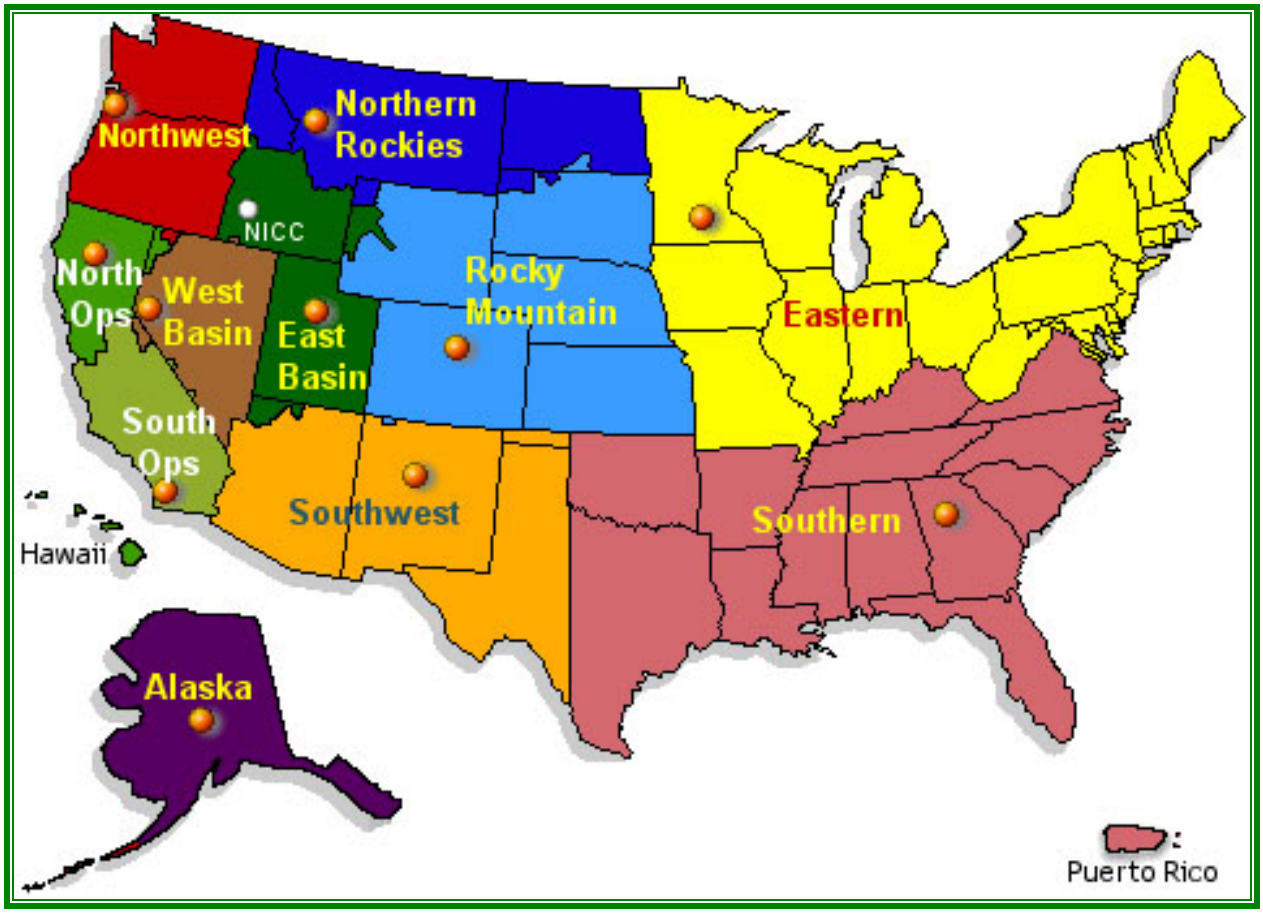
USDA FOREST SERVICE

2008 NATIONAL SMOKEJUMPER REPORT



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DC-3 (J-42) dropping cargo

National Smokejumper Program

USDA FOREST SERVICE

2008 REPORT

Introduction

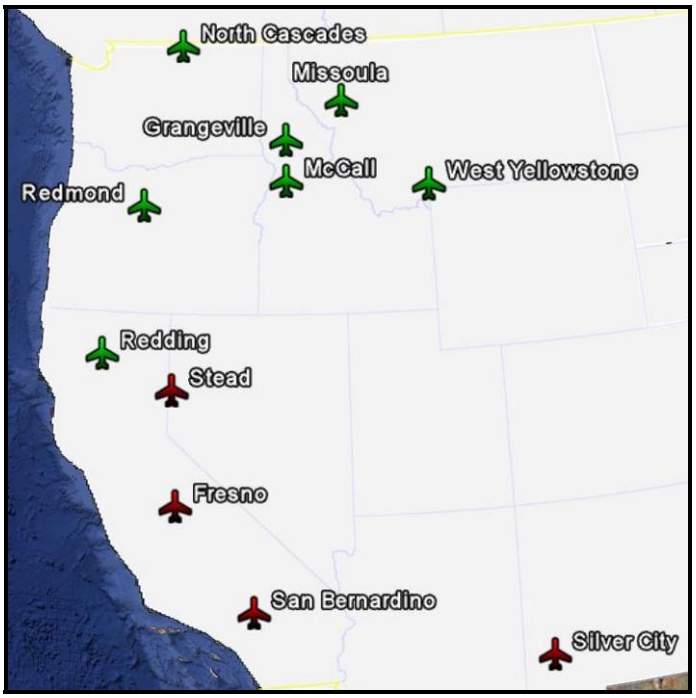
This report reflects the contributions that Forest Service Smokejumpers made on initial attack incidents, as well as supporting the full spectrum of fire response needs, and the agency's Natural Resource agenda. The National Smokejumper program continues to provide a workforce of competent, experienced, and service oriented firefighters and fire managers.

