

**UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
Office of Fire and Aviation**



Operations Alert

No. 08-01

September 4, 2008

Subject: PERSONNEL AND EQUIPMENT SAFETY

Area of Concern: RETARDANT/SUPPRESSANT APPLICATION

Discussion: On August 27, 2008 a Single Engine Airtanker (SEAT) crashed on the Flat Bush Fire, Northwest of Meeker, Colorado. Debris from the accident damaged two federal wildland fire engines and narrowly missed the six crewmembers. The approach to the drop brought the SEAT over the location where the engines and crewmembers were staged.

Aerial supervisors and incident pilots constantly work with ground crews to ensure drop areas are clear of personnel prior to dropping retardants or suppressants. The lesson learned here is that when applicable, we need to apply this measure of safety to personnel and equipment located in and around the aircraft's final approach and departure path. This can be accomplished by working through the aerial supervisor or communicating directly with the tanker/helicopter pilot to safely relocate personnel and equipment.

Don't assume that aerial resources can always see you. If you have concerns communicate them immediately. Additional information on retardant use and effectiveness can be reviewed in the Aviation portion of the Incident Response Pocket Guide (IRPG).

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