

**NATIONAL PARK SERVICE**

**Reference Manual #60: Aviation Management**

**Chapter 15 – Contract, Rental, and Charter Aircraft**

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Reviewed by the Chief, Division of Fire and Aviation Management

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## 15 Contract, Rental, and Charter Aircraft

### 15.1 General

Aircraft operators providing contract, individual charter, or hourly rental service to DOI bureaus must be approved by OAS. Pilots must meet DOI experience requirements and adhere to flight time and duty limitations. See [351 DM 3.6](#) and Chapter 11.13, *Crew Duty Time Limitations*.

### 15.2 Procurement

All exclusive use contracts will include NAO representation and the affected RAM during all phases of the contracting process.

All aircraft services required by any NPS unit must be acquired through the DOI aircraft procurement process as outlined below with the following exceptions:

#### 15.2.1 Seat Fare

Seat fares refer to a ticket purchased with a scheduled air carrier; this includes Part 135 operators (On Demand Operators) who are approved through the NAM by the Chief, DFAM, and OAS. See [OPM-15, Seat Fares](#) for additional information.

#### 15.2.2 End Product/Service Contracts

These contracts are used to obtain services and products such as aerial photographs, per-head animal capture, or seeding/fertilization. Aircraft, including uncrewed aircraft, may be used to obtain the product or services but that decision rests solely with the contractor for an end product contract. There are limits on specifying controls or specific types of aircraft in the solicitation of service contracts. See [OPM-35, Identification of End Product/Service Procurement versus Flight Service Procurement](#), for further guidance.

These types of contracts do not need to be obtained through OAS because they are not for flight services.

### 15.3 FBMS, Interagency, and Cross Servicing Agreements

Dedicated funding is a requirement of the DOI Financial & Business Management System (FBMS) before any flights occur. All DOI Interior Business Center-Acquisitions Division (AQD) contracted aviation services procured by the NPS will be funded through an interagency agreement with AQD.

In lieu of an interagency agreement, parks may also use “cross servicing agreements.” AQD has the ability to cross-service NPS exclusive- use and on-call aviation for non-emergency, project flights. The cross-servicing process must be done with close assistance from AQD to ensure a purchase request (PR) is done correctly. The main benefit of using cross-servicing is that the PR commits and obligates the NPS funds to the project before the flight occurs and the actual charges post to the NPS line of accounting. Cross servicing reduces the workload for NPS contracting and budget/finance personnel. Funds are obligated immediately, vendors are paid more quickly, and real-time tracking of the funds is available for expenditures for NPS and AQD.

#### 15.3.1 Aviation Services Acquired in Support of Non-Fire Activities

Each region or individual park must have a funded task order in place or an approved process to obtain non-fire and non-emergency flights. Aviation users must work with their

PAM/RAM to ensure that non-fire and non-emergency aviation services are ordered in accordance with departmental policy.

### **15.3.2 Aircraft Services Acquired in the Support of Fire Management Activities**

A national interagency agreement is funded by the Division of Fire and Aviation Management for NPS fire management activities for exclusive-use aircraft as well as on-call aircraft (suppression, severity, fuels, emergency stabilization, burned area rehabilitation, and preparedness).

### **15.3.3 Aircraft Services Acquired in the Support of Search and Rescue**

A national interagency agreement is established for NPS search and rescue (SAR). A task order is provided by AQD to vendors in support of SARs. Contact a RAM for payment procedures. Do not delay a SAR response in the event of life-threatening circumstances. Payment for the use of aviation resources can be addressed after the flight.

## **15.4 Procurement of Flight Services from DOI Bureaus and the USFS**

Prior to the use of aircraft assigned to other DOI bureaus or the USFS, parks are responsible for determining if an interagency agreement or cross service agreement can be used for the payment.

## **15.5 Exclusive Use Contracts**

Exclusive use (EU) aviation contracts are awarded to one vendor, for a specific location and duration. NPS has several helicopter EU contracts throughout the nation for fire, resource management, and SAR work. If there is a need to extend the contract beyond the mandatory availability period (MAP) contact your COR and RAM.

## **15.6 Emergency Aircraft Procurement**

The justification for the procurement of emergency aircraft services must meet either of the following criteria found in [350 DM 1](#):

1. Life-threatening (emergency) – A situation or occurrence of a serious nature, developing suddenly and unexpectedly, and demanding immediate action to prevent loss of life. The loss of property can be included in this category.
2. Operational (urgent) – An unforeseen combination of circumstances that calls for immediate action but is not life-threatening.

### **15.6.1 Ordering Emergency Aircraft Services**

Aircraft are often used for emergency services to meet the requirement of [NPS Management Policy 2006, Section 8.2.5](#). The aircraft will be OAS carded or have a Cooperator Letter of Authorization for the intended mission. If, due to the nature of the emergency, the pilot and/or aircraft are not carded for the intended mission, a SAFECOM will be submitted as soon as practical after the mission and the affected RAM will be notified as soon as possible.