HELIBUCKET REQUEST AND OPERATING PROCEDURES

The SC Forestry Commission (SCFC) purchased two 780 gallon Bambi Buckets to be used by the SC National Guard (SCNG) Blackhawk helicopters to assist the Forestry Commission in wildfire suppression. The helicopter is available through ESF4 Firefighting with the SC Emergency Management Division.

Operating Procedures:

1. The Bambi Buckets are the property of the SCFC. The Forestry Commission is responsible for the maintenance and repair of the buckets. The National Guard will keep the buckets at McEntire Air Base and will be responsible for cleaning and drying the buckets after use.

2. Requests for the use of the buckets with the National Guard helicopters will come from the SCFC to EMD to the Governor and National Guard. Requests from other sources (fire departments, county emergency management) must be referred to and evaluated by the SCFC before the request goes to the Governor and the National Guard. The buckets will not be taken out-of-state except on SCFC-approved requests.

3. The SCFC will provide an experienced wildland fire fighter to serve as on-board Helicopter Coordinator (HLCO) for each Blackhawk helibucket mission. The HLCO will provide a communication link and tactical coordination between helicopter and ground forces. Radio call sign for HLCO will be “Blackhawk” while on board the helicopter.

4. The SCFC will provide one person at the helispot for air support. This person will be responsible for taking the foam to the helispot, loading the foam into the foam reservoir in the helibucket, assisting with handling the helibucket, and assisting as needed with the helicopter operation. The Air Support vehicle should contain 100 gallons of foam, tool kit, roll of duct tape, roll of electrical tape, highly visible flagging, large funnel, and two five gallon buckets. A pump for transferring the foam from the barrel to the foam reservoir will be on board the helicopter.

5. The SCFC will periodically inspect the bucket at McEntire to determine maintenance and repair needs.

Request Channel Through the SCFC:

1. Incident Commander to Regional Dispatch.
2. Regional Dispatch to Regional Forester or Regional Operations Officer.
3. Regional Forester or Regional Operations Officer to Fire Management Staff.
4. Fire Management Chief to State Forester. Fire Management Staff will advise Deputy State Forester and Field Operations Support Division Director.

Request Procedures Through EMD:

To request this assistance from the SCNG, the SCFC has to declare that the needs on a wildfire have exceeded the available resources. Following are the steps necessary for this action:

1. State Forester contacts SC Emergency Management Division Director requesting SCNG assistance with helibucket.
2 - EMD Director contacts Governor with this request.
3 - If Governor approves, an Executive Order is issued for the SCNG to provide assistance.
4 - EMD makes arrangements with SCNG to send helicopter and bucket to fire.
5 - The cost of this assistance will be covered by the State of SC contingency fund (if available) if the Governor issues an Executive order. Cost may have to be covered by SCFC.
6 - This procedure will take 20-30 minutes before the NG is activated.

**Considerations In Determining Need For Helibucket:**

1. Fire threatening life, property, and high value natural resources. Wildland urban interface, residential areas, plantations, mountains, Carolina bays, areas with heavy fuel concentrations, fire fighting personnel and equipment.
2. Fire expected to be difficult to contain and expected to be burning out of control four hours or longer during daylight.
3. Extreme fire behavior. Crowning, spotting, Drought Index over 500, strong wind, low humidity, heavy fuels.
4. Distance from McEntire Air Base, located between Columbia and Sumter. Any location in SC is within one hour flying time.
5. From time request is approved by Governor, response time for SCNG will be approximately two hours (one hour for helicopter crew response to helicopter and one hour pre-flight and start-up) plus travel time. Will not fly bucket in dark.

**Information Needed With Request:**

1. Lat and Lon of fire
2. Helispot location (lat & lon) and how to identify from air. Grass field, parking lot, football field. Markings to look for on top of truck at helispot. Minimum size helispot 100 feet x 100 feet (1/4 acre).
3. Contact person at fire or helispot (Air Ops, Ops Chief, IC) and how to contact. Air Ops to Helicopter frequency is 122.75. No SCFC frequencies on helicopter radio.

**Information Needed When Helicopter Arrives:**

1. Location of water sources (map). Pond, lake, or river. Permission from landowner to use water source. Depth needed 10 feet. Glide path 200 feet for helicopter lifting out of pond.
2. Helicopter Coordinator meets helicopter at helispot near fire. HLCO should be briefed on fire behavior, tactics, fuels, location of structures and high value resources, radio communication plan.
3. Location of fuel for helicopter – JET A. Blackhawk has 2 to 2 1/2 hours flying time on tank of fuel.

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