



4th International Wildland Fire Conference

Workshop on Aviation Management Communiqué

Summary

The aim of this session was to identify opportunities for multilateral cooperation to improve the safety, effectiveness and efficiency of aerial fire fighting.

A number of opportunities were identified for cooperation, including:

- the sharing of information, especially related to safety of operations;
- sharing of physical resources, including aircraft and specialist personnel.

The principal barriers identified included:

- lack of standardisation of operating procedures;
- differing approaches to regulatory aspects of aviation.

The session agreed on a statement of intent to continue communication, cooperation and collaboration in the field of aerial fire-fighting.

The session made a number of recommendations to the Conference, encompassing:

- the need to continue to identify opportunities for sharing of information and resources;
- the need to establish frameworks to properly evaluate the net benefit (including accounting for benefits of prevention of losses) of application of aerial means;
- the need to ensure that aerial operations are managed, supervised and supported to a high standard, and are properly integrated with other aspects of fire operations;
- the establishment of a formal network to facilitate the continued sharing of information, with a priority on safety-related information
- the need to standardise approaches to integrated management of aerial means.

Report of the session

The aim of the session was to explore avenues for future multi-lateral cooperation in the aerial suppression of wildland fires, with the objective of improving global performance in the safety, effectiveness and efficiency of aerial fire fighting means.

An emphasis was placed on examining the opportunities for international exchange of information, particularly (but not exclusively) relating to the safety of aerial operations.

The session identified a number of opportunities for cooperation and collaboration:

- the exchange of information, in particular information that will enable the fire and aviation communities to pro-actively identify and treat safety issues;
- the exchange of physical resources, in particular:
 - within and between regions, to reduce duplication and to provide capacity to address surges in demand;
 - between jurisdictions or locations with complementary fire seasons, primarily to provided enhance commercial opportunities, and to improve viability of investment in new technology and equipment; and to alleviate skills management and personnel retention issues associated with seasonality of work.

A number of barriers to cooperation and sharing of resources were also identified for potential treatment, including

- language
- lack of coordination mechanisms or coordinating bodies;

- differences between countries in the approach to the regulation of aviation activities and difficulties in cross-jurisdiction recognition of regulatory compliance;
- differences in standards of operation, including the training and certification of personnel.

Common themes emerging from discussion in the session, included:

- the considerable benefit that would flow from a more structured, formal approach to sharing of information relating to the safety of aerial operations, including "lessons learnt" and the ability to identify trends requiring remediation;
- the issues posed by climate change, and by demographic changes (particularly in the expanding wildland urban interface).
- the need for proper analysis of benefits of aerial suppression, with could extend to include accounting for the prevention of emissions of 'greenhouse' gases through effective reduction in the extent of forest fires;
- the critical importance of a high standards of management, supervision and support for aerial operations;
- the importance of security of contracts (length of term of contract) for service providers, in order to support investment in modern equipment;
- the importance of applying standardised approaches to management and support of aerial operations (for example use of ICS, standard communications technology and protocols) to under-pin opportunities for sharing of resources.

Agreed Statement of Intent

The workshop considers that in the current and predicted global fire environment the use of aerial means to support the suppression of fires may, in appropriate circumstances, offer benefits in community safety, security of the environment and fire suppression efficiency.

The workshop notes the recommendation of the FAO Fire Management Global Assessments of 2006 that "countries collaborate within and between regions, sharing knowledge and experienceInternational and regional collaboration should be considered at Technical workshops and high-level meetings....to promote collaboration."

The fire-aviation community intends to continue to communicate, cooperate and collaborate to improve the global performance of the means of aerial fire fighting in safety, effectiveness and efficiency.

Agreed recommendations

The workshop recommends to the 4th International Wildland Fire Conference that:

1. Agencies and service providers note that there are opportunities for the sharing of aerial resources - information, people and aircraft - between and within global regions.
2. Agencies and organisations with responsibility for forest fire prevention and control establish frameworks to analyse the opportunities for appropriate application of aerial means where there is net benefit (including accounting for the benefits of prevention of losses).
3. Agencies and organisations with responsibility for forest fire prevention and control note that experience around the world has demonstrated that aerial means must:
 - a. be managed, supervised and supported to a high standard, and
 - b. be properly integrated with other aspects of fire operations
 to ensure effectiveness and efficiency.
4. That an examination be made of the possibility of establishing a formal network of parties with an interest in aerial firefighting means, in order to facilitate the continued sharing of information. As a priority, such a network should provide means for the timely and regular sharing of information which may positively impact the safety of aerial operations. Arrangements should include provision for regular meetings of persons involved.
5. Agencies and organisations utilising aircraft in forest fire control consider opportunities to apply of standardised approaches to the integrated management of aerial means, such as the application of the Incident Command System, and the application of common communications technology and protocols.