



Office of Aviation Services (OAS)

Briefing Paper – For Information



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Issue/Topic

Drone Incursions on Wildfires – Key Messages – July 2018 Update

Key Messages

- Incursions of unauthorized drones near wildfires endanger wildland firefighters on the ground and in the air and the communities they work to protect.
- The three elements to addressing drone incursions are **Awareness**, **Notification**, and **Enforcement**.
- In 2015, DOI, working in partnership with the Department of Agriculture's U.S. Forest Service (USFS) and the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) developed and implemented the [“If You Fly; We Can't”](#) and [“B4UFLY”](#) public awareness campaigns. These [public outreach materials](#) are a [standard part](#) of every incident management team's [toolbox](#).
- In 2016, DOI led a prototype initiative to expand drone operator **awareness** to the location of wildfires, providing drone industry volunteers with access to near real time wildfire location data.
- In 2016, interagency [notification protocols](#) were also developed and instituted and the [FAA developed](#) and distributed [law enforcement protocols](#) to address reckless use of drones.
- In 2017, based on positive results from the 2016 pilot program to share wildland fire location data DOI launched [“Know Where Not To Go,”](#) an **awareness** program that made this data available to anyone (individuals, OEM's, service providers, etc.). 2017 saw [14% fewer incursions](#) than 2016.
- The interagency community has gone above and beyond to provide the public with **awareness** of the dangers to firefighters and their communities of non-participating drones incurring on wildfires and the information necessary to “know where not to go” with their drones. **Notification** protocols to ensure reported sightings of drones near wildfires are thoroughly vetted, and if confirmed, reported to proper authorities have been developed and published on the web. For those drone operators who continue to endanger firefighters and their communities by insisting on flying drones near wildfires, vigorous **enforcement** of laws and regulations pertaining to [interfering with agency functions](#) and [careless or reckless aircraft operations](#) becomes necessary.

Background

- From 2014 to 2015 drone incursions near wildfire incidents more than doubled, with 21 drones spotted, resulting in firefighting aircraft grounded six times. Since 2014, DOI and its interagency partners in the FAA, USDA-FS, and the States have taken numerous steps to address incursions.

Current Status

Drone incursion awareness and notification initiatives are mature and ongoing. DOI is working closely with local law enforcement and the FAA to promote increased enforcement. **As of July 27, 2018, there have been 18 drone incursions on wildfire, 25% fewer than at the same time last year (24).**

Point of Contact

Mark L Bathrick, Director, OAS: mark_bathrick@ios.doi.gov