

CALIFORNIA NEEDS THE PROTECTION OF THE DC-10 FOR THE COMING MEGA WILDFIRE SEASONS

Serious destructive wildfires have been on the rise in California, the nation and the world due to global warming and more people moving into the wildland urban interface.

Ground forces and current air assets are no match for the intense, fast-moving, 100-foot high-class flames of these mega fires.

Cancelling the last year of the DC-10 airtanker 3-year contract is penny-wise and pound-foolish.

The DC-10 can drop 12,000 gallons of suppressant in 8 seconds and build an 0.6 mile line of retardant in 1 hour from a base 190 miles from the fire, while current S-2T CAL FIRE 1,200 gallon airtankers will take 4 hours from a base 45 miles from the fire.

The single-drop DC-10 line is continuous, wider, and has no breaks in it. The thinner S-2T line consists of 12 separate drops subject to breaks and crossovers that sometimes allow the fire to break through!

No ground forces (crews or fire trucks) can be placed directly in front of an advancing mega fire. Yet these forces typically account for 95% of the cost of suppressing a major fire. Aviation costs are typically of the order of only 5% of total suppression costs! Yet aviation assets are the only assets with any potential of attacking the hottest, faster-moving portions of the fires.

Prior to the introduction of the DC-10 (12,000 gal) and the Martin Mars (7,200 gal) aircraft to California fires, the largest airtankers were limited to 3,000 gallons maximum capacity. This 3,000 gallon capacity restricted the airtankers to direct attacks only on the flanks of the more intense fires!

While mega fires account for only 5% of the total number of fires in a year, their cost of suppression is 65% or more of the total annual suppression costs!

If cuts must be made in CAL FIRE's budget, cuts should be made in the portion that is ineffective towards stopping mega fires. The portion that provides the only ability to address these larger fires quickly must be kept intact. Billions of dollars of home losses and hundreds of millions of suppression costs are inevitable if these few big fires are not stopped or significantly limited by effective early attacks.



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