U.S. Forest Service Smokejumper Mission

The U.S. Forest Service Smokejumper mission is to implement programs that support the land stewardship and public safety goals of the U.S. Forest Service. At its core, our job is to protect human life, defend communities and property at risk, and conserve natural resources. In cooperation with our federal, state, and local partners, we are the workforce that natural resource and emergency managers look to for safe and effective response to wildfires and other emergencies, and who carry out a wide-range of conservation projects that serve to promote our Nation's legacy of healthy and productive forests and grasslands.

Permanent Forest Service Smokejumper Bases

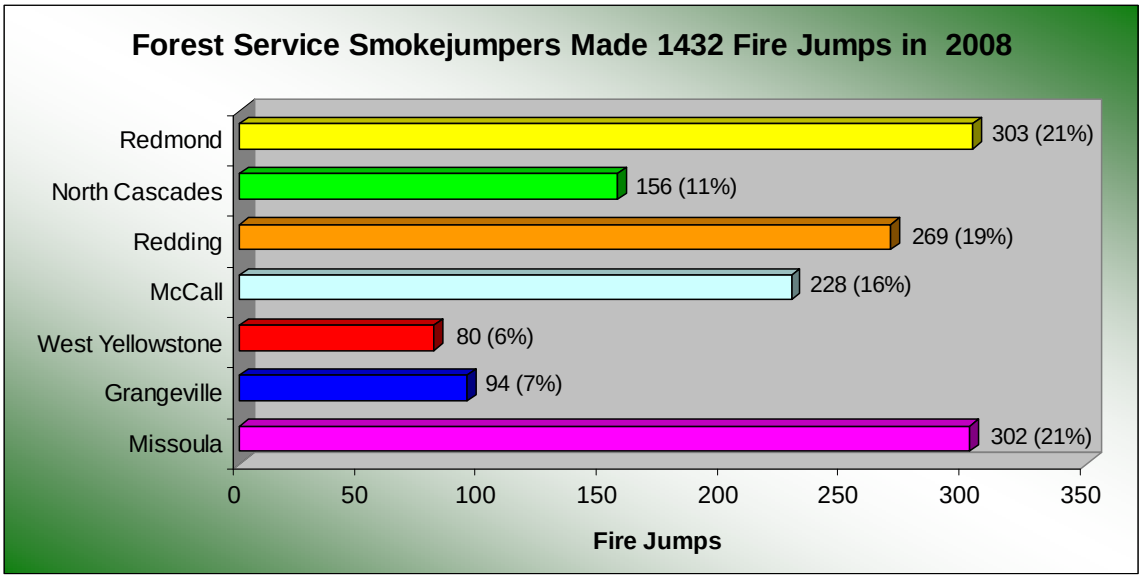
Smokejumper Base	Region	Type/Owner	Call Sign	Smokejumpers
Missoula	R-1	DC-3/USFS	J-15	74
		Sherpa/USFS	J-79	
Grangeville	R-1	DHC-6 Twin Otter/Leading Edge	J-14	30
West Yellowstone	R-1	Dornier 228/Bighorn	J-13	29
McCall	R-4	DHC-6 Twin Otter/USFS	J-41	64
		DC-3/USFS	J-42	
		DHC-6 Twin Otter/USFS	J-43	
Redding	R-5	Sherpa/USFS	J-51	37
		Dornier 228/Bighorn	J-52	
North Cascades	R-6	Casa 212/Bighorn	J-09	28
Redmond	R-6	Sherpa/USFS	J-73	51
		Sherpa/USFS	J-79	
Seven Bases	**4 Regions**	**12 Aircraft**		**313**



