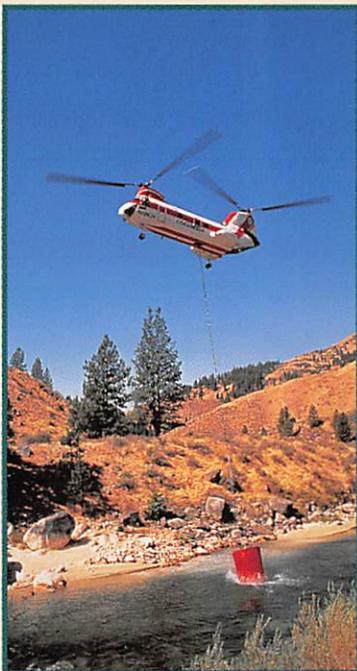


# AVIATION AND LAND MANAGEMENT

Managing natural resources and providing fire protection on hundreds of million acres is a big job. To meet this challenge, the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) relies heavily on its fleet of 12 agency-operated and more than 700 contracted airplanes and helicopters to manage wildland fires and wildlife habitat, map natural resources, and carry out law enforcement missions, among other activities.

In a typical year, BLM aircraft fly almost 30,000 hours, transporting 68,000 passengers and more than 2.4 million pounds of cargo. This is comparable to the operations of a regional airline! BLM's safety standards meet or exceed those of regional airlines, with fewer reported incidents. BLM maintains its excellent safety record, despite operating more than 60 different types of aircraft in hazardous

conditions. BLM pilots are well trained professionals who routinely fly over remote, uninhabited terrain, many times at low altitudes, exposed to power lines, erratic winds, steep terrain, and other hazards. Safety is always a priority both on the fireline and in the air.



# THE EVOLUTION of AVIATION in the BLM

BLM's aviation program got its start in Alaska, where aircraft are the only means of access to the vast territory managed by the agency. Most of the original fleet consisted of old World War II aircraft purchased from the military. Today, BLM uses contracts to meet most of its aviation equipment and service needs.

BLM is constantly looking for opportunities to improve safety, efficiency, and cost-effectiveness of the Aviation Program. Currently the agency is looking at the feasibility of merging aviation functions with other agencies. Aviation safety programs, inspection and checkride procedures, and review and evaluation processes are all examples of functions that may be combined in the future.

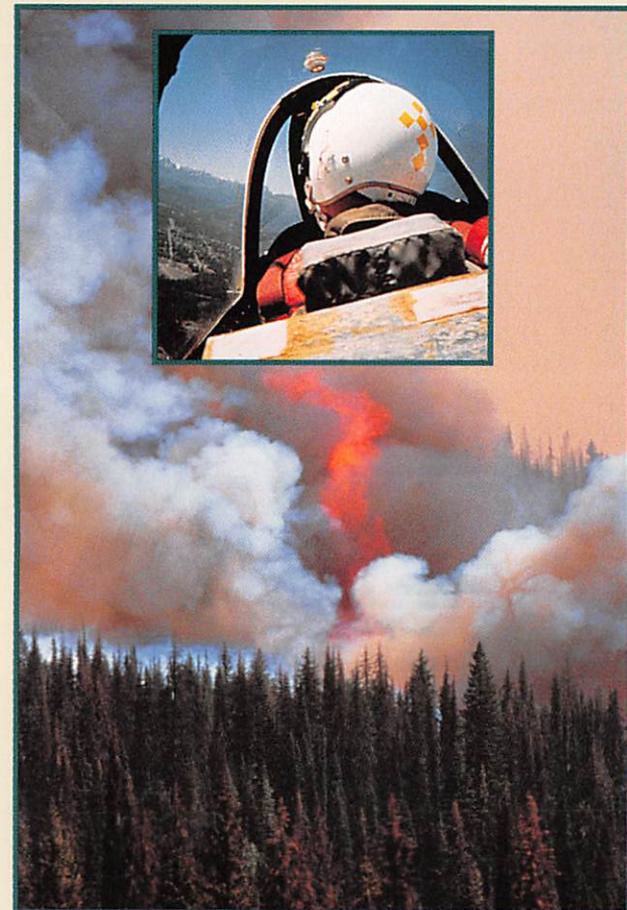


For more information, please contact your local BLM office or:

Chief, External Affairs  
BLM National Office of Fire and Aviation  
National Interagency Fire Center  
3833 S. Development Ave.  
Boise, Idaho 83705-5354  
phone (208) 387-5457  
[www.nifc.gov](http://www.nifc.gov)

BLM/RS/GI-97/002+9210

# BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT



# AVIATION in the BLM

**MANAGING FIRE and  
NATURAL RESOURCES**

# PUTTING OUT the FIRE

More than half of the hours that Bureau of Land Management (BLM) aircraft fly each year support fire management activities. Airplanes and helicopters of many sizes and types are used in various ways to fight fire.

**Fire Detection and Monitoring**—Light airplanes and helicopters detect and monitor fires from the air. Aircraft provide an "eye in the sky" for firefighters on the ground, whom they can alert to possible safety hazards. Still and video photography and photomapping are also performed from aircraft over fires.

**Initial Attack**—Aircraft transport smokejumpers quickly to the right place at the right time, while fires are still small. Smokejumpers parachute into remote areas from 3,000 feet above the ground. Helicopters deliver helitack crews and lightweight equipment by either landing close to the site, or, when terrain is too rugged for landing, by slinging loads and allowing specially trained firefighters to rappel to the ground. Airtankers and helicopters often control small fires from the air with retardant or water drops.

**Air Attack**—Lead planes check wind, turbulence, smoke conditions, hazards, and topography, assuring that designated drop zones are safe and clear before the larger airtankers drop fire retardant or foam on a fire. Helicopters equipped with buckets carry and drop water or retardant on hot spots. Light aircraft also coordinate operations when multiple aircraft are working over a fire.

**Logistical Support**—Large cargo and passenger aircraft carry crews, equipment, and supplies to the fire site or Incident Base. Small and medium helicopters are used to transport crews, equipment, and supplies to remote fire locations or camps in rugged terrain.

# MANAGING NATURAL RESOURCES

While fire suppression is the major activity for BLM's Aviation fleet, airplanes and helicopters are essential tools for other activities to sustain the health of the land and its resources. Helicopters are used to transport surveyors, archeologists, and other resource specialists to remote areas. From the air, public lands can be easily monitored, evaluated, and protected.

# NIFC'S ROLE

The National Interagency Fire Center (NIFC) in Boise, Idaho, is the nation's logistical support center for wildland firefighting, and plays a key role in BLM's aviation program. NIFC coordinates and supports operations for managing wildland fire and other natural disasters throughout the United States.

BLM's National Office of Fire and Aviation is located at NIFC. This office handles planning and evaluations, sets operating standards, and oversees aviation safety. BLM aviation specialists consult with experts in other agencies and private industry to maintain aviation services at a high level of efficiency and cost-effectiveness, strengthening BLM's ability to ensure public safety, protect vital natural resources, and maintain the health of the land.

The BLM aviation program works through the Department of Interior's Office of Aircraft Services (OAS), also headquartered at NIFC, to administer aviation contracts. BLM shares aviation services with other federal land management agencies and the National Weather Service.

