NMAC Correspondence #2015-4 May 26, 2015

To: Geographic Area Coordination Groups

From: National Multi Agency Coordination Group

Subject: Airtanker Management

The national airtanker fleet includes a mix of Exclusive Use (EU), Call When Needed (CWN)/On-Call Type 1 and Type 2 airtankers (Large Airtankers or LATs), Very Large Airtankers (VLATs), Single Engine Airtankers (SEATs) and Forest Service owned airtankers. To ensure consistent utilization, rotation, and management of the national airtanker fleet, the following is interagency direction for the management of airtanker rotation and supplements direction contained in PMS 508 Interagency Airtanker Base Operations Guide and in PMS 506 Interagency SEAT Operations Guide. This memorandum supersedes direction previously provided in NMAC correspondence #2014-9.

All LATs, VLATs and SEATs operating from the same base shall be dispatched in rotation based on the type of airtanker requested on a first in/first out basis regardless of contract type (EU, CWN/On-Call or Forest Service owned) or the location of the incident.

First in/first out also applies to airtankers that are requested for a load/return. When an incident requires multiple loads of retardant, Aerial Supervisors/Incident Commanders will notify the appropriate dispatch center of the need for additional retardant and any operational retardant delivery requirements. To ensure timely and effective retardant delivery, dispatch will order the next available airtanker in rotation if an airtanker that meets the requirement of the request is available and located at the load and return airtanker base.

Exceptions**:**

1. A Leadplane or Aerial Supervision Module (ASM) is not available and the airtanker crew is not approved for independent IA response.
2. Incident commanders/aerial supervision requests a specific type of resource (e.g. VLAT, LAT, or SEAT).
3. On-scene aerial supervision determines that the use of a specific make/model airtanker is not effective based on factors such as risk, maneuverability in terrain, and/or effectiveness.
4. The next airtanker in rotation has an operating restriction at the base where it is being assigned. Operating restrictions may include fuel and retardant availability, airtanker base or airport restrictions, significant downloading based on performance, or distance to the incident is not considered effective.
5. Repositioning of an airtanker closer to where their maintenance crews or supplies are available. The National Interagency Coordination Center (NICC) will facilitate in coordination with the Geographic Area Coordination Center (GACC).
6. A benefit to the government would be realized by changing the rotation. This will be facilitated by the GACC or NICC with consideration to days off, mission requirements, and/or anticipated need.
7. Airtankers are returning after day(s) off. Upon returning to availability from days off, these airtankers will be at the end of the rotation at the airtanker base. Airtankers that work a seven day schedule retain their position in the rotation.
8. MAFFS and Canadian airtankers supplementing the commercial airtanker fleet will begin rotation at that base after the contracted and FS owned airtanker(s) at the beginning of each day.
9. Water Scoopers will not be included in airtanker base rotations.

Rotation of State Airtankers

Rotation of State resources on State incidents at a state airtanker base is established by their agency.

In cases where State resources are operated in conjunction with federally contracted airtankers on an incident primarily on federal lands, the State airtankers are added to the rotation after the federal airtankers at the beginning of each day.

Additional Information

Forest Service/DOI contracted airtankers, when assigned to incidents managed by other agencies or state cooperators remain under the direction of the Contracting Agency. Forest Service and DOI Contracted airtankers are bound only by their contract and will be treated fairly and equitability during their assignment with other federal or state agencies.

/s/ Aitor Bidaburu

Chair, NMAC