

CORRESPONDENCE/MEMORANDUM

DATE: 05/10/13

FILE REF: 051013

TO: Regional Forestry Leaders
Area Forestry Leaders
Area Dispatchers

FROM: Trent Marty - FR/4

SUBJECT: SEAT Protocols

For the 2013 fire season the state has contracted for two Single Engine Air Tankers (SEATs) that will be based in Siren primarily to address concerns for the 'blow-down' area.

In the past the SEATs have been based at other airports. There are five primary bases in Wisconsin; Necedah, Black River Falls, Siren, Solon Springs and Crivitz. These are fully supplied bases with enough resources to get through a 30-day contract. There are six satellite bases in Wisconsin: Adams-Friendship, Wisconsin Rapids, Stevens Point, Eau Claire, Warbirds and Iron River. These locations were selected because they have large blocks of pine nearby, urban interface values at risk and a degree of large fire history. These sites are moderately supplied with sufficient resources to get them through a burn period. There are other sites which may be utilized for incidents pending the proximity to the fire and training of resources to supply water for the aircraft. SEATs are a statewide resource managed by the Bureau of Forest Protection in conjunction with the regions. Day to day missions and scheduling is done at the Area level.

For the 2013 fire season 2 SEATs will be based at Siren. The first SEAT at the Siren base started on Friday, April 19 running 30-days consecutively from the start date. The second SEAT at Siren started on Thursday, May 2 running 30-days consecutively from the start date.

The primary role of the SEAT is to provide early suppression action on small, initiating fires that have potential for rapid development into large fires. In addition to initial attack uses, SEATs may also be used to protect high value resources, support line construction by tractor plows or other ground suppression apparatus, or assist with general suppression on working fires. But their greatest value remains in initial attack assignments to limit fire spread on small fire incidents with high potential for rapid, large fire development. Since early initial attack is vital, all attempts will be made to deploy a SEAT from the SEAT base closest to the developing fire.

MOBILIZATION

SEATs will be moved statewide by the Bureau of Forest Protection in conjunction with the regions as fire conditions dictate the need. When an anticipated long term deployment is expected it will be a coordinated effort between Bureau, receiving and sending Regions/Areas, with the Bureau having the final decision in cases where consensus cannot be reached.

When moving SEATs for a short term (one day) deployment to one of the established DNR satellite bases the sending Area will coordinate and communicate the move to the new base keeping the Bureau and all fire managers statewide informed of the move through the daily operations plan. These movements are usually made because of potential dangers for a SEAT due to a cross wind component at a primary base.

Requests from outside of the DNR for the use of any SEAT: The appropriate Area Forestry Leader (AFL) of the Area where the SEAT is currently based or deployed has the authority to assign the SEAT to

another agency for a period of up to one day. This allows the local AFL to promptly respond to requests supporting local border and/or other agreements for IA (Initial Attack) or one-day EA (Extended Attack) for the USFS. Any further or extended deployment needs to be approved by the Fire Management Section Chief, Bureau Director or their designee.

Any time the SEATs are deployed to a different agency's jurisdiction the Regional Forester or designee will be notified immediately and the RFL will notify the Fire Management Section Chief, Bureau Director or their designee. The key aspect here is to launch the SEAT for a critical mission, yet keep everyone informed of the activities of the SEAT resource.

DISPATCHING PROTOCOLS:

To clarify the dispatching responsibilities and priorities for use, the following protocol will be used to request and to assign SEATs

