Safety

Personal Safety. Personal safety is of primary importance and will not be compromised for any reason. The pilot or project manager may terminate the mission flight, or a passenger may elect not to fly on a scheduled flight, based on safety concerns.

Personal Protective Equipment and Training For Special Use Flights. On point-to-point fixed wing flight operations, personal protective equipment (PPE) is not required. However, operation of all other fixed-wing and all rotor-wing flights are considered Special-Use Activities as defined in RM-60. Managers are responsible for ensuring that all employees involved in aviation activities meet the appropriate level of training and experience standards. PPE will be correctly utilized for all Special-Use Activities. The minimum specialized aircraft safety equipment and PPE are contained in RM-60. Park aviation management plans may prescribe more stringent requirements for the use of PPE than required by RM-60. The Service will provide all required PPE for special use flights for government employees.

Aviation Mishaps. Aviation mishap reporting is a key element of the department's aviation accident prevention program. Superintendents will ensure that all aviation mishaps, including those involving military aircraft and ground support personnel, are reported in accordance with DOI and FAA requirements. Aviation mishaps may range from minor incidents with no injury or property damage to major accidents such as an aircraft crash with fatalities.

Immediate Reporting. All aviation mishaps will be immediately reported to the Regional Director, WASO Ranger Activities Division, and the Office of Aircraft Services 24-hour hotline number (1-888-4MISHAP/1-888-464-7427). A SAFECOM will also be completed and submitted to the AMD Safety Manager and the NPS Regional Aviation Manager.

NPS as First Responder. The National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) has primary aviation accident investigation responsibility. If the NPS is first on the accident scene as an initial responder, they will provide immediate care to injured personnel and secure and protect the scene. Refer all inquiries as to the cause of the accident to the NTSB.

More detailed information on mishaps and accident investigations can be found in the RM 60 and should be included in the Park Aviation Plan.

Flight Plans and Flight Following. Flight plans must be prepared and flight following must be conducted for all NPS aviation activities. Procedures and requirements will be published in the RM-60.

4.4 Passengers

Official passengers. On aircraft within NPS operational control, official passengers will be permitted only in accordance with DOI regulations. As stipulated in Section 1.7A of [350 DM 1](#), official passengers include:

- Officers and employees of the Federal Government traveling on official business.
- Members of Congress and employees of Congressional committee staffs whose work relates to DOI programs.
- Non-Federal passengers when engaged in missions which enhance accomplishment of a Departmental program such as personnel of cooperating state, county or local agencies; representatives of foreign governments; and contractors' representatives to include those employed by such agencies, and private citizens.
- Space-available passengers authorized and approved in accordance with OMB Circular A-126.
- Space-available travelers approved by the Secretary of the Interior on a trip-by-trip basis.

Required Approvals. In accordance with [OMB Circular A-126](#) and the Department of the Interior Manual, Senior Executive Service (SES) and employees above GM-15 must have Departmental Solicitor's approval for point-to-point flights. Consult with your Regional Aviation Manager prior to flights with non-scheduled airlines.

4.5 Environmental Considerations

Minimum impact. Noise abatement is a key consideration in park aviation activities. Existing fleet and vendor aircraft will be operated in a manner to minimize audible and visual impacts to park resources and visitor experience. Technological and operational technique advances will be evaluated and, if found to be appropriate, will be employed. Superintendents must also evaluate the establishment of flight corridors and other protocols governing administrative use of aircraft.

Exceptions for the acquisition of other than quiet-technology fleet aircraft require approval by the NPS Director.

Wilderness Use. A superintendent may allow aircraft use in wilderness if its use is the minimum requirement to achieve the purposes of the area as wilderness or to deal with emergency situations. (See section 6.3.5 of Management Policies.)

Facility Construction. Aviation facilities such as hangars, runways, heliports, and aircraft fueling systems require special consideration. Before constructing such facilities, managers will consult appropriate NPS/AMD technical specialists and refer to standards contained in associated Departmental handbooks.

4.6 Aircraft Acquisition and Disposition

Acquisition of Aircraft Services. When a superintendent has determined that aircraft services are needed, a determination must be made as to how the services will be acquired. With the assistance of the regional and national aviation managers, the superintendent will conduct a needs analysis that considers factors such as flight missions, types of aircraft needed, and level of anticipated need. Additional guidance will be available in RM-60.

Acquisition methods. There are several methods of procuring aircraft services. Regardless of the method selected, superintendents must consider safety, cost effectiveness, mission, quiet technology, and

a variety of other issues. Refer to RM-60, your park/regional aviation manager, 353 DM 6 (Aircraft Acquisition and Disposition) and 351 DM 4 (Cooperator Aircraft) for further guidance.