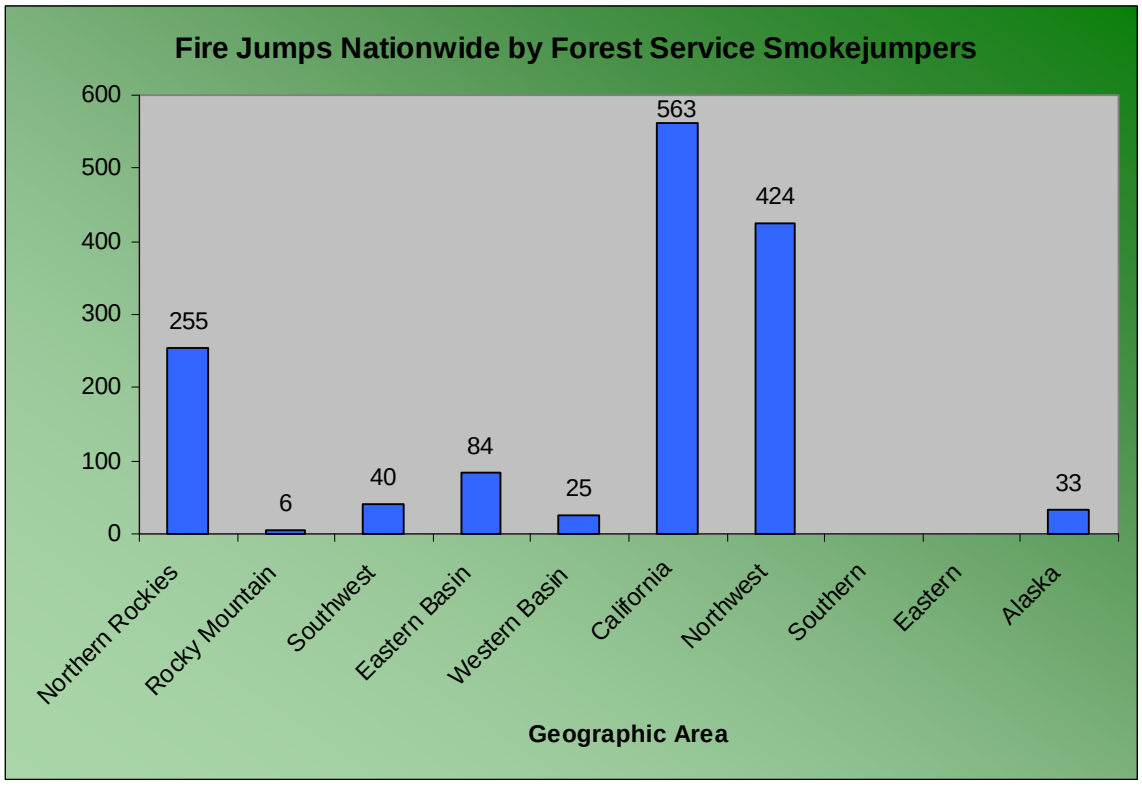
Spike Base Locations Utilized in 2008

Spike Base Location	Region	Duration (days)	Fires Jumped	Ground Action	Total Fire Assignments
Silver City, NM	R-3	62	9	3	12
Stead, NV	R-4	26	7	1	8
Fresno	R-5	21	6	0	6
San Bernardino	R-5	21	2	0	2
Total Activity	**3 Regions**	**130**	**24**	**4**	**28**

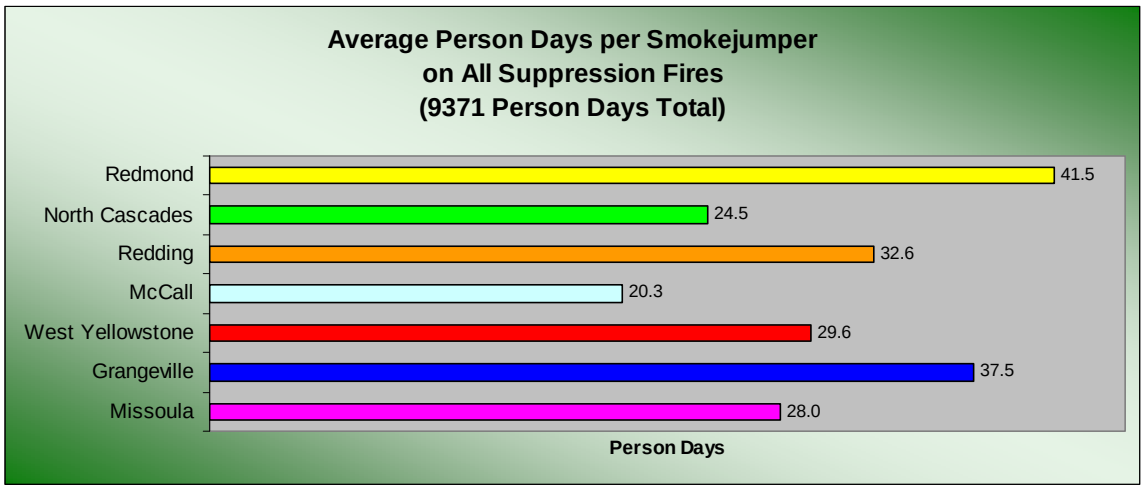
Fire Jumps



This graph shows the contribution of each Smokejumper base to fire jumps made in 2008.

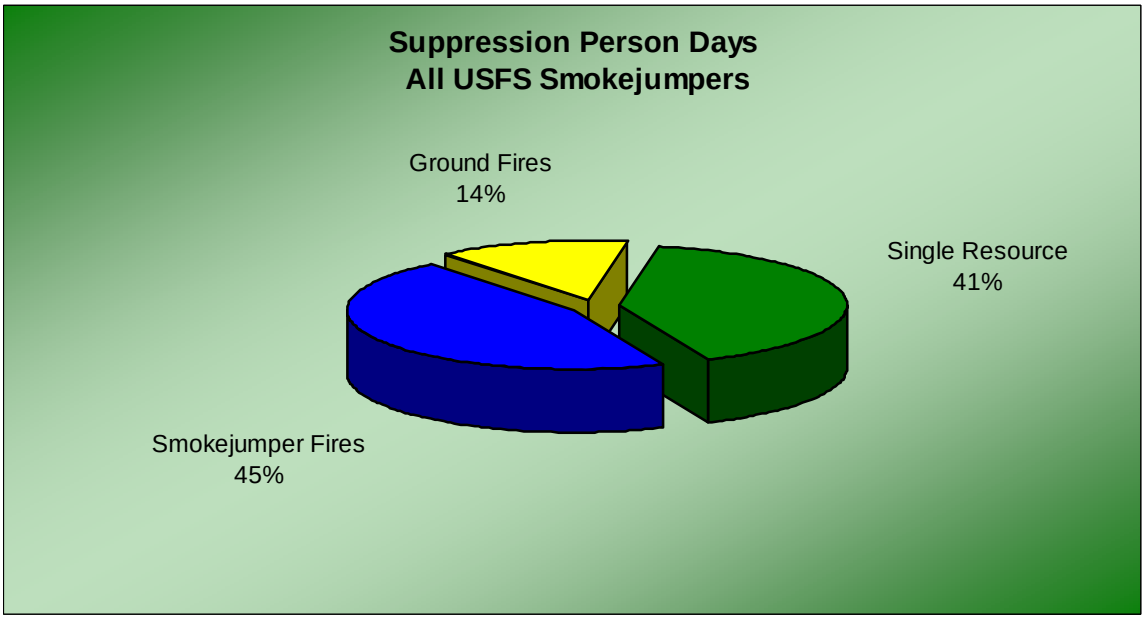


The above graph shows fire jumps made by all USFS Smokejumpers in each Geographic area.



