



Interagency Aviation Information Bulletin



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Subject: Mixing Dissimilar Retardants from the Same or Different Manufacturers

Area of Concern: Mixed Dissimilar Retardants Are Not Tested For Fire Suppression Operations

Distribution: All Aviation Operations

Discussion: All airtanker bases, permanent or temporary, use Long Term Fire Retardants (LTFRs) that are listed on the Qualified Products List (QPL) <https://www.fs.usda.gov/rm/fire/wfcs/>. The specific LTFR used at each base is identified within the [NWCG Airtanker Base Directory, PMS 507](#) and local airtanker base operating plans. Any changes in a product needs to be updated and communicated to the NWCG Airtanker Base Directory Unit to ensure the directory is up to date.

Mixing dissimilar retardants from the same or different manufacturers must be avoided. Mixed products are not tested as part of the qualification process. The chemical makeup of each product varies and mixing sufficient quantities of different retardant products may result in unexpected issues. If an airtanker arrives at an airtanker base with more than a residual retardant quantity remaining in its tanks (i.e. it only dropped a partial load prior to landing at a new base), that airtanker may only be “topped off” with the same retardant that it is currently carrying. The following steps are required as appropriate:

Airtanker Bases

- Determine what LTFR the airtanker is carrying
- If the airtanker is landing with more than a residual amount of LTFR, and the LTFR carried by the airtanker is different than the LTFR at the airtanker base, facilitate a jettison at an approved site prior to landing if appropriate.
- If a jettison is not appropriate and the airtanker lands with a full or partial load of LTFR, do not offload a LTFR into any tank or system that is different than the LTFR used at your base, unless the tank is empty and rinsed. Ensure the offloaded product is loaded back onto an airtanker as soon as practicable, then rinse the offload tank prior to using for another product.
- Notify the National Airtanker Program Manager anytime an airtanker lands with a full or partial load of LTFR that is different than what is at the base. This will allow the National Airtanker Program Manager to re-educate the airtanker vendors, aerial supervisors and base managers about this issue. Airtanker Base Managers have discretion on what to do with the partial load.

Regions

- Coordinate similar LTFR placement at bases in proximity to each other if possible.
- Ensure contracts are in place for removal and disposal of retardant in the event LTFRs are mixed and need to be removed from the site.

National Office

- Ensure Airtanker Base Managers (ATBMs) understand their authority to facilitate a jettison rather than an airtanker landing with a full or partial load of LTFR that is dissimilar to what is used at the base. Ensure ATBMs understand the reporting requirements for jettisoned loads. All jettisoned retardant must be documented ensuring the location, quantity and incident it was ordered on are captured. The link below is an example of a Jettison Log that captures all required information.
<https://www.nwcg.gov/sites/default/files/committee/docs/iabs-2023-airtanker-jettison-tracking-log.pdf> Each base must maintain a Jettison Log for their jettison area and may be required to submit annual reports. Refer to your local unit or region for specific reporting intervals.
- Ensure airtanker vendors and aerial supervisors are aware of the potential issues caused at an airtanker base by landing with a dissimilar product.

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