

International Fire Aviation Working Group – Practice Guide

Fire Operations

FO 5.5 - Briefings.

This voluntary Practice Guide forms part of a series in the International Fire Aviation Guidelines.

1. Purpose

- 1.1. To provide guidance to Fire Agencies, Aircraft Operators and Pilots about Operational Briefings

2. Application

- 2.1. Comprehensive and accurate briefings of personnel are critical to safe and successful fire aviation operations.
- 2.2. Due to its complexity and inherent risks comprehensive briefings of all personnel involved in air operations is mandatory.
- 2.3. The Incident Controller (IC) is responsible for ensuring that appropriate briefings occur to all aviation personnel in a timely manner.
- 2.4. Incident Management teams must allocate clear responsibilities for the conduct of briefings.

3. Briefings

- 3.1. When there is an ongoing operation, the IC must ensure that a briefing is conducted at the start of each day's aviation activities. Person conducting the briefing is to record that a briefing has occurred in their personal log book.
- 3.2. Briefings must be given to personnel prior to undertaking Air Operations at an established incident. The briefing is to cover key aspects of the operation particularly the airbase emergency procedures, any logistical arrangements and any prepared specific daily requirements. An established operation is an incident that has escalated to a level whereby air operations continue longer than one day.
- 3.3. As a minimum strategic daily briefings must be given, but more frequent briefings may be required, in a manner appropriate to the efficient transfer of information during an incident;
 - Task specific briefings must be given and will normally follow the general briefing or later in the day prior to the task.
 - Individual aircraft briefings are the responsibility of the Pilot in Command (PIC). Pilots should brief all passengers as per the relevant Civil Aviation Orders and Company Operations Manual

4. Briefings

- 4.1. In order to be effective, briefings must be appropriately tailored to the circumstances, considering factors such as:
- role and responsibilities of the personnel being briefed;
 - whether the information has been previously provided.
 - In general terms briefings should aim principally to include only important or changed information, in order to avoid information overload or distraction. Other information may be provided in written form for reference if required.
 - Briefings should be conducted, if practicable, where distractions are minimal.
 - Consideration should be given to appropriate use of visual or electronic aids when conducting briefings. Written briefings may be utilised where appropriate.

5. Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

- 5.1. Procedures must be in place to ensure that appropriate Personal Protective Equipment is utilised by personnel involved in Fire Aviation.
- 5.2. PPE Procedures should specify:
- roles and/or specific personnel required to utilise PPE or specific operations requiring use of PPE; and
 - PPE required to be utilised in each case.

6. Conduct of Briefing

- 6.1. Briefings should as far as possible follow the SMEAC format (see attachment 1)
- 6.2. Prior to commencement of flight operations all personnel involved should be briefed together. However, late arriving aircraft crews and those flying early must not be overlooked; there may be a need to conduct multiple briefings.
- 6.3. A suitable area for the conduct of briefings should include an area for self-briefing and flight planning by aircrew.
- 6.4. Pilots should be provided with a copy of the aviation section of the IAP and other relevant sections of the IAP on a daily basis. Aviation personnel are to be provided with a copy or access to a copy of the IAP on a daily basis or as the situation changes
- 6.5. At the completion of the briefing all pilots and crew must be willing and able to undertake the tasks that have been allocated.
- 6.6. A debrief should be conducted post operational tasking.

7. Aircraft Task Briefing

- 7.1. Task specific briefings must be given. Initial task briefings will normally follow the general briefing and during the day as required prior to the task.
- 7.2. Task specific briefings will normally be verbal but shall include specific information in written form.
- 7.3. Safety briefings shall be given to every passenger prior to entering the safety circle to board a helicopter. The briefing may be given by the Pilot or other qualified personnel (e.g. the Airbase Manager, the Flight Manager, Helicopter Crew member or Loadmaster).

8. Operational radio frequencies

- 8.1. A combination of default fixed and mission-specific frequencies may be used for communication in the event of fire operations. Fixed frequencies must be organised in conjunction with the relevant Civil Aviation Authority and confirmed prior to each fire season. Other frequencies may be made available for the exclusive use of fire agencies in the event of fire operations.
- 8.2. All frequencies to be used on a specific mission must be covered comprehensively during the pre-flight briefing and made easily available to flight crew and air base personnel for the duration of the flight.
- 8.3. If the operational frequencies are reallocated or are to change for any reason, such as moving between geographical areas, this must be communicated in advance and clearly understood by both Air Crew and ground personnel.