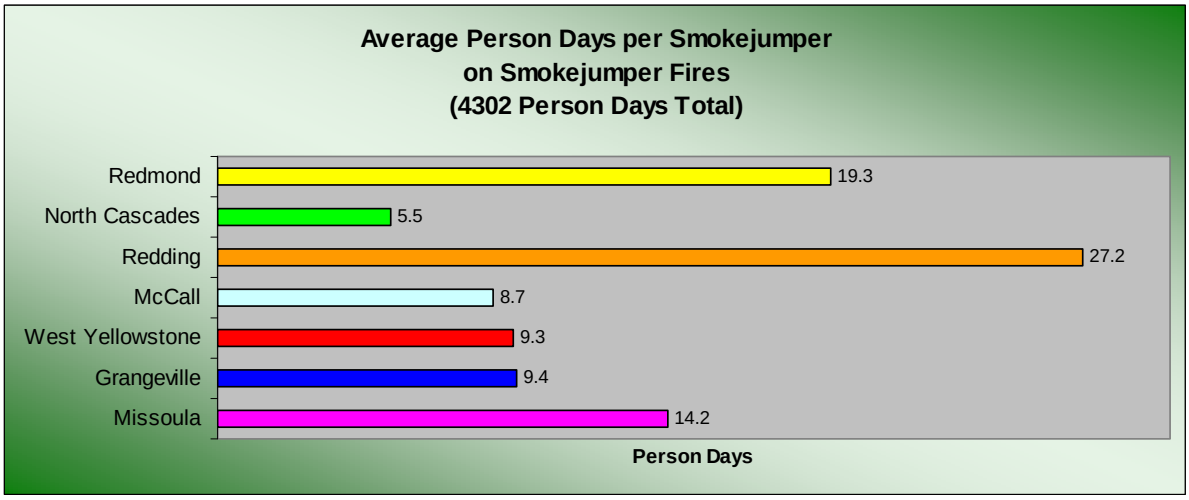
In 2008, each of the 313 smokejumpers nationally spent an average of 30 days on suppression assignments.

As a program, 4266 person days were spent on Smokejumper fires, 1282 person days were spent on "Pounder" fires, and 3823 person days were spent working as Single Resources.



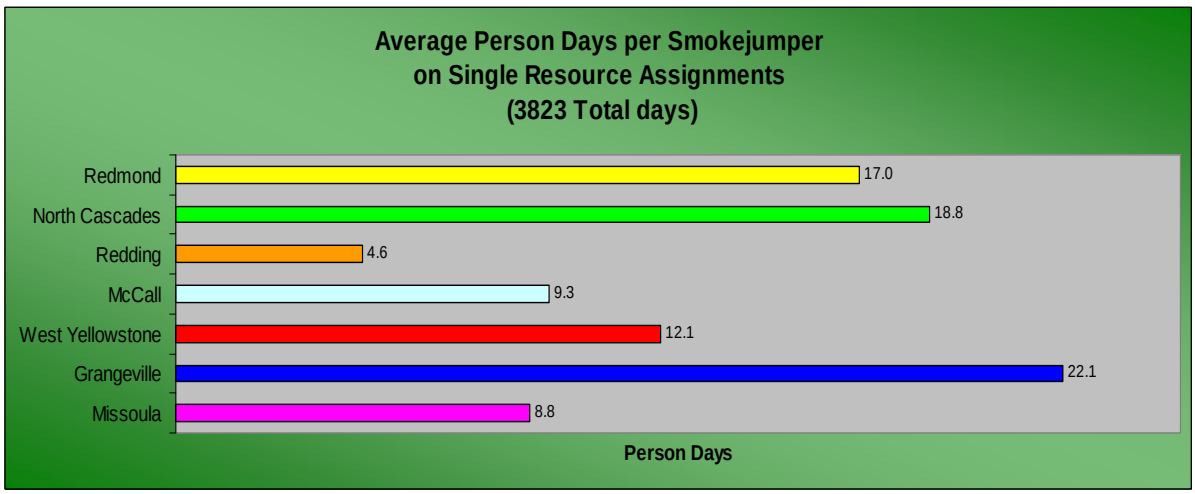
Smokejumpers adjust to fit the need. During periods of heavy Initial Attack, they are available to be delivered by parachute, helicopter, or ground. When large incidents need assistance, Smokejumpers serve as Single Resources who provide leadership and/or specialized skills in support of these incidents.

Smokejumpers spent almost an equal amount of time filling critical single resource positions as they did on smokejumper fires. Considerably less time was spent on Initial/Extended Attack of fires staffed through means other than parachuting.

