



**TO :**

**FROM :** National Wildfire Coordinating Group

**REPLY TO :** NWCG@nifc.gov

**DATE :** 07/11/2002

**SUBJECT :** SAFETY ADVISORY : P2V and C130A Operational Suspensions

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The following attachment contains briefing papers on the temporary suspension of operations for P 2V airtankers, and the indefinite suspension of operations for C 130A airtankers.

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# USDA Forest Service Fire and Aviation Management Briefing Paper



July 8, 2002

**Topic:** Contract C-130A Airtanker Fleet Disposition

**Issue:** The Forest Service has suspended operations of the C-130 Fleet pending further developments in the NTSB accident investigation.

**Background:** On June 17, 2002, a C-130A modified as an airtanker crashed fatally injuring its 3-member crew while dropping fire retardant on the Cannon Fire that was being fought on the Toiyabe National Forest.

## Key Points:

- The National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) is leading the investigation of the accident. Jack Blackwell, Region 5 Regional Forester, will be the leader of the Forest Service Management Evaluative Team.
- Pending receipt of the preliminary indications of the cause of the accident, the Forest Service has ordered the stand-down of the remaining C-130A tankers. Any further speculation concerning future actions based upon this accident is premature.
- This grounding significantly impacts our operational capability as the C-130A fleet represents 16% of our fixed wing fleet retardant capability (in gallons).
- Three contractors are effected by this grounding: Hawkins and Powers Aviation, Inc. of Greybull, Wyoming; TBM, Inc of Tulare, California, and International Air Response, Inc. from Chandler, Arizona. Hawkins and Powers and TBM have current contracts with the Forest Service.
- As a result of this stand down, there are 39 operational tankers under contract. Eight Modular Airborne Fire Fighting Systems (MAFFS) aircraft operated by the Air National Guard and the Air Force Reserve are also available.
- In order to be able to reactivate the aircraft as soon as possible if the investigation determines it feasible, the Forest Service will continue to pay daily availability for the C-130As during the course of the investigation. The Forest Service has a liaison with the NTSB investigation team monitoring developments in the investigation.
- A team of contract, operations, and maintenance specialists are standing by to facilitate rapid reactivation of the C-130 fleet if this option becomes available.

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# USDA Forest Service Fire and Aviation Management Briefing Paper



Date: July 10, 2002

**Topic:** P2V Air tanker wing cracks

**Issue:** Temporary suspension of P2Vs due to wing structure cracks

**Background:** T-11, a P2V aircraft owned by Neptune Aviation, was found to have a 1-foot long crack in the lower skin of the right wing earlier this week. This triggered a round of inspections of the P-2v/SP2H fleet and sufficient indications were found by the operators to initiate a more in depth inspection program.

**Key Points:** After contact with the P-2V Airtanker operators, the following listed aircraft have been found to have cracks in the under surface of the center section of the wing, they are not available for operations until repairs are made.

Neptune: T-05, T-06, T-09, T-10, and T-11. T-06 was not offered this contract period and remains in maintenance. .

Hawkins and Powers: T-139 and T-140 were both found to have cracks in the lower doubler. These two aircraft are on a contract to BLM and are the Interior used P-2V's from Cedar City and Grand Junction.

Aero Union: T-01 and T-16 have cracks in the doubler and are being repaired. The retardant tank must be removed from T-16 to repair damage close to the fuselage.

Minden Air: T-99 is being inspected and is to be followed by T-55 and T-48. the past experience shows that we can expect cracks in at least two of the three aircraft.

The operators are cooperating between themselves and are working toward a permanent repair for the P-2V. Neptune is engineering a temporary repair the will be FAA approved prior to use. The estimate is that the SP-2H of Aero Union will be repaired within two days and the others will follow as they are completed.

Paul Markowitz. The National Maintenance Officer, was dispatched in a charter aircraft to visit all the aircraft and assess the damage as well as meet with the NTSB at T-133 in Albuquerque. He has seen the cracks and has had input into the direction from contracting.

Overall this has been a rather orderly process of inspection even though it has severely limited the number of available airtankers. Neal Hitchcock and the National MAC Group has been briefed on the situation.

**Summary:** This grounding comes on the heels of the suspension of the C-130A fleet, and further reduces the airtanker fleet capacity. Currently, 36% of the heavy airtanker fleet is

**not available for operations. The majority of the P2VSP2H aircraft should be back in service within 10 days, assuming the FAA approves the proposed repairs.**

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