

# NEWS Release Bureau of Land Management • BIFZ

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Burns Interagency Fire Zone • <http://www.blm.gov/or/districts/burns/fire>

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## BURNS INTERAGENCY FIRE ZONE'S KRISTINA THISSELL RECEIVES NATIONAL AWARD FOR SEAT BASE MANAGEMENT

**HINES, Oregon** – On Tuesday, February 19, Burns Interagency Fire Zone (BIFZ) employee Kristina Thissell received national recognition for her management of the Burns Single Engine Air Tanker (SEAT) Base during the 2007 wildfire season.

Thissell, who has been with the Burns, Oregon District of the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) since 2002, was honored for running an efficient and productive SEAT Base that delivered over 468,000 gallons of retardant in a single season – more than any SEAT Base in the country, ever. Bryan Bitting, BIFZ Aviation Manager, Brad Bernardy, Oregon/Washington BLM State Aviation Manager, and Mark Bickham, BLM National SEAT Program Manager, were on hand to deliver the award and show appreciation on behalf of the Bureau for Thissell's outstanding efforts.

The SEAT has become one of the most important new tools in aerial firefighting. The SEAT is a small agricultural "crop duster" airplane that has been modified to drop fire retardant on wildfires. These aircraft are designed to fly low and slow which is ideal for dropping retardants. In contrast to the large air tankers that carry 2,000 to 3,000 gallons, the SEATS only carry 500 to 800 gallons of retardant. The SEAT does not replace large air tankers, but it is the ideal tool to use on fires that have just started. Retardant is not designed to extinguish a fire, it is dropped just ahead of the flames to slow or retard the spread. This gives firefighters time to arrive at the fire and actually put the fire out before more expensive resources are dispatched.

"The SEAT pilots and aircraft have a critical role in helping maintain firefighter and public safety. Managing the SEAT Base is a very complex operation with a lot of moving parts. The amount of business at the Burns base in 2007 made managing it no walk in the park," said Bernardy. Bitting added, "The SEAT Base in Burns is really still set up on a temporary basis. The fact that Kristina safely managed such a high level of activity utilizing temporary arrangements speaks highly of the remarkable work she accomplished."

For more information, contact the Burns Interagency Communication Center at (541) 573-4545.

### About BLM

The BLM manages more land – 258 million surface acres – than any other Federal agency. Most of this public land is located in 12 Western States, including Alaska. The BLM, with a budget of about \$1.8 billion, also administers 700 million acres of sub-surface mineral estate throughout the nation. The BLM's multiple-use mission is to sustain the health and productivity of the public lands for the use and enjoyment of present and future generations. The BLM accomplishes this by managing such activities as outdoor recreation, livestock grazing, mineral development, and energy production, and by conserving natural, historical, and cultural resources on the public lands.

