



DFPC 2015 Aviation Summary

Senate Bill 13-245 created Colorado Firefighting Aviation funds under the Colorado Division of Fire Prevention and Control (DFPC). Senate Bill 14-164 authorized DFPC to purchase, lease, and contract aviation resources beginning July 1, 2014. Funding was authorized to assist local jurisdictions with initial attack wildland fire response on state and private lands within the state of Colorado. To accomplish this goal, the DFPC purchased and equipped two Multi Mission Aircraft (MMA) to provide for small fire detection, large fire mapping, and safety oversight. DFPC also contracted three firefighting helicopters and two firefighting Single Engine Air Tankers (SEATs), with the ability to add additional SEATs and helicopters if the need arises.

All aircraft are intended to complement existing federal resources, and operate accordingly with the assistance and cooperation of interagency firefighting partners. All aircraft and pilots are interagency carded and meet interagency operating guidelines.

Season accomplishments of this aviation program are listed below.

Multi Mission Aircraft (Guardian 327 & Guardian 328)

In March, the MMA flew a total of 10.2 hours including 2.2 hours assisting Great Sand Dunes National Park with a search and rescue (SAR).

In April, the MMA flew a total of 42.9 hours primarily for outreach, training, SAR, and orientation. On 4/17 Guardian 227 assisted the Larimer County Sheriff's Office with a SAR mission.

In May, the MMA flew a total of 37 hours primarily for outreach, training and orientation

In June, the MMA flew over 80 hours for fire detection and surveillance, all-risk support, training and orientation. On 6/3 Guardian 327 provided imagery to Mesa County to provide situational awareness regarding a landslide. On 6/23 Guardian 327 participated in an interagency SAR training with the Larimer County Sheriff's Office. In the fire realm, MMA crew identified and flew fire detection routes across the state, and detected 8 fires on federal and private lands this month which were previously unreported. These successes led to numerous interagency requests for MMA detection flights or fire surveillance during the last week of June.

In July, the MMA flew over 75 hours for fire detection, surveillance, SAR, training, and orientation. MMA Mission Sensor Operators identified and flew fire detection routes across the State, and detected 7 fires which were previously unreported.

- 7/2/15 - Guardian 327 found and reported a small unattended fire north of Lamar CO in Queens State Wildlife Area.
- 7/14/15 - Guardian 328 received resource order from Moffat County Sheriff's Office for fire detection along route following past 24 hour lightning occurrence, from Craig over Elk Springs and extending to Utah Border. This flight resulted in three new fires detected, which were called into Craig Dispatch (county land).
- 7/16/15 - Guardian 328 was ordered again by Moffat County Sheriff's Office for detection flight along lightning route in Moffat and Rio Blanco Counties. Flight detected three additional new fires, which were called into Craig Dispatch – Hay Canyon/CO-WRD-183, Godiva/CO-LSD-199, and unnamed fire near Little Snake River on Colorado/Wyoming Border. On return flight to Centennial, Guardian 328 flew reconnaissance of Left Hand Canyon at request of Boulder County with no fires detected.
- 7/25/15 and 7/26/15 - Guardian 328 provided aerial support for a SAR mission in Conejos County.
- 7/27/15 - Guardian 328 supported the Bitter Creek Fire in Wyoming with infrared mapping and reconnaissance and also responded to a request from Moffat County for a reconnaissance flight due to reports of drift smoke. After a reconnaissance of the area the crew of Guardian 328 confirmed to the

Moffatt County Sheriff's Office Fire Management Officer that there was not a new start in the area, thereby standing down a full interagency fire response for a false alarm.

During August, the DFPC MMA flew over 136 flight hours, detecting over 22 new fires and reporting them to the appropriate interagency dispatch center. Guardian 328 was detailed to the State of Oregon, where it flew the Stouts Fire (Oregon State), and located over 14 new fires with various state and federal jurisdictions. Back in Colorado, Guardian 328 located two other new fires, flew detection for United States Forest Service (USFS) and Colorado counties, and mapped Bureau of Land Management (BLM), USFS and Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) fires in Colorado and Wyoming. Guardian 327 flew primarily in Colorado, New Mexico and Wyoming; detecting 6 new fires, providing intelligence for 17 fires, and flying 6 detection missions for the BIA, USFS, and Colorado counties.

- 53 flight hours (Guardian 327 and 328)
- 6 new fires detected
- 2 ferry flight
- 17 fire surveillance/imagery missions
- 6 detection missions

In the month of September, Guardian 327 flew over 56 hours for federal agencies on the Wolverine, Chelan and First Creek Complexes, providing large fire mapping and firefighter safety oversight for the interagency incident command teams and air tactical group supervisors. On the First Creek Fire, at the request of the incident air attack, Guardian 327 provided real-time information to a hotshot crew regarding fire that had spotted across their line. Guardian 327 notified the crew of the spot through the proper chain of command and the crew safely engaged and contained the spot fire.

