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Subject: National Rappel Program Update for July 2011

To: Regional Foresters

The National Consolidated Rappel Training recently concluded in the Pacific Northwest Region (PNW) in John Day, Oregon, with 254 veteran and rookie rappellers successfully completing the training and 38 contract pilots completing rappel evaluation flights. The trainees included PNW, Northern, Intermountain and Pacific Southwest region personnel. The PNW region hosted a complex and dynamic training session which was very successful and set the standard for future rappel training.

The National Rappel Quality Assurance Team (NRQAT) reviewed the PNW component of the National Rappel Program in 2010 and in 2011 and conducted the same review of the Northern, Intermountain, and Pacific Southwest regions and bases. The NRQAT also attended the National Consolidated Rappel Training in June 2011. Based on the NRQAT's recommendations, the Northern, Intermountain and Pacific Southwest bases were approved for re-activation on June 28, 2011, by Tom Harbour, Director of Fire and Aviation Management. The PNW region was fully approved on April 1, 2011, based on the 2010 Quality Assurance review and actual operations.

The bases that are now approved for national rappel operations are below:

Northern Region – Gallatin

Intermountain – Boise, Payette 1 & 2 and Salmon 1 & 2

Pacific Southwest – Scott Valley (Klamath N.F.) and Trimmer (Sierra N.F.)

Pacific Northwest – Frazier (Umatilla N.F.), John Day (Malheur N.F.), Prineville (Ochoco N.F.), Siskiyou, Sled Springs (Wallowa-Whitman N.F.) and Wenatchee.

These helicopter rappel crews are fully functional for initial attack, extended attack, and large fire support. Proficiency rappels may be necessary away from the home unit and if assigned to a fire personnel and aircraft time shall be charged to the fire P-Code. Appendix N of the Interagency Helicopter Rappel Guide recommends that proficiency rappels be conducted “away from the helibase to prevent distractions to the helibase operations and rappel modules.”

The National Rappel Specialist position is filled by detailer Brandon Culley (541-620-0085). This position will be advertised and filled by the end of calendar year 2011. Brandon should be the point of contact for all rappel operational questions and issues through August 2011. Rappel Quality Assurance Operations reviews coordinated with the regions will be conducted with each of the 14 bases or helicopters during this season. These reviews will focus on maintenance of the rappel standards and procedures in the 2011 Interagency Helicopter Rappel Guide.



An After Action Review with the four regions will be conducted following the 2011 season and will review operational and program objectives, quality assurance processes, SAFECOMs, lessons learned, and rappel operations.

In 2012, National Consolidated Rappel Training will be held at several locations by a National Rappel Training Cadre. Each of the training sessions will consist of an inter-regional mix of national rappel bases. Planning for these training sessions is now underway.

/s/ T.C. HARBOUR

TOM HARBOUR

Director, Fire and Aviation Management

cc: Karyn L Wood, Pat Norbury, John A Nelson, Ron Hanks, Arthur W Hinaman, Aaron L Schoolcraft, Ezequiel N Parrilla, Richard Kvale, Vince Welbaum, Regional Fire Directors, Regional Aviation Officers