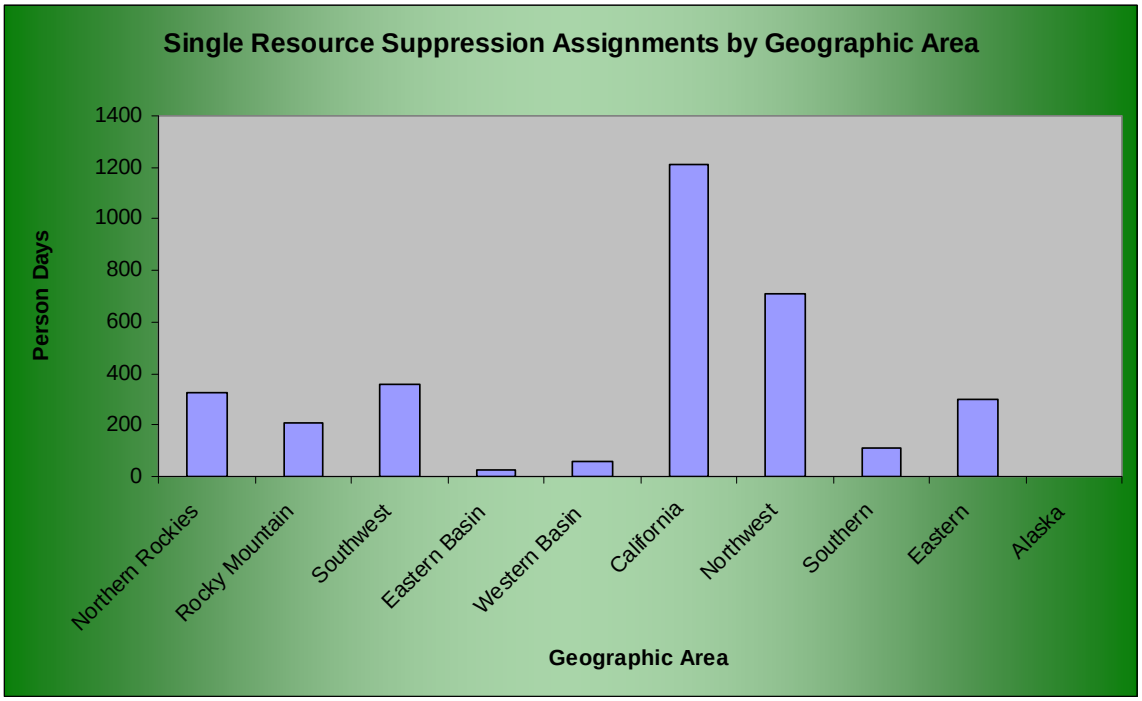


A Smokejumper's traditional role is to parachute into rugged terrain in order to work emerging fire incidents. The speed, range, and payload of Smokejumper aircraft allow for a large number of firefighters to be quickly deployed on incidents over a great distance.

The above graph shows the average number of days a Smokejumper from each base spent on Smokejumper fires in 2008.



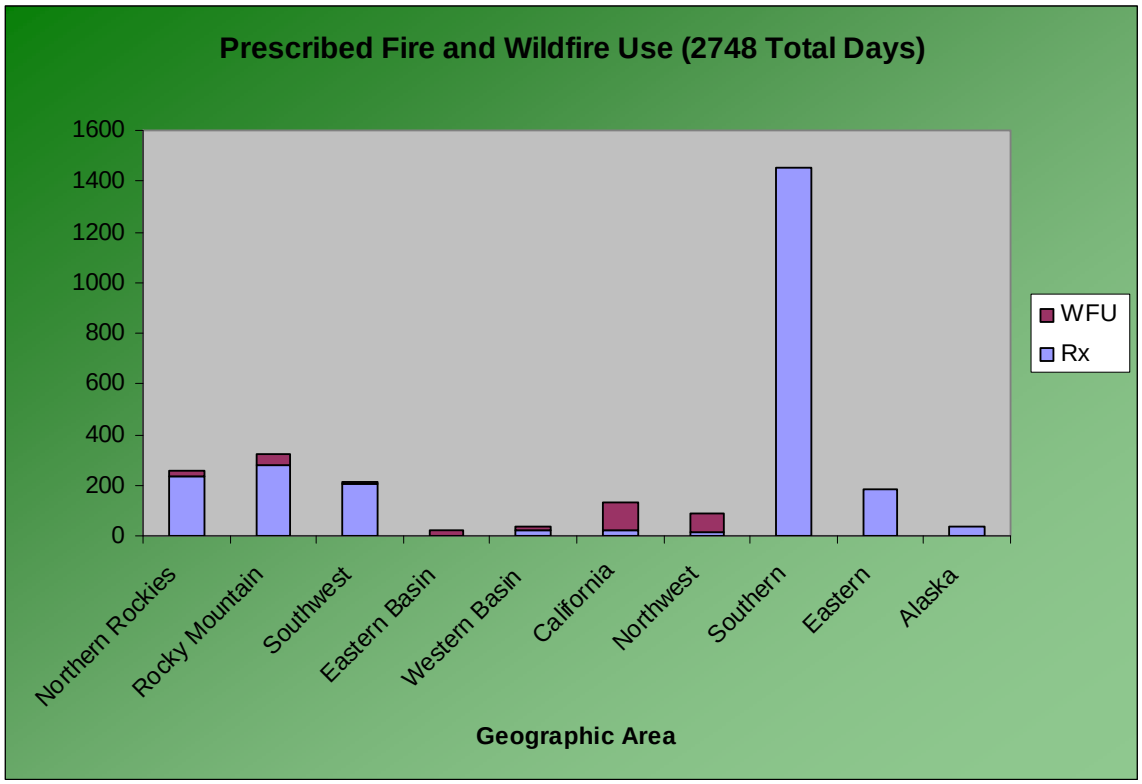
In 2008, Smokejumpers spent 3823 person days in this capacity. The above graph shows the average number of days a Smokejumper from each base worked as a Single Resource.



The above graph shows the days Smokejumpers spent working as Single Resources in each Geographic area. The distribution is indicative of the fire activity in each Geographic Area.

LeHardy Fire, Yellowstone National Park

Resource Management Activities from Forest Service Bases



The above graph shows Smokejumper contributions in accomplishing prescribed fire targets and managing fire for resource benefit in each geographic area. Throughout the year, Smokejumpers worked on a variety of projects across the nation such as prescribed fire, mechanical fuels treatment, trail work, and tree climbing.

NCSB Smokejumper working on arbor project

2008 Season Overview

The following are excerpts from individual base reports for 2008.

REGION ONE

Missoula: Fire season in Region One was slow, with only 146 fire jumps made out of Missoula. Consequently, most of the rookies got their first fire jumps on boosters to other bases. With Region Five seeing so much action, this also meant that it was a good year for single resource assignments, and that translated to a lot of training opportunities and 37 task books being signed off.

Twelve Forest Service smokejumpers were sent to Alaska to train on the BLM ram air parachute system this year. Missoula sent four in hopes of gaining program experience. The Assistant Base Manager, Loft Foreman, Training Foreman, and a Loadmaster Spotter went. This allowed overhead from most functional areas to be trained with the thought of being able to train more jumpers in the future. Missoula would like to have a significant number of jumpers trained on the BLM system in the next couple of years. This would position us well to evaluate other parachute systems and better prepare the program to safely employ whatever is selected as the next smokejumper canopy or system.

Several Missoula jumpers volunteered to assist, as needed, with the Iron 44 helicopter crash in Region Five. They worked with the Portland NIMO team and organized memorial events, assisted families of the victims-it was a challenging assignment and as the operations chief from the NIMO team said "they just got it done-whatever we asked of them." All involved with the incident had high praise for the jumpers who responded.

