

News Release

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Aerial wildland fire training taking place next week in Northern California

Boise, Idaho, April 17, 2026 – The USDA Forest Service, CAL FIRE and other state fire agencies will conduct annual training for Modular Airborne Firefighting Systems (MAFFS) personnel at the McClellan Airtanker Base in Sacramento, Calif., April 20-24. The Forest Service Redding Air Attack Base (Redding, Calif.) will also be used as a reload base for the training.

The annual MAFFS recertification training will include personnel from the California Air National Guard's 146th Airlift Wing (Port Hueneme, Calif.), the Nevada Air National Guard's 152nd Airlift Wing (Reno, Nev.), and the Air Force Reserve's 302nd Airlift Wing, Peterson Space Force Base (Colorado Springs, Colo.). Military C-130 Hercules aircraft will be utilized during the training as well as several models of smaller lead planes.

The training includes classroom sessions, flying and ground operations for Air National Guard air crews, civilian lead plane pilots and support personnel from the Forest Service and state agencies. The exercise is the second of two preseason sessions for the MAFFS program.

The eight C-130 Hercules aircraft that are part of the program are equipped with the Forest Service's MAFFS, a pressurized tank system which slides into the back of the military aircraft with retardant released through a nozzle on the rear left side of the aircraft. MAFFS-equipped C-130s can drop up to 3,000 gallons of fire retardant in less than 10 seconds across a quarter-mile line. The aircraft can be activated to provide a critical "surge" capability to help slow the spread of wildland fires. MAFFS aircraft are only activated when all commercial airtankers that are part of the national airtanker fleet are fully committed or not readily available.

As part of the training in Northern California, practice water drops will be conducted on some remote portions of the Tahoe National Forest. Residents and visitors in those areas may see low-flying C-130 aircraft and smaller lead planes throughout the week.

For more information on the MAFFS program, visit: www.fs.usda.gov/managing-land/fire/planes/maffs.

For background photos and videos of the program, visit: www.dvidshub.net/feature/MAFFSAEG.