

CAL FIRE NEWS RELEASE

California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection



CONTACT: CAL FIRE Duty PIO
(916) 651-3473 (FIRE)
@CALFIRE_PIO

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CAL FIRE SECURES 24 ADDITIONAL FIREFIGHTING AIRCRAFT FOR CALIFORNIA

Sacramento – CAL FIRE is bolstering its firefighting aircraft fleet across California for the second year in a row as a result of over \$72 million in funding provided by the administration of Governor Gavin Newsom. The investment has allowed CAL FIRE to secure 24 additional firefighting aircraft (19 helicopters and 5 airplanes for a contractual period of 90-120 days) to enhance their statewide response efforts against wildfires in California. The additional fixed-wing aircraft include 3 large airtankers specifically designed to carry up to 4,000 gallons of retardant. These aircraft have been strategically located in communities across California and will be pre-positioned to meet the needs of potential fire activity throughout the state.

"The deployment of more aircraft dedicated to the people of California marks a historic milestone, with the highest number of firefighting aircraft ever available for initial attack in the state for the second consecutive year," stated Director and Fire Chief Joe Tyler. Chief Tyler further explained that "the significant rainfall California experienced this winter has led to a substantial increase of highly flammable fuels, which contribute to the rapid escalation of fires." Last week alone, CAL FIRE responded to over 300 wildfires as temperatures continued to increase across the state.

Aircraft are initially prepositioned in the following Counties: Butte, Tuolumne, San Diego, Tulare, Humboldt, Mariposa, Nevada, Siskiyou, Sacramento, Fresno, Shasta, San Luis Obispo, Napa, Placer, Lassen, Riverside, and Sonoma Counties.

Established in 1970, [CAL FIRE's aviation program](#) has grown to over 60 fixed-wing and rotary-wing aircraft, making it the largest civil aerial firefighting fleet worldwide. This renowned aviation program responds to thousands of wildfires [dropping water and fire retardant](#) in California each year.

In light of these efforts, CAL FIRE urges the public to refrain from operating drones over areas with fire activity. It is important to note that flying drones in these areas is strictly prohibited by law. Drone operation hampers aerial firefighting capabilities and poses significant risks to lives, property, and natural resources.

CAL FIRE remains dedicated to the protection of California's communities and natural landscapes, and these additional firefighting aircraft represent a significant step towards enhancing the state's wildfire response capabilities.

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