

National Multi-Agency Coordinating Group

3833 South Development Avenue; Boise, ID 83705

NMAC Correspondence M2026-14

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To: Geographic Area Coordinating Groups
From: National Multi-Agency Coordinating Group
Subject: Guidance on Canadian Airtanker and Birddog Use Limitations and Requirements

Due to the high demand for aerial firefighting resources, the National Multi-Agency Coordinating Group (NMAC) requested aircraft to aid with wildfire suppression through the National Interagency Fire Center (NIFC)/Canadian Interagency Forest Fire Centre (CIFFC) agreement. The deployment includes two Canadian airtankers (Q400s) and one Canadian birddog (TBM-960) aircraft. This memorandum provides guidance and clarification regarding the dispatching, utilization, and operating procedures for Canadian airtankers and birddogs hosted under the NIFC/CIFFC agreement.

The U.S. Wildland Fire Service (USWFS), Flight Standards Branch and the U.S. Forest Service (USFS), Washington Office Airworthiness Branch inspected the Canadian-registered aircraft and approved their use. The USWFS and USFS inspected the Canadian pilots and approved them for operations within the United States (U.S.) by granting a joint Letter of Authorization.

Use Limitations and Requirements

- The Q400s and birddog will be dispatched as a group and will operate together while assigned.
- Although a Canadian Air Attack Officer (AAO) may be onboard the birddog, the AAO is not authorized to function as air attack, to lead or direct U.S. aircraft. In some circumstances, a specially designated Air Tactical Supervisor (ATS) from the USWFS or USFS may be onboard to assist with communications and airspace procedures.
- The group of Q400s and birddog are not initial attack capable. Once dispatched, the group may divert to a higher priority incident only if appropriate aerial supervision (Air Tactical Group Supervisor, Leadplane, or Aerial Supervision Module) is already on scene.
- The aircraft will initially be positioned in Boise, ID, and may operate from any U.S. airtanker base approved for their make and model.
- Canadian airtankers shall always be last out on rotation. When available, federally contracted airtankers must also be ordered.

Additional information addressing tactical procedures will be distributed by the USWFS and USFS to applicable functional groups, including aerial supervisors, airtanker bases, and dispatch centers.

/s/ Charles Russell
Chair, National Multi-Agency Coordinating Group