Helicopters (N538TD, N132BH & N60901)

DFPC currently contracts helicopter services for three aircraft; helicopter N60901, a large restricted helicopter capable of carrying heavy loads and large amounts of water, and helicopters N538TD and N132BH which are staffed by initial attack firefighting crews.

In May, Helicopter N538TD came on contract 5/4/15 and flew 3.7 hours for both training and public education. Helicopter N60901 came on contract 5/15/15, and was dispatched on 5/22/15 to the Mud Lake Complex in Florida, where it delivered approximately 20,000 gallons of water to the National Park Service fire with over 20 flight hours.

In June, Helicopter N538TD assisted Washington and Morgan Counties with 3.6 hours of reconnaissance flights for the Messex flood. On 6/17/15 the aircraft and crew conducted interagency aviation training with the Pueblo West Fire Department. Helicopter N60901 returned on 6/3/15 from to the Mud Lake Complex. N60901 plus staff from the operations and aviation branch of DFPC conducted interagency helicopter training on 6/24/15 at Christman Field, attended by 25+ county and municipal cooperators firefighters. On 6/29/15 the helicopter was requested to support the Ecklund Fire in Dinosaur National Monument (National Park Service). Helicopter N132BH came on contract 6/3/15 in Montrose CO. The aircraft and crew coordinated and conducted a very successful interagency training and area clean up in Telluride, CO. On 6/23/15 the aircraft was dispatched to support wildfires in California, where it is supporting the Eldorado and Modoc National Forests. Costs for out of state fire support are paid for by the ordering agency.

During July 538TD was stationed in Pueblo, Montrose, Delta, Grand Junction and Craig. They responded to five fires and flew 14.9 hours, ferried 32 passengers, delivered 681 gallons of water and 2,695 pounds of cargo for County, USFS and BLM Fires. N538TD was staged in Craig on a Geographic Area preposition order. Helicopter N60901 was staged in Grand Junction, CO on a Geographic Area preposition order in early July, and responded to four fires – The Anvil 2, Plateau, Juniper, and Bitter Creek (Wyoming), primarily delivering water drops to assist fire suppression. Helicopter N132BH and crew spent the month of July supporting initial attack and fire suppression efforts in northern California, flying over 26 hours, ferrying 59 passengers, delivering 16,000 gallons of water and 9,138 pounds of cargo for USFS fires.

In August N538TD flew 43 hours, provided initial attack for 18 fires, large fire support for 15 fires, transported 116 passengers, delivered more than 16,000 gallons of water, and delivered more than 14,000 pounds cargo to fires in Colorado and Wyoming. Helicopter N132BH flew 48 hours, provided initial attack for 7 fires, provided large fire support for 11 fires, transported 99 passengers, delivered 40,609 gallons of water, and delivered 37,165 pounds of cargo in Colorado for County, BLM and USFS fires. N60901 flew 26 hours flight time, provided support for 1 initial attack, supported 8 large fires, and delivered 58,000 gallons of water in both Colorado and Wyoming for USFS, BIA and BLM Fires.

Single Engine Air Tankers (T-831 and T-888)

Colorado Single Engine Air Tankers started their season in May. T- 831 repositioned from Fort Collins to Durango, CO, with no fire missions in May due to the unseasonably wet spring.

During June T- 831 staged in Durango CO for most of the month, where it dropped 745 gallons of retardant, and flew 1.62 hours on the Ecklund Fire in Dinosaur National Monument. T-888 came on contract in Fort Collins on 6/15/15. On 6/18/15 the SEAT flew to Centennial, CO for an orientation for the Joint Budget Committee.

During July T- 831 & T-888 were co-located in Grand Junction on an interagency preposition order. T-888 responded to 3 fires in July, delivering 2150 gallons of water and 2720 gallons of retardant to 2 BLM fires in Colorado (Ecklund and Keystone), and 1 BLM fire in Wyoming (Bitter Creek). T-831 Responded to 2 fires in July, delivering 4000 gallons of retardant to 1 BLM fire in Colorado (Keystone) and 1 BLM fire in Wyoming (Bitter Creek).

During August, the SEATs have flown over 50 hours, primarily on the western slope of Colorado, supporting the BIA, USFS, and BLM.

All Aircraft

Colorado SEAT contract availability periods extend into September and helicopter contract availability periods extend into the end of October. This contracted availability provides interagency aerial firefighting support for what is increasingly becoming an extended fire season in Colorado. Outside of contracted availability periods, all aircraft can be brought back into availability at short notice should late fall or winter fires occur.

The DFPC MMA are available for fire, all-risk and SAR missions year-round.