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# CDF NEWS RELEASE

California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection



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## **CDF Uses DC-10 to Drop Retardant on Sawtooth Fire** Jet Aircraft Marks Historic First for Firefighting

**Victorville** -- The California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CDF) is using a modified DC-10 to drop fire retardant on the Sawtooth Fire.

A four-member flight crew aboard Tanker 910 is working in coordination with CDF support personnel to drop the retardant. The aircraft was deployed at the request of CDF Incident Command Team 8, which has been coordinating firefighting efforts on the blaze.

“This is the first time in history a DC-10 had been utilized in a firefighting capacity,” said Director Ruben Grijalva of CDF. “We are always examining firefighting tools that can help save lives and property. Once our staff certified the aircraft we made it available to the Incident Command Team.”

Incident Commander Rick Henson made a tactical decision that the Sawtooth Fire would be an appropriate and conducive venue to test the aircraft due to the terrain, weather and fire conditions. “I was fortunate enough to watch this first live fire drop from a nearby helicopter and was very impressed with how much retardant was dropped,” said Henson. “I immediately directed my staff to evaluate the retardant’s coverage on the ground. Preliminary reports indicate the DC-10 retardant met the objective of slowing the fire’s spread.”

Three separate external tanks with a capacity of 12,000 U.S. gallons of retardant were utilized during the two separate flights by Tanker 910. The operational objective is for the aircraft to build a buffer of retardant between the Sawtooth Fire and the community of Big Bear while allowing ground crews to get in position to build a containment line.

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Tanker 910 was certified or “carded” today by the CDF Aviation Management Unit after the aircraft was tested repeatedly with numerous drops in the desert as well as runs on higher elevations. Tanker 910 is certified by the FAA and meets the same maintenance standards as passenger-carrying planes of the identical size.

The DC-10 is a 31-year-old former passenger jet that was jointly developed over the past four years by Omni Air International of Tulsa, Oklahoma and Cargo Conversions LLC, a freighter conversion company based in San Carlos, California. A demonstration of Tanker 910 in late March for state fire officials and the media at Southern California Logistics Airport in Victorville, formerly the George Air Force Base, located in the Mojave Desert. Tanker 910 was leased today by CDF at a cost of \$52,000.

Lightning started the Sawtooth Fire on July 9 and it has since consumed 62,000 acres and destroyed 58 residences and 171 outbuildings in San Bernardino County. The fire has caused one fatality and 12 minor injuries. Property loss is estimated at \$8,702,000. Currently, in addition to the DC-10, there are 85 fire crews; 206 engines; 8 airtankers; 15 helicopters and 35 bulldozers battling the blaze, with 60 percent containment.

The Sawtooth Fire is being managed by the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection Incident Command Team 8 in conjunction with CDF, San Bernardino County Fire, the San Bernardino County Sheriff's office, U.S. Forest Service, CHP, LA County Fire, CA Dept. of Corrections and Rehabilitation, Red Cross, and the Governor's Office of Emergency Services.

***(Fact Sheet Attached)***



## TANKER 910 AIRCRAFT FACT SHEET

### **AIRCRAFT**

A DC-10 airliner modified for aerial firefighting.

### **CREW:**

Two pilots, a flight engineer, and a CDF Air Tactical Group Supervisor -- acting as a technical advisor -- are on board and working in coordination with CDF support personnel

### **EXTERNAL TANKS:**

Three separate external tanks mounted along the centerline which can hold 50 tons of water or retardant and are balanced with baffles to prevent shifting while in flight. The tanks' ground clearance is approximately 15 inches above the tarmac. The tanks can be re-filled concurrently on the ramp in eight minutes.

### **DROP CAPABILITIES:**

Tanker 910 can dump as much as 12,000 U.S. gallons of retardant in as little as eight seconds. Tanker 910 uses the computerized gravity-feed water dump system that is essentially a modified and scaled-up version of the system used by Erickson Air-Crane on its S-64 helicopter. The drop rate, controlled from the cockpit, is governed by the opening of the tank doors.

### **APPLICATIONS:**

The 10 Tanker has maneuverability but is more geared for a large-scale drop, compared to the CDF's S-2Ts aircraft which hold 1,200 gallons of water or retardant used for tighter surgical drops.

### **CERTIFICATION:**

The 10 Tanker was certified or "carded" today by CDF Aviation Management Unit after the aircraft was tested repeatedly with numerous drops in the desert as well as runs on higher elevations. Testing with loads in the last few days has shown the Tanker 910 provided appropriate coverage on the ground. The external tanks provide constant flow and a clean pattern considering the size of the drop. Tanker 910 is certified by the FAA and meets the same maintenance standards as passenger-carrying planes of the identical size.

## **DEVELOPMENT**

Jointly developed over the past four years by Omni Air International of Tulsa, Oklahoma and Cargo Conversions LLC, a freighter conversion company based in San Carlos, California. Tanker 910 was demonstrated in late March for state fire officials and the media at Southern California Logistics Airport in Victorville, formerly the George Air Force Base, located in the Mojave Desert. The DC-10 is a 31-year-old former passenger jet that carried 285 passengers for American Airlines and later held as many as 380 passengers for charter flights flown by Omni Air International to Hawaii.

## **TACTICAL APPLICATION:**

Today's operational objective for this aircraft is to build a retardant buffer between the fire and Big Bear and to protect ground crews, which were flown in this morning by helicopter. The retardant that is going to be dropped by Tanker 910 is intended to buy some time for the ground forces to get in position and get the containment line built.

## **COST:**

Tanker 910 was leased today by CDF at a cost of \$52,000.

## **Info Web Sites**

Sawtooth Complex Incident Information

[http://cdfdata.fire.ca.gov/incidents/incidents\\_details\\_info?incident\\_id=94](http://cdfdata.fire.ca.gov/incidents/incidents_details_info?incident_id=94)

CDF

[www.fire.ca.gov](http://www.fire.ca.gov)

CDF Aviation

[http://www.fire.ca.gov/php/fire\\_er\\_airprgm.php](http://www.fire.ca.gov/php/fire_er_airprgm.php)

Omni Air

<http://www.omniairintl.com/history.html>