



USDA Forest Service Fire and Aviation Management Briefing Paper



Date: March 31, 2003 1800

Topic: Columbia Support

Issue: Interagency support to Columbia Recovery effort.

Background: Saturday morning February 1, 2003 the shuttle Columbia was lost in flight over Texas and Louisiana.

Key Points:

Rotor wing air operations have ceased until further notice due to the helicopter accident on March 27.

The debris field from the space shuttle is in part on the National Forests and Grasslands in Texas and the Kisatchie National Forest in Louisiana.

All activities are being conducted under a Unified Command of FEMA, NASA, EPA, and the State of Texas. A FEMA Interagency EOC at Lufkin is serving in a capacity of a Multi-Agency Coordinating Group (MAC) directing operations. Texas Forest Service is providing operations planning and logistical support to the Emergency Operations Center (EOC) in Austin.

Field operations are located in Palestine, Nacogdoches, Corsicana and Sabine with Texas Forest Service managing local collection sites in these communities plus San Augustine and Rusk for receipt and cataloging of shuttle material.

Goals continue to be the safety of personnel and the public in the affected areas, collection of shuttle material, location and containment of hazardous material, and supporting the completion of the incident investigation. The retrieval of shuttle materials has become the primary focus. All items are handled according to the established protocol of NASA.

In Nacogdoches, the Montana Interagency Type 2 Team (Gray) is in command.

The following interagency resources are committed to the incident through FS-FEMA mission assignments:

- Approximately 5,458 people are assigned to the incident. Human resources committed include: (3) Type I teams, (2) Type II teams, LEI, miscellaneous overhead, and 162 crews.
- 27 Helicopters and 10 fixed wing aircraft are on site providing aerial reconnaissance of open areas.
- Miscellaneous equipment including: global positioning systems (GPS), all terrain vehicles (ATVs), weather stations, satellite phones, etc.
- Mobile Caterer and Showers

To date, a total of 396,358 acres have been searched at an average rate of 3.5 acres per person-day.

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