Grangeville: The Grangeville smokejumper program employed 30 smokejumpers in 2008. The fire season was very much below average for Region One. The first smokejumper fire staffed out of Grangeville this season was on July 21st on the Idaho Panhandle. We staffed 13 initial attack fires with 48 jumpers (12 of the 13 fires were jumped.)

As a result of the minimal fire activity in Region One, our smokejumpers spent most of the summer on the road either boosting other smokejumper bases or being utilized as single resources on larger extended attack fires in California and the Northwest.
It is interesting to note that while the Region One fire season did not provide many opportunities for initial attack, the number of days our employees spent on fire assignment and project work remained essentially the same as those in 2007.

West Yellowstone: West Yellowstone had 29 active jumpers this year not counting 9 BLM detailers. Twelve individuals accepted promotions/reassignments. The only rookie this year was a detailer from the Huron-Manistee NF in Region 9.

Six of the seven total fires jumped and seven of the nine ground actions this year were in the Greater Yellowstone Area. Fires in the GYA accounted for 76% of the person days spent on fires jumped or "pounded" from West Yellowstone.

West Yellowstone Smokejumpers filled 32 single resource assignments for a total of 350 person days. The majority of those days were spent in support of fires in Northern California and in the Southwest early in fire season.

This year West Yellowstone continued the practice of having an ICT3 on every load and providing highly qualified firefighters to assume leadership positions where needed. Four of the fires jumped or pounded out of WYS this year had a jumper ICT3, and at least one DIVS working the fire. Throughout the fire season, West Yellowstone jumpers worked as ICT3 on twelve different incidents and three Air Attack missions were flown from the base.

REGION 4

McCall: The first smokejumper refresher training session on April 28th turned out to be indicative of the upcoming fire season in the central Idaho area. Nearly two feet of snow had to be plowed from the aircraft ramp and training units. All of the refresher training jumps were completed in the Garden Valley, Idaho area, a distance of about 80 miles from McCall. The wet spring made for a fire season that was considerably below normal for the area.

A total of 64 McCall smokejumpers completed training this spring, including 6 who completed rookie training. A large number of vacancies in the current organization were filled this summer, providing career advancement opportunities for individuals both within the McCall organization as well as some individuals that transferred from other bases. The base also took advantage of a number of detail opportunities by bringing individuals into the smokejumper organization, through temporary promotions, and by detailing smokejumpers to outside fire management positions.

The first fire jump of the season was made on June 29th on the Nez Perce National Forest and the last on August 26th on the Fishlake National Forest. The fire season out of McCall was one of the slowest on record, with only 228 individual fire jumps by McCall smokejumpers this season. Of those, only 106 fire jumps on 22 fires were made from the McCall base. That is the least number of jumps in more than 10 years, and only 60% of the 10 year average. The crew was kept busy with booster crews to Redding and NCSB, a spike base operation out of Stead, NV, numerous single resource assignments and local projects.

REGION FIVE

Redding: The California Smokejumpers had a record breaking year in 2008. The lightning storm of June 20th and 21st set the table for a fire season that would highlight the utility of the smokejumper program. Smokejumpers provided firefighters, leadership, paracargo, and intelligence to a region that was combating a relentless onslaught of lightning fires. As the season progressed and eventually came to an end on October 25th, Smokejumpers parachuted to 101 fires totaling 616 fire jumps.

During the month long period from June 20th to July 20th, 431 smokejumpers were delivered to 41 fires within Region 5. To put this into perspective, more Smokejumpers were on fires in a month than are normally on fires in an entire season in California.

The significance of this year does not lie solely in the fact that smokejumper utilization was the highest it has ever been inside Region 5, but in how this record was accomplished and the circumstances in which it was achieved. The highlight of this year's success was the fact that all Region 5 smokejumpers had zero parachute related injuries. Considering all of the exposure encountered, this a significant achievement.

Region Six

North Cascades- The fire season of 2008 was modest for the North Cascades Smokejumper Base in terms of initial attack activity due to considerably less lightning in our locale, but was still a successful and rewarding season. The Pacific Northwest was poised to have an average fire season, the exceptions being northeastern Oregon and southeastern Washington where winter snowpack and spring precipitation have been consistently below average. The Methow /Okanogan region was also an area of concern given its historical high fire frequency and large fire potential, however close to average snowpack and rainfall as well as unusually low lightning activity made for a fairly quiet fire season.

North Cascades Smokejumpers staffed 64 fires nationally this season, with 30 of those fires (for a total of 156 jumps) staffed out of the North Cascades base. The first fire was jumped on July 1st and the last on September 20th. Of these fires the majority were jumped on the Okanogan/Wenatchee National Forests, followed by the Idaho Panhandle. Other users were the Mount Baker Snoqualmie NF, Colville NF, North Cascades National Park, Colville BIA, and the Washington State DNR.

During the 2008 season NCSB personnel provided ICT3's and Type 3 command organizations on National Forests across the country including the Okanogan /Wenatchee NF, and the Umpqua NF. The North Cascades Smokejumpers were also able to supply desperately needed middle management positions on several large fires throughout the United States, as well as other single resource positions including trainees. These assignments accounted for over 500 work days, and included Operation Section Chief, Division Supervisor, Safety Officer, Air Tactical Group Supervisor, Task Force Leader, Crew Boss, Felling Boss, Field Observer, and Helicopter Crew Member. In Addition several North Cascades smokejumpers worked with Fire Use Modules this season, and provided qualified FEMO's and FOB's to assist in planning and implementing fire use tactics.

NCSB also contributed their climbing skills to the Okanogan/ Wenatchee National Forest, and the Colville National Forest. Jumpers assisted with ongoing campground improvement and safety projects, which included hazard tree removal, limbing, and snag creation work for wildlife habitat improvement.

