
CAL FIRE NEWS RELEASE

California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection



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RELEASE
DATE: September 6, 2018

CAL FIRE Aircraft Fighting Record Setting Fires

Pilot's Technical Expertise Assists in Extinguishing Hard to Reach Wildfires

Sacramento – As California experiences the largest wildfires in the State's history, CAL FIRE's aviation program is responding to the challenge. CAL FIRE has the largest department-owned fleet of firefighting aircraft, including airtankers and helicopters. These aircraft are strategically located throughout the State, operating from 13 air attack and 10 helitack bases, which provide quick access to fires within 20 minutes.

"Our aircraft and firefighters are continually being tested, as they fight some of the largest and most destructive wildfires in the State's history, often in steep and difficult terrain," said Chief Ken Pimlott, Director of CAL FIRE. "Our experienced pilots, with their skilled ground crews, are able to get a quick jump on these fast-moving fires to help protect lives and property."

Records seem to be shattering in 2018, as McClellan Reload Base, near Sacramento, has already set an all-time record for retardant delivered at 5 million gallons, with four months remaining in the year. Statewide, CAL FIRE has delivered over 11 million gallons of retardant to date, compared to only 7.7 million as of this time in 2017.

Another record broken is the number of flight hours on CAL FIRE's S-2T airtankers. The S-2T is a versatile airtanker that CAL FIRE uses to provide fast initial attack delivery of fire retardant on wildfires. This year, the S-2T flight hours for January 1 through August 31 is 3,299 compared with last year at this date of 3,091, an increase of 208 hours.

"I am extremely proud of all the men and women of CAL FIRE, including the staff and contractors in our aviation program," said Chief Pimlott. "I recognize the increasing demands placed upon our aviation program. We continue to build upon a program that will meet the challenges related to wildland fire in California into the future."

For more information, visit www.fire.ca.gov.

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