

GAME-CHANGER FOR AERIAL FIREFIGHTING: NEW RULES COULD BE THE BEGINNING OF THE END OF GOVERNMENT MICROMANAGEMENT

The aerial firefighting industry has been stuck in a weird place for years. The government calls your services "commercial" but then tells you exactly how to do your job. New federal rules might finally get us a step closer to being treated like experienced professionals.

The Problem We All Know

Here's what's been happening: • Government says aerial firefighting is a "commercial service" • Then they write 100-page specs telling you what aircraft to use, how to fly, and what retardant to drop • You know better ways to fight fires, but you can't use them because "that's not what the contract says" • Meanwhile, fires keep getting worse and more expensive

It's like hiring a brain surgeon but then handing them a manual on exactly which scalpel to use and where to cut.

What Just Changed

Federal Acquisition Regulation (FAR) Part 10 Updates: In the quest to streamline government processes, the rules have now been changed, and the government is encouraged to use "reverse industry days" where YOU tell THEM how aerial firefighting actually works. No more waiting for them to figure it out.

Key Change: They streamlined the process to give buyers more flexibility in finding the best solutions. Plus, they're being told to engage with industry before making decisions about what they need.

A Step Toward True Commercial Treatment

Nobody actually believes aerial firefighting is a true "commercial service" like buying office supplies. But these changes could get us closer:

Reverse Industry Days Let You: • Educate government buyers who've never

JUST PLAIN WORKS

Global Product Support



When every drop counts, trust the Cascade Bucket. Built for bulletproof reliability and ease of use, it delivers consistent water drops, stable flight, and fast deployment. Its collapsible design makes storage and transport simple, while rugged construction ensures it performs under pressure. Developed with input from aerial firefighting professionals, the Cascade Bucket answers the call for a solution that just plain works.

