



# USDA Forest Service Fire and Aviation Management Briefing Paper



Date: Tuesday, September 2, 2008

**Topic: Fatal airtanker crash near Stead Airport north of Reno, NV**

## **Background:**

- A P2V airtanker crashed at approximately 6 pm PDT Monday, September 1 shortly after take-off from Stead Airport 15 miles north of Reno in Washoe County, NV,
- The airtanker was owned and operated by Neptune Aviation of Missoula, MT.
- Three contract crewmembers, including the pilot are reported to have been aboard and are presumed dead.
- The airtanker was one of 19 heavy airtankers under contract by the US Forest Service.
- Earlier on Monday, the airtanker made retardant drops on the Burnside Fire on the Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest. The approximately 200-acre Burnside Fire is located south of Lake Tahoe in Alpine County, CA.
- After completing sorties on the Burnside Fire, the airtanker was ordered by Cal Fire to the Smitty Fire in Calaveras County, CA on the Tuolumne-Calaveras Administrative Unit.
- The airtanker crashed soon after take-off on its first run to the Smitty Fire. The airtanker completed no drops on the Smitty Fire.

## **Current Situation:**

- The NTSB is investigating.
- The cause of the accident is unknown. There is no known link or common cause related to previous accidents.

## **Key Points:**

- The Forest Service's first concern is for the families and friends of those who were aboard the airtanker.
- The Forest Service conducts thorough inspections of all aircraft before each wildfire season to ensure each aircraft complies with Forest Service safety standards.
- The Forest Service completed engineering studies and modified airtankers to eliminate the metal fatigue related to the 2002 airtanker accidents.
- Media calls should be directed to the NTSB at 202-314-6100.

Contact: Becky Rine. 202-205-1450