Redmond- The summer of 2008 was average for number of fires jumped. Out of Redmond, 76 fires were staffed totaling 320 fire jumps. Redmond responded to those 76 fires in 16 separate land management areas. The first fire jump occurred on June 21st and the last on October 2nd. The 76 fires are approximately 103% of our 10-year average of 71 fires, and 320 fire jumps is 99% of our 10-year average of 326 fire jumps.

The Deschutes and Willamette National Forests were the primary users with 29 and 10 fires respectively. Other users were the; Umatilla, Mt. Hood, Siskiyou, Mt Baker Snoqualmie, Rogue River, Malheur, Ochoco, Burns District BLM, Umpqua, and Crater Lake National Park.

SIGNIFICANT ACTIONS

The following narratives are provided as examples of significant actions or "saves" during the 2008 fire season. It is likely smokejumper actions on these fires were instrumental in saving taxpayers millions of dollars in suppression costs.

Additionally, Smokejumpers have taken more active role in Wildland Fire Use events. In an environment of evolving fire policy, the ability to adapt has allowed the Smokejumper program to serve managers' needs for modified management strategies. These types of actions during the 2008 fire season were also considered to be significant in terms of Smokejumper contributions.

Missoula Smokejumpers

Gould Fire: Lightning caused over 1000 fires on June 21st 2008 in Northern California. At 0900 on Sunday the 22nd of June, 10 smokejumpers (9 MSO + 1 RDD) dispatched out of Redding, jumped the Gould Fire on the rugged and remote Klamath National Forest. The initial size up from the previous day was 3-5 acres on an east/west ridge with fire on the north and south aspect.

Upon arrival at the fire an ASM platform was actively suppressing the fire by directing retardant drops. Air attack estimated the size to be 30-50 acres in steep remote terrain. This was the only day that retardant was used. The jumpers set up a short ICT3 team, ordered additional man power and supplies, and initiated line construction. Line construction was extremely difficult as the steep terrain illustrated well what is meant by "Klamath Spread"- roll-out.

Over the course of the next 6 days resources came and went with none, other than the jumpers, staying more than 3 days. Due to the extreme fire situation in Northern California there were no overhead teams to be had. The resources included 2 10-person helitack modules, a 10-person fire-use module, the Klamath Hotshots, a 20-person type II crew from Utah, the 20-person Blue Goose Fish & Wildlife crew, a 20-person Crew #2, 2 professional sawyers, and a light and medium helicopter. No aviation resources were ever exclusively assigned to the incident and flight time was extremely limited at times due to pilot flight hour guidelines. In spite of daily optimism of catching the fire and hard work by all, it wasn't until Friday June 27th at 1400 that the fire was finally contained at 211 acres.

The fire was then handed to a Type 3 team from Alaska that was brought in because there were no other resources available to take over the fire for the previous week. Upon demobilization the local AFMO (Battalion 41) thanked the jumpers for their hard work and expressed that 95% of time the Gould Fire would not have been caught but that leadership, solid tactics, teamwork and tenacity had made this fire a great catch. The combination of an IC Type 3 and excellent teamwork made for huge cost saving and decreased exposure to multiple hazards.

Grangeville Smokejumpers

Rattlesnake Fire: The Rattlesnake fire was started August 5, 2008 by rafters along the Selway River at Rattlesnake bar. Due to windy conditions and steep terrain, it quickly grew to 200 acres. The Moose Creek Ranger District had jurisdiction over the incident. Although the fire was in a traditional fire use area, it could not be classified as fire use due to the circumstances of its ignition, so an Appropriate Management Response strategy of Confine/Contain was adopted. Point source protection for the Shearer Guard Station, the Selway Lodge, and several pack bridges were the priority for resources that would be assigned. The district requested an ICT3 to manage the incident which was supplied by the Grangeville smokejumpers as well as a trainee.

The jumpers and a compliment of 12 additional firefighters were flown into the Shearer Air Strip at 0700 on August 6, utilizing Grangeville's Twin Otter for transport. These personnel began triaging structure protection needs while smokejumpers at Grangeville and Missoula readied pumps, structure protection equipment, tools, and food supplies for para-cargo support to the incident. McCall's Twin Otter was brought to Grangeville to cover initial attack responsibilities while J-14 completed logistical flights of personnel into Shearer Airstrip, and paracargo to the Selway Lodge.

Over the next five days, cabin wrap and water handling equipment totaling 6400 lbs was delivered to the Rattlesnake fire via paracargo. The jumpers coordinated the reception of the equipment as well as the development and implementation of a structure protection plan and a firing plan for the Selway Lodge. They coordinated with the district to establish management action points for implementation of their plans depending on fire activity and risk to structures in the river corridor.

By August 10th, natural barriers and well timed checking actions along the flank of the fire nearest the structures combined with cooler weather had decreased the probability of the fire becoming a problem and the fire was turned over to a district ICT4.

On August 21, a Grangeville smokejumper replaced the district ICT4 and due to cooler weather and a favorable extended forecast, recommended removing much of the structure protection equipment. The jumpers facilitated removal of equipment and demobilizing personnel aboard J-41, with the remainder of the supplies packaged for transport by pack train at a later date.

West Yellowstone Smokejumpers

Deer Creek Fire: Deer Creek fire was initially reported by Jumper -13 (empty) on the evening of Aug 6, 2008, as a small, one load or less fire. An order was placed for a load of jumpers that evening for an early morning fire jump. The following morning the IC called Dillon dispatch for an update on the incident. The fire was reported at 5+ acres burning in heavy fuels and the fire also increased in size. The weather forecast was for temps in the low 80's, RH 20-25%, 30% chance of thunderstorms and a CWR 10%. Winds SW 5-12 with heavy gusts around storms. With this information the IC requested an ATGS, Type II Helicopter, and an airtanker prior to launching the jumpship. At 0800 J-13 launched from WYIFC and completed initial jump mission by 0856.

