



Zion National Park Fire Management



Interagency Air Operations Center Opens in Cedar City

An open house was held on June 6, 2002 to celebrate the opening of the Interagency Air Operations Center in Cedar City, Utah. This newly constructed facility was a cooperative effort between the Bureau of Land Management Cedar City District Office (who provided the majority of funding and planning documents), the National Park Service (Zion National Park), the National Forest Service (Dixie National Forest), and Utah Division of Forestry, Fire and State Lands. All of these agencies make up an organization that is known as the Color Country Interagency Fire Management Area that works cooperatively to manage all aspects of wildland fire management in Southwest Utah and Northwest Arizona. The center will serve as an aerial resource center for interagency firefighting efforts throughout the Eastern Great Basin area.

This project was funded through congressional appropriations associated with the National Fire Plan of 2000, which recognized the need for improved firefighting preparedness after that year's severe wildfire season. One of the key needs documented by the plan was to construct and repair air tanker and helitack bases across seven western states. These bases are a nationally shared firefighting resource.

The Air Operations Center will house an air tanker base (consisting of a Type II Airtanker, capable of delivering 2450 gallons of retardant), a fixed-wing base (consisting of a twin-engine aerial command aircraft that provides aerial supervision of aircraft on wildfires) and an eight-person National Park Service Helicopter Module (providing initial attack capability and aerial reconnaissance and support), and a dispatch center to coordinate all of the air activity. A ready room, kitchen and sleeping area will provide crew and staff with on-site amenities. Future plans will provide quarters for 12 Bureau of Land Management Smokejumpers, who will be stationed out of the facility through the fire season.

The Air Operations Center will provide for quicker, safer and more efficient protection from wildfires that threaten public and private properties in the Eastern Great Basin and throughout the west. It also represents the value of interagency cooperation that is vital in our efforts to successfully manage wildland fire.