

Mirroring Organizations & Cooperative Integration: Enhancing a Cooperator's Aviation Program

The Challenge

A comprehensive aviation management plan is the foundation of any aviation program. This foundation must include such elements as an Aviation Management Plan, Aeronautical Risk Assessment Program, Fleet Modernization Planning, and an Aeronautical Security Plan. As responsibilities increase, organizations and personnel change, and interagency collaboration and integration are emphasized, it is imperative that a manager in charge of aviation has such a comprehensive plan in place to support projects affiliated with the forest and land management programs in a state. Conducting aviation work without a comprehensive plan is a recipe for failure and potential tragedy.

During a Fire and Aviation Management Program Review, Northeastern Area (NA) reviewers found that the cooperator was managing an aviation program without a comprehensive plan. Because of a very small workforce lacking aeronautical experience, they relied on a contracting officer to deliver the program. This meant that contracting managed the risk and contract language dictated the work. Since NA learned of this discrepancy, much has been done to help this state mitigate risk and enhance its program management.

The Solution

Resolving such a situation requires trust, collaboration, integration, and partnering to build an aviation program that establishes right from wrong, safe operations from unsafe, and delivers the program with cost efficiencies built in to deliver productive outcomes. A comprehensive aviation management plan was discussed, drafted, and developed with NA leading the effort. It required learning the cooperator's complete aviation program, the organization of the State's regions and available resources such as airports, flight services, maintenance, tanker bases, contract aircraft

A comprehensive aviation management plan is the best tool to give leadership the ability to effectively and efficiently manage an aviation program.



A comprehensive aviation management plan is the first step in planning for safer operations of all aviation missions including this Bell UH-1H fire suppression helicopter operated by the Maine Forest Service. (Photo credit: Tom Parent)

resources, and other agencies within the State that the Department of Natural Resources could make agreements for conducting mutual aid and assistance.

Resulting Benefits

The benefits include the documentation of actions needed to plan aviation projects, a blueprint for planning and preparing aviation-supported projects, the ability to conduct a dedicated risk assessment for each project using a template similar to a US Forest Service Project job hazard analysis, and a security plan that provides guidance and direction for safeguarding personnel, materials, equipment, and aircraft during aviation operations. In order to be responsive to maintenance needs, mechanical problems, threats and terrorism, and safety issues, a comprehensive plan provides the guidance for leadership to take appropriate action.

Sharing Success

Working together to develop this plan helped increase the trust and appreciation between NA and the state. The processes used in creating the plan can be used with other states to develop new plans or fine-tune existing ones. The plan has prepared the Cooperator's leadership to meet any challenge, and establishes the foundation for modernization and advancing the program to meet future needs.



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