

## Large Airtanker Contract Termination Key Points - 5/10/04



The Fire Management leaders of the agencies created a short-term strategy for 2004 that will incorporate increased pre-positioning of resources, additional helicopters and helitankers, additional Single Engine Air Tankers (SEATs) and prioritization of resources to be protected.



Large airtankers are primarily used for initial attack and structure protection support. While other aviation assets will be used to offset the lack of airtankers, ***homeowners and communities should take action today to reduce their fire danger by reducing fuels and using the FIREWISE concepts.***



This decision may result in a reduced amount of retardant used in firefighting. During the past 3 years, airtankers delivered about 20% of all the suppressant (retardant, foam and water) used on fires. However, due to the condition of the fleet, we reduced the amount of retardant load by weight carried by these airtankers. For the past decade, the amount of retardant delivered by airtankers has been trending downwards, while helicopter suppressant delivery is increasing.



In 2003, the agencies paid nearly 30 million dollars for airtankers during the fire season. With the termination of the contract, the cost of paying contract airtanker companies for preparing to fulfill the contract, including maintenance, inspections, training and overhead will be about 10 million dollars.



Any unspent dollars associated with the termination of the contract will be used to offset the cost of additional firefighting resources to mitigate the reduction in airtankers. Additions to the aerial fleet could include added Single Engine Airtankers (SEATs), helitankers, and Type 1, 2, and 3, helicopters.



Airtanker bases will continue to be an operating facility for Single Engine Air Tankers (SEATs), helicopters, smokejumpers and aerial supervision operations.

As needed, the agencies will use the eight National Guard and Air Force Reserve C-130 aircraft equipped with the Modular Airborne Firefighting Systems (MAFFS) because they are documented airworthy by the military.



Equipment and personnel will be prepositioned in areas of expected fire activity based on predictive services information. The National Interagency Coordination Center (NICC) will control the assignments of all the additional aerial assets brought on contract to offset the reduction in aerial resources by the airtanker contract termination.



Not every initial attack effort gets air support. Firefighters are trained to improvise and adapt to the conditions on the ground, and to the resources available to fight fire. The 10 Standard Fire Orders, guide firefighting efforts at all times and in all situations. By following these tenets, and by mitigating the 18 Watch Out Situations, firefighters are able to operate safely with or without air support.