1. All requests for each SEAT will be made through the Dispatcher of the Area where the SEAT is currently based or deployed. Each Dispatcher will maintain routine contact with the SEAT Manager as well as the SEAT pilots and develop a communication procedure to promptly relay SEAT deployment/mission information. If a SEAT is relocated to a different base for the day due to weather or for other logistical considerations, requests for that SEAT must now be made through the Dispatcher of the Area where the SEAT is temporarily based. Dispatchers will communicate the status of SEATs to all AFL's and Dispatchers when SEATs are temporarily relocated via daily operations plan. If the plan is out before the move is made an email will be generated advising of the move via the daily operations plan distribution list.
2. As outlined in the Fire Management Plan for the 2011 Wind Event, when an Area is at a staffing level of 4-5, 1 SEAT, when available, will automatically be dispatched on any reported fire or a tower shot, within the blowdown area, with a small to medium growing smoke of any color. When the staffing level reaches 6-7, 2 SEATs, when available, will automatically be dispatched on any reported fire or a tower shot, within the blowdown area, with a small to medium growing smoke of any color. All 4 SEATs will be dispatched to any extended attack fires within the blowdown area.
3. When a WDNR Incident Commander (IC) makes a request through their local Dispatcher for deployment of a SEAT to an initiating fire outside of the blowdown area, the local Dispatcher determines the closest SEAT and contacts the appropriate Dispatcher to request the deployment of the closest SEAT. The request will include information on location, proposed action, fire potential, and suppression resources currently assigned including the name of the IC and if air attack is assigned to the fire. The SEAT will be deployed to support this initial attack effort if it is not already assigned to provide suppression on another working fire. Once this SEAT is deployed to this fire, it will continue to support this fire until released by the IC or deployed to another higher priority fire assignment by the AFL for the dispatch group where the SEAT is currently working.
4. Deployment of two SEATs to support initial attack on fires outside of the blowdown area is encouraged providing both SEATs are in close proximity to the fire, when fire potential warrants this level of response and when requested by the IC. Both SEATs will be available for use on a fire when both SEATs are unassigned or when high value resources require use of both SEATs. Note: Although two or more SEATs may have a greater impact initially on a fire an AFL needs to weigh the risk of not having a SEAT on an initiating fire some place else.
5. If a SEAT is deployed and working suppression on an ongoing fire, the decision to redeploy the SEAT to a different assignment shall be made by the AFL or by both AFLs if more than

one dispatch group is involved. When the Dispatchers receive a request for use of an actively assigned SEAT, the Dispatcher will attempt to confirm with their AFL if the SEAT can be released. If necessary, AFLs will discuss the current and proposed SEAT fire assignments to decide the highest priority for use of SEATs to limit fire size and maximize protection of resources. If neither AFL is available for this decision, the Dispatchers will decide by giving highest priority to SEAT use on small initiating fires and where suppression can minimize fire size and maximize protection of resources.

6. Primary responsibility for maintaining communications with the SEAT pilot(s) and SEAT manager(s) when deployed to a fire mission is assigned to the Area Dispatcher of the Area where the SEAT(s) is working. If the SEAT has been assigned to assist another non-DNR agency within the Area, the Area Dispatcher still holds the responsibility to maintain contact with the SEAT pilot(s) and SEAT manager(s) until the SEATs are released to return to their base.
7. SEAT pilots will maintain 15 minute flight following contact with the Dispatcher of the Area where the SEAT is assigned. In addition, there must be radio confirmations between the SEAT pilot and Dispatcher during every SEAT mission: 1. SEAT departure/take off; 2. SEAT contact with Air Attack or local IC on the fire; 3. SEAT confirmation of drop and enroute to base (reload and return or hold); 4. SEAT final approach to land at base.
8. When SEATs are relocated to a different base (i.e., from Siren to Crivitz), Area Dispatchers will coordinate radio contact with the SEAT pilot and utilize Auto Flight Follow (AFF) to track the flight progress as the SEAT crosses the air space of each Area. If the receiving or sending dispatch group has the “new” console it will be possible for one dispatcher to do all of the flight following.
9. When SEATs are dispatched outside the state, flight-following will be accomplished with a positive hand-off from the sending and receiving dispatch offices excluding border agreements.
10. All dispatchers must utilize AFF during all SEAT missions to ensure flight following if for some reason radio communications fail.

Additional questions on SEAT aircraft can be directed to: Jim Barnier for tactical usage and operational deployment and to John Jorgensen for SEAT contract interpretations or SEAT base management.

Cc: Area Dispatchers
SEAT Base Managers
John Jorgensen – FR/4
DNR Pilots
Jim Barnier – Wisconsin Dells
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