Attachment 1 – Aviation Briefing

1. Format (SMEACS)

1.1. The five elements of a good briefing can be remembered with the acronym SMEAC:

- S - Situation
- M - Mission
- E - Execution
- A - Administration/Logistics
- C – Command and Communications
- S - Safety

1.2. Personnel conducting briefings should ensure they comply with the SMEACS format so as to provide complete, consistent, relevant and up-to-date information.

2. Situation

2.1. This section provides an overview of the current fire situation and should include:

- Where is the fire now?
- Where is the fire going based on weather, fuel, topography?
- What is happening on the fire ground?
- What resources including aircraft are committed and available?
- What is the fore expected to impact on?

Factors that may be considered within the aviation context of the situation can include:

Issue	Factors		
Incident	Status, location and size	Direction, intensity and behaviour	Area of concern, and rate of spread
Topography	Hills, mountains, valleys	Water points	Other considerations including vegetation
Weather	Current	Forecasted winds, temperatures	Significant features
Exposure	Assets at risk	Environmental	Possible community and cultural impacts
Damage	Communities, towns	Environmental, losses, area burnt	Stock and fencing
Current Resources	Personnel and equipment on hand	Specialist equipment	Water resources, plant, tankers, aircraft

3. Mission

- 3.1. The Mission is primary control objective of the fire incident as set out in Incident Action Plans and approved by the Incident controller. Sometimes Mission Command principals are used.
- 3.2. The concept of Mission Command is based on issuing a carefully worded 'Commander's Intent' that focuses on describing the outcome that the Commander envisages, and the purpose.
- 3.3. The concept relies on crews being well trained and trust exists between commander and crews. It also assumes there is good information flow.
- 3.4. When implemented well, the Mission Command concept results in less detailed and less prescriptive orders.
- 3.5. A focus on the Commander's Intent results in a focus on the outcome. It leaves crews more freedom to achieve the outcome in the best way they choose, rather than having this dictated.
- 3.6. The concept can also allow a subordinate to 'seize the initiative' when an unforeseen opportunity arises that may not be foreseen by a Commander. The Commander's role then becomes one of procuring and providing the resources and authority for crews to achieve the intent. This does not absolve the Commander of the role of supervision - observing, engaging, monitoring and overseeing by Commanders is a vital part of Mission Command.

4. Execution

- 4.1. The strategies, tactics and tasks assigned to specific resources and teams to achieve the stated objective. This should include branch plans or alternatives as required.
- 4.2. The Incident Action Plan outlines the strategy and tactics and deployments for the shift

5. Administration and Logistics

- 5.1. This part of the briefing is intended to cover
 - Incident management structure including, location of incident control points, assembly / staging areas;
 - Food and drinking water; preparation and delivery;
 - Clothing and personal protective equipment;
 - Re-supply (e.g. fuel, food, water, foam, and other supplies);
 - Method of personnel and resource movement;
 - Timings of meetings;
 - Resource timing requirements - dispatch, arrival, assigned, return;
 - Shift changeover - time, place and method;
 - Accommodation and welfare arrangements;
 - Specialist resources - method of dispatch;
 - Mechanical maintenance;

- Staging Area layout and procedures;
- A traffic management plan, if required, showing direction of travel around the incident; and
- Information regarding necessary logistical arrangements.

6. Command and Communications

6.1. This part of the briefing is intended to provide

- A structural chart depicting the personnel in the Incident Management Team;
- Management arrangements, including the establishment of any Sectors and/or Divisions and their respective roles;
- Identification of the resources to be allocated to each Division and/or Sector
- Maps and plans of the incident's location showing Divisions, Sectors and the fire area affected;
- A communications structure plan and technical requirements, including information on all agencies involved, with appropriate contact details that includes the following:
 - Aircraft and external resource communications;
 - Selection of radio channels and resource identification call signs;
 - Telephone, facsimile and information technology specifics;
 - Inter-agency communications;
 - Buildings internal communications system;
 - Media strategy; and
 - The Incident Controller to state the frequency of Situation Reports and content required.

7. Safety

7.1. This section sets out information on

- Predicted weather changes
- Personal protective equipment to be worn
- Known and anticipated hazards
- Anchor points, safe zones and escape routes
- Location of first aid/medical facilities including crew rehabilitation
- Public safety issues, deaths, injuries or evacuations in progress or completed
- Community Information, warnings issued
- Critical issues or time periods (e.g. expected wind changes)

