



National
Operational
Guidance

Control measure

**Notify the appropriate authorities
about potential hazards to aircraft**



NFCC
National Fire
Chiefs Council

Developed and maintained by the NFCC



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Control measure knowledge

Wildfires can produce significant smoke plumes, which can reduce visibility for pilots. Wildfires can also produce strong thermal updrafts that may be hazardous to flight. This means wildfires may present a significant hazard to a variety of aircraft, including aircraft deployed at the incident, and aircraft that may be present in the area for other reasons (for example, commercial aircraft or Ministry of Defence aircraft).

In addition, aircraft flown by other agencies, or by members of the public who are not involved in suppressing the fire, may inadvertently or deliberately fly over or near to the wildfire. This presents a hazard to personnel involved in both aerial and ground operations.

Fire and rescue services need to consider that commercial aircraft and unmanned aircraft that are not involved in suppression operations may be flown at, or near, a wildfire incident. They may, for example, be used to record media footage of the incident or to inspect national infrastructure such as power lines or pipelines. These aircraft may fly near to aerial or ground resources, increasing the likelihood of an air-to-air or air-to-ground collision.

It is important that fire and rescue services notify air traffic control as soon as possible if there is a possibility that the wildfire may represent a hazard to aircraft in the area. Air traffic control can then issue warnings and instructions to aircraft in the vicinity of the fire. If required, the police can request that air traffic control create an air exclusion zone around a fire, to prevent unauthorised aircraft or unmanned aircraft from flying over, or near, the incident.

Strategic actions

Fire and rescue services should:

- Identify and compile contact details for all National Air Traffic Control and all air traffic control units within their area
- Identify the areas covered by individual air traffic controls within their area



Tactical actions

Incident commanders should:

- Request that the fire control room notifies air traffic control if a wildfire incident is likely to present a hazard to aircraft
- Contact the police to request an air exclusion zone around the wildfire to assist in maintaining the safety of the aerial and ground resources deployed
- Consider suspending aerial operations if unauthorised aircraft are present and pose a risk