

Blue Ribbon Panel on Aerial Wildland Firefighting Questions and Answers

9/30/02

Q1: What is the purpose the Blue Ribbon Panel on Aerial Wildland Firefighting?

A1: Forest Service Chief Dale Bosworth and Bureau of Land Management Director Kathleen Clarke chartered the panel in light of the many issues surrounding aerial firefighting including three fatal aviation accidents during the summer of 2002. The Panel is an external fact-finding group, charged with identifying key information for planning the safe and effective future operations of the wildland firefighting aviation program. Their report will help the agencies determine the adequacy of the current system by identifying weakness and failpoints, and strengths, in areas of safety, operational effectiveness, costs, sustainability, and strategic guidance.

Q2: Who is on the Panel?

A2: The Panel members provide a cross section of extensive experience including military and civilian aviation. Information on the Panel members is available at www.fs.fed.us/fire/blue_ribbon/index.html

Q3: How are they going to proceed?

A3: The Panel will be traveling to [various cities](#) to gather comments from wildland firefighting agency aviators and program managers in government sessions, and private citizens and individuals involved in the airtanker and helicopter industry in an invited panel and open Town Meeting format. The Panel will also be accepting [written, faxed and email comments](#) to consider for their report.

Q4: What kind of recommendations will the Panel make?

A4: The Panel will not be making recommendations. They will be providing an assessment report on the overall wildland firefighting aviation program. Any recommendations in the report will be those provided by panel members and the public as a matter of included comments. The Panel was asked to submit their findings by November 2002.

Q5: Is the Panel only talking to Forest Service aviation folks in the government section?

A5: No. The Panel has talked with OAS, BLM and Forest Service aviation personnel and will continue to be open to wildland firefighting agency employees who want to contact the panel and provide input.

Q6: How are the wildland firefighting agency aviation personnel going to interact with the Blue Ribbon Panel?

A6: The Panel is asking the agency aviation folks to prepare an assessment of their program such as management, operations, and equipment, including strengths and weaknesses, and present that information to the panel. There will be brief meetings of these key aviation and fire management personnel in as many regions as possible with questions as needed in this informal environment. However, to ensure that everyone's view is considered, the panel is encouraging anyone interested to submit [written comments for the record](#).

Q7: Who will be attending the invited panel discussion session at the Regional Town meetings and how were they chosen?

A7: The individuals participating at the open panel discussion segment of the meetings represent a cross section of wildland firefighting aviation industry professionals, and were chosen through Forest Service and BLM Aviation Manager recommendations to help provide an in-depth picture of the issues. This panel discussion session is part of the meeting, open to anyone attending, and will be recorded for the record.

The agencies' Aviation Managers also provided the Panel a list of technical specialists that may be contacted for further information in the areas of the airtanker industry, the helicopter industry, management oversight, structural engineering, contracts, air base facilities and lead planes. The individuals may or may not participate actively as invited panel members, but will be asked to submit written comments or invited to provide information during the Town Meeting session.

Q8: How will the Town Meetings be run? Can anyone participate?

A8: Anyone who wishes to provide a perspective into the aerial wildland firefighting programs can sign up and speak to the Panel at the [Town Meeting](#) session. Those who participate will be reminded to stay on topic, and will have a limited time in which to make their key points. Speakers addressing the Blue Ribbon Panel at the town meeting will be recorded, and the transcript of their comments included in the final record.

For additional information, go to www.fs.fed.us/fire/blue_ribbon, or contact Rose Davis, Forest Service Fire and Aviation Management Public Affairs, NIFC, (208) 387-5437. The email address is rzdavis@fs.fed.us