Acquisition of fleet aircraft. The relative merits of purchase versus contracting must be evaluated according to the requirements set forth in OMB Circular A-76. The AMD provides direction and assistance for the acquisition of fleet aircraft.

Contract / Charter. If the cost of the use of non NPS-owned aircraft will exceed \$25,000, the aircraft service must be via contract rather than rental. All aircraft services acquired by contract will be acquired through AMD.

Rental. Services are acquired on an hourly rate basis and can be used when the cost of services is \$25,000 per transaction or less. AMD provides an approved list of rental sources based on a standard Aircraft Rental Agreement (AMD Source List) from which all vendors must be selected.

Use of military aircraft including Coast Guard. These may include, for example, regular army, reserve, National Guard, or Coast Guard aircraft. Except in instances of life-threatening emergencies, military aircraft generally cannot be utilized without a specific written approval or agreement, from the Secretaries of the Interior, Defense or Transportation. 351 DM 4 describes the policy for the use of military aircraft and requires a General Agreement or Interagency Agreement.

Use of other cooperator aircraft. A superintendent may allow park cooperators such as research partners, and other public agencies to conduct aviation activities in the park. Except in instances of life-threatening emergencies, cooperator aircraft generally cannot be utilized without a specific written agreement between the cooperator and AMD. If NPS personnel are to be, for the mutual benefit of the Government and the cooperator, non-revenue passenger/aircrew members aboard cooperator aircraft either inside or outside the park boundaries then the park superintendent must ensure that cooperator aircraft and crews meet all operational requirements as described in 351 DM 4 for cooperator flight operations.

Use of Volunteer pilots must meet the requirements of OPM-34.

Disposition of Aircraft. The superintendent determines when an aircraft is no longer useful to the park. AMD is responsible for disposing of aircraft, with bureau input in accordance with 353 DM 6. Refer to RM-60 for more information on this subject.

5. RESPONSIBILITIES

The NPS is solely responsible for managing its aviation program. NPS program management will consist of aviation managers at the national, regional and, in some cases, the park level, who will serve as points of contact for the superintendent. The Director is ultimately responsible for establishment of aviation policy and ensuring its implementation and oversight. The Director also reserves authority to approve the acquisition of other than quiet-technology fleet aircraft.

5.1 The Associate Director, Resource and Visitor Protection, is delegated operational responsibility for implementation of the Service's aviation operation and safety program, and is responsible for:

The issuance of Reference Manual-60; and
Serving as a member of the Department's Aviation Board of Directors.

5.2 Regional Directors:

Support and disseminate aviation policies and information.

Ensure that aviation training is in compliance with requirements and that proper equipment is utilized.

Ensure availability of aviation expertise to field managers who are responsible for aircraft operations.

Assign a liaison to aviation accident investigation teams.

Promote and support the Aviation Mishap Information System (AMIS).

Authorize Incidental Pilots.

5.3 Superintendents/park managers will ensure that:

Conservative decision-making and risk assessment are used in determining the appropriateness of using aviation resources.

Employee and public safety is considered foremost for all aviation activities, but full consideration is also given to resource and visitor impacts.

The AMP is developed and approved, in consultation with the regional aviation manager.

Aviation program planning requirements are met.

Aviation needs are included in program development.

Aviation activities are conducted in compliance with applicable policy/directives.

Options such as the incorporation of quiet technology aircraft and the establishment of flight corridors and other protocols governing administrative use of aircraft are evaluated and used when appropriate.

The Aviation Mishap Information System (AMIS) is promoted.

Appropriate aviation training is completed.

Safety hazards are mitigated and flight following is accomplished.

Aviation Life Safety Equipment requirements are followed.

Records related to the aviation program are maintained.

Significant operational problems are reported to the Regional Aviation Manager.

Aviation resources are procured, managed, and operated within the contract's scope.

5.4 The Park Aviation Manager is responsible for:

Ensuring compliance with AMD policies and standards.

Ensuring compliance with this Director's Order.

Ensuring compliance with the standards and instructions issued by the Associate Director in RM-60.

Requesting waivers, exemptions, or exceptions to policies, standards, procedures, or other instructions. Request must be submitted to the appropriate authority through the Associate Director for Resource and Visitor Protection.

5.5 All employees involved in aviation activities are responsible for:

Knowing and following applicable policy and directives.

Maintaining currency by attending required aviation training in accordance with DOI and NPS policies.

Using appropriate personal protective and life support equipment.

Reporting potential and actual problems.

Ensuring their own safety as well as that of others.

5.6 The DOI perspective. A summary of NPS and other DOI bureau responsibilities with respect to the DOI Aviation Management Program is listed in Appendix 2 of 350 DM 1.

-----End of Director's Order #60-----