The ICT3 (t) proceeded to the fire and reported approximately 10 acres burning actively down slope with creeping and torching. An order was immediately placed for an additional 8 jumpers who were dropped at 0920. At approximately the same time Helicopter 468, Lead 47, and Tanker 21 arrived on the fire. Using Lead 47 to manage the FTA until ATGS arrival at 1030, the jumpers were able to simultaneously begin working the west and north flanks of the fire and also continue jump operations, deploying the initial 8 jumpers on the fireline. The aircraft were effective in knocking down the fire activity using the airtanker to build line while Helicopter 468 knocked down hotspots. Tanker 21 dropped two loads and was released along with the Lead Plane. An order was placed for additional pumps, hose, and a 20 person Type II crew. The pump/hose order was filled by para-cargo and dropped by J-13 at 1230.

Through aggressive initial attack in the early morning stages the fire was not able to grow and was, in essence, knocked down before the mid-morning burn period had begun. Keep in mind the fire was torching at 0830 and had burned actively throughout the first night.

The following day a monsoonal push arrived with increased RH and moisture which significantly reduced the fire behavior. It was decided to reduce the fire from a Type 3 to a Type 4 organization and release all but two of the jumpers with the arrival of the 20 person hand crew the following day.

In conclusion, with early detection and the permission to do aggressive initial attack along with good availability of resources before the beginning of the burn period, the jumpers from West Yellowstone were able to keep this fire at a Type 3 organization, work the fire safely and keep costs to a minimum.

Redding Smokejumpers

Star Fire: Throughout the fire siege of 2008 smokejumpers made significant contributions to fires all over the State of California. Whenever smokejumpers were available aircraft would depart the Redding base and deliver firefighters to both small and large incidents. As the days went by and the fires grew larger there were fewer incidents that remained reasonable for the use of initial attack resources. There were exceptions though, and the Star fire on the Sierra National Forest was one of them.

The Star fire was located mid slope in the Merced River drainage. The fire was framed by Yosemite National Park to the north and a broken granite ridge forming Star Lakes to the South. The fire was not staffed for several days due to the fact that it was inaccessible and no aerial delivered firefighters were available. On June 24th, a load of 10 smokejumpers flew from Redding and began taking initial action on the fire. The fire was estimated to be 150 acres and the smokejumper in charged determined an ICT3 was necessary. The next morning, another load of 10 smokejumpers flew from Redding and staffed the fire with an ICT3. The fire continued to grow but remained within grasp for two primary reasons: The top of the fire was being kept in check by a large, continuous band of broken granite, and the smokejumpers were able to establish an anchor point at the heal of the fire prohibiting it from backing any further down into the Merced River. Another load of smokejumpers arrived on the 26th and the thirty smokejumpers put all of their effort into stopping the lateral movement on the left and right flanks. A helispot was cut so that additional resources could be flown in and with the help of four hotshot crews the Star Fire was contained to 375 acres by July 1st.

The Star Fire was a significant save for the Region 5 Smokejumpers and showcased our ability to provide leadership as well as abundant personnel to contain a problematic fire. To highlight how problematic fires burning in the Merced River Drainage can be, it is worth noting that the Oliver fire was burning about 7 miles down drainage of the Star during the same period of time. This fire burned 2,789 acres, but more significantly it cost nearly 12.5 million dollars to suppress.

Redmond Smokejumpers

Wizard Fire: In late September the Wizard fire burned aggressively in a rugged, highly visual, and politically sensitive area of the Deschutes NF. Redmond smokejumpers were instrumental in providing a significant overhead contribution during the initial attack phase of the fire. The overhead contribution included a Type 3 IC, 2 Division Supervisors, 2 Dozer Bosses, several Task Force Leaders, and several C Fallers. As suppression activities continued over the next several days Redmond smokejumpers continued providing overhead support in key overhead positions. The positions included Type 3 IC, a Type 3 IC (T), 2 Division Supervisors, 3 Task Force Leaders, 1 Dozer Boss, 2 C Fallers, and 1 Air Attack.

North Cascades Smokejumpers

Roaring Creek Fire: On July 7, a lightning storm passed through the eastern part of Washington State igniting several fires on the Colville BIA, including a start located near Roaring Creek in Ferry County. The fire was burning in extremely steep, rocky dangerous terrain with high potential of spread. This fire threatened valuable timber resources and the conditions were right for large fire growth. Smokejumpers were requested and two loads of jumpers from NCSB were inserted that afternoon. The smokejumpers were able to provide an IC as well as DIVS in order to establish a command structure. The fire was broken into two divisions and after three long days the jumpers, with the help of BIA firefighters and air support from air tankers and helicopters, were able to contain the fire at less than 100 acres.

Summary

The National Smokejumper program continues to provide a workforce that supports the full range of fire & fuels management needs, as well as a broad range of resource management support for the U.S. Forest Service and other land management agencies. During the 2008 season, smokejumpers made a significant contribution by supplying service oriented firefighters capable of addressing the full spectrum of fire responses by adjusting to fit the needs of the land and fire managers they serve.

Smokejumper parachuting to jump spot with Twin Otter orbiting above

GLOSSARY

This page clarifies terms used by the Smokejumper program. Please see the USFS Smokejumpers National User Guide" for a thorough explanation of terms.

Fire Jump- One jumper going out the door for fire suppression mission.

Jump Fire- Wildfire that is staffed with Smokejumpers jumping from the airplane.

Paracargo- Supplies delivered to a fire or project by parachute. Every Smokejumper fire receives paracargo consisting of tools, food, and water. Paracargo is also provided to other fires.

Pounder Fire- A fire that is staffed by Smokejumpers by transport other than jumping.

Smokejumper Fire- Historically, remote fires that are not readily accessible by means other than jumping. This definition is changing to include various other roles from support, to leadership on a large variety of incidents. The critical element is that Smokejumpers are delivered via parachuting.