

Single Engine Air Tankers

Overview

This module focuses on communicating effectively with single engine air tankers in order to achieve the drop results that you want.

Pilots want feedback because they take pride in their work and want to do it the right way.

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SEAT Briefing Exercise:

Using the Incident Pocket Response Guide's, "Directing Retardant and Bucket Drops" reference (located in the blue section); answer the questions on page 2 based on the following scenario.

You have responded to a single tree fire which consists of a 60 foot snag that appears to have substantial heat inside, the fire has not spread to the surface fuels. There are some embers and a smoke column coming from the top of the snag. You survey the area and see a uniform open timber stand and several other snags nearby. The main concern is the surface fuels which are thick and continuous grasses.

The snag is located mid-slope on one of the more prominent peaks in the area. Due north on the summit of the peak is the forest's Anderson repeater station along with some other radio towers. The snag will fall directly downhill if it goes on its own, but doubt you'll be able to catch any surface fire due to the high spread potential. After sizing up the snag, your falling experience tells you it's too hazardous to fall with a chainsaw and too dangerous to dig handline around it.

Dispatch informs you a loaded SEAT is available and airborne in the area. You plan to use retardant to cool the snag while also pre-treating the area where it will fall. You're pretty confident the retardant will work and with no other reasonable options available, you request the SEAT. Dispatch provides you the call sign and the air-to-ground frequency. You locate a place well out of the way of the snag and drop area with a good view.

You attempt communication with the SEAT and can faintly hear an aircraft to the north, but the transmission was faint and scratchy. However, dispatch comes in clearly and you just heard them tell the SEAT they were positive on automated flight following (AFF). You know he's familiar with the area, but he doesn't know where your fire is. No GPS is available and dispatch only had a very general location for the fire.

1) Write a brief description of how to talk the pilot into your location if you establish communication; also, what other options do you have if you cannot establish direct communications with the SEAT?

2) Prepare a briefing for the pilot with your intent to achieve the desired/needed results.

Directing Retardant and Bucket Drops (from IRPG, Aviation Section)

- ✓ **Give general location** on incident to aerial resource – division/head/heel/flank.
- ✓ **Finalize location** with:
 - Clock position from pilot's perspective (see IRPG front cover).
 - Description of prominent landmarks
 - Target position on slope – lower 1/3, upper 1/3, mid-slope, top of ridge, etc.
 - **Use signal mirrors whenever possible.**
 - Use panels or flagging to mark target as needed.
- ✓ **Describe target** from your location and explain mission. The pilot will decide drop technique and flight path.
- ✓ **Know the pilot's intentions** prior to the drop. Clear the area to avoid direct flights over ground personnel and equipment.
- ✓ **Give feedback** to the pilot about drop accuracy. Be honest and constructive. Let pilot know if drop is early, late, uphill, downhill, on target, too high, too low, etc. Report low drops immediately.



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Want More Information?



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- BLM SEAT Program
 - <http://www.blm.gov/nifc/st/en/prog/fire/Aviation/Airops/seat.html>