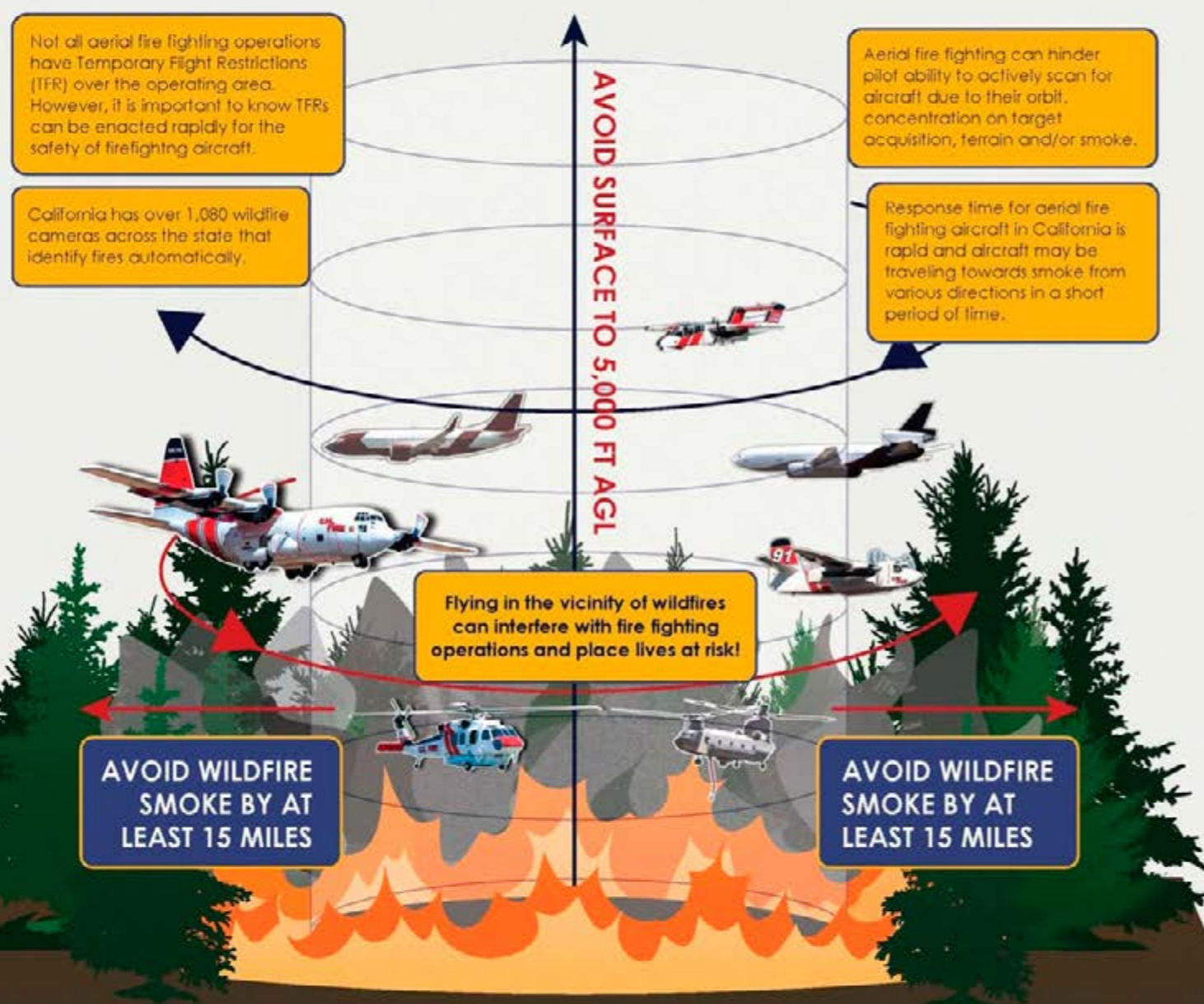


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! WARNING ! MID-AIR COLLISION HAZARD

IF YOU SEE WILDFIRE SMOKE, FLY AWAY!

Multiple helicopters and airplanes flying in different patterns at varying altitudes should be expected above a wildfire. Aircraft will be circling the fire area, including the column of smoke, actively engaged in firefighting operations.



been in the pilot seat • Show off your best tech before they write requirements • Fix their wrong assumptions about how firefighting actually works • Explain how business decisions are made, what your expenses are, and risks you take

What The Industry Should Push For: • Standardized requirements across agencies instead of each one reinventing the wheel • Industry or third-party experts handling safety inspections (there aren't enough government inspectors anyway) • Real collaboration on writing specs that actually improve performance

Plus, A Small Business Reality Check

The FAR update also removed most small business considerations from the market research process. This could actually help:

- Research on what is available in the market focuses first on who can actually fight fires, not their business size • Faster decisions on what is needed/wanted without layers of approvals • Innovation wins over "business as usual"

BUT, small business set-asides for awards still exist—they just moved it later in the decision process. Now market research focuses on capabilities first, which is how it should be when lives are on the line. Then a determination is made to determine if there are two or more small businesses who can do the job.

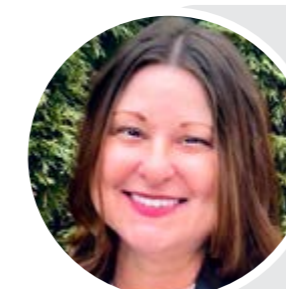
Bottom Line

This newfound "freedom" is going to be a significant opportunity for the agency folks we deal with. It'll take a minute for them to realize what they CAN do now and how it benefits them.

The best thing we can do is be patient, help them learn, and use reverse industry days to educate them about the challenges businesses face and the benefits we provide. It might finally be our chance to move closer to being treated like the experts we actually are. ■



Paul Petersen is the Executive Director of UAFA. He retired in April 2023 from the Bureau of Land Management, Nevada State Office as the State Fire Management Officer and was responsible for coordination and implementation of fire preparedness, fire suppression, hazardous fuels reduction, fire prevention/mitigation/education and overall leadership for the Fire and Aviation. He has served as a Firefighter, Engine Captain, Fire Operations Specialist (Battalion Chief), Assistant Fire Management Officer, Fire Management Officer, and Deputy State Fire Management Officer.



Tiffany Taylor is the Senior Policy Director for UAFA. She has almost 25 years' experience in federal government acquisition. Most recently she was the Senior Procurement Executive (SPE) and Program Management Improvement Officer (PMIO) for USDA, overseeing the buying of everything from commodities to research to all-hazards incident support (wildfires, animal disease outbreaks, COVID, etc.) and providing acquisition expertise and recommendations to the Secretary. Prior to her SPE position she was the Chief of the Contracting Office for all Forest Service Incident Support contracts.

DO NOT REPORT FIRES THAT HAVE FIRE FIGHTING AIRCRAFT ON-SCENE.
TO REPORT A WILDFIRE THAT YOU THINK HAS NOT BEEN REPORTED,
CONTACT THE SERVICING TOWER, APPROACH, OR FLIGHT SERVICE STATION.

PRODUCED IN COOPERATION WITH THE USDA FOREST SERVICE,
WHICH IS AN EQUAL OPPORTUNITY PROVIDER, EMPLOYER, AND LENDER.