



OPERATIONAL CIRCULAR: 06/2020

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FEBRUARY 2020

LARGE AIR TANKER (LAT) OPERATIONS

In response to the significant current bushfire activity across Australia, the Federal Government recently announced the additional \$20m funding for the provision of two very large air tanker (VLAT) and two large air tanker (LAT) aircraft.

On Thursday, 16 January 2020, the Hon. Mark McGowan, MLA, Premier of Western Australia and the Hon. Francis Logan, MLA, Minister for Emergency Services announced that WA's fire response capabilities would be bolstered by the addition of the new MD87 large air tanker (LAT) which arrived in Perth on Monday 20 January 2020. The addition of the LAT will provide a vital capability and an enhanced defence against bushfires in support of ground crews and in the protection of the community and assets for the 2019/20 southern bushfire season.

Contract arrangements are as follows:

- The airtanker has been contracted for an initial service period of a minimum of 50 days, with options to extend.
- The initial nominated operational base (NOB) will be RAAF Pearce Air Base with additional forward operational bases (FOB) being developed.
- Australian Defence Force (ADF) is providing support to establish the NOB including accommodation and logistical support.
- NAFC will be providing a working group of experienced LAT fire agency practitioners to provide assistance with the induction of LAT operations into WA.

MD87 Fire Bomber Capabilities

The MD87 capabilities for LAT operations include:

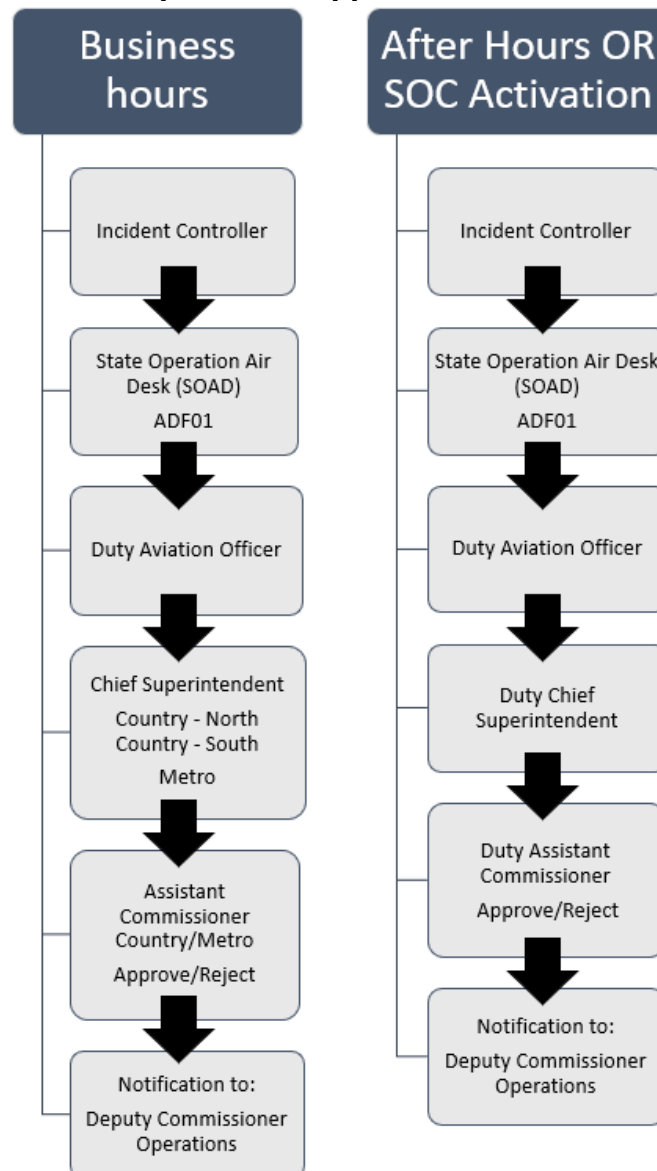
- on all occasions a LAT Air Attack Supervisor will be dispatched to integrate the aircraft into firefighting operations;
- standard retardant capacity of 11,350 litres;
- constant flow firebombing doors with the ability to split loads and vary drop patterns to achieve best outcome and drop effectiveness;
- typical footprint on coverage level 4 is 336m long and 20m wide;
- ability to take off and land fully loaded;
- two pilot operation;
- cruising speed of 800km/h;
- loaded strike range up to 1440km from operating base;
- three hour endurance;

Target Audience: All DFES, LG and DBCA fire services personnel.					
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- 1600m runway capability loaded – potential WA regional airports that are suitable include Busselton - Margaret River, Kalgoorlie, Cunderdin, Geraldton, Albany and Learmonth;
- under certain conditions, the aircraft is flown with the landing gear down during retardant drops. This reduces airspeed while allowing higher engine RPMs, reducing lag on post-drop climb out.

Request and Approval Process



For more information refer to the [Use of Retardant During Firefighting Operations](#) and [MD-87 Large Airtanker](#) fact sheets. Alternatively, please contact Adam Bannister, Manager Air Operations: adam.bannister@dfes.wa.gov.au.

CRAIG WATERS DEPUTY COMMISSIONER OPERATIONS

Target Audience: All DFES, LG and DBCA fire services personnel.					
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