



Interagency Aviation Information Bulletin



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Subject: Integrated Operational Field Evaluation (I-OFE)

Area of Concern: Communication of I-OFE information to stakeholders

Distribution: All Aviation Operations

Discussion: Qualification testing of Long-Term Fire Retardants (LTFRs) includes extensive laboratory testing and an operational field evaluation that includes integration with airtanker base and aerial operations. Due to the introduction of new non-traditional LTFR chemistries, additional field testing will be performed that integrates the new and existing LTFRs.

Fortress North America, LLC (Fortress) has developed a new family of LTFR products including dry (FR-100) and liquid (FR-200) concentrates. Both products are fully qualified on the USDA Forest Service Qualified Products List. During the FR-100 OFE in 2021, product commingling occurred with existing qualified LTFRs. As a result, an Integrated Operational Field Evaluation (I-OFE) was developed to observe, understand, and develop mitigations from any potential effects of incorporating new and traditional phosphate-based LTFRs in airtankers and at airtanker bases. The I-OFE will consist of three Fortress Mobile Retardant Bases (MRBs) and two airtankers which will be located at the discretion of the Government. The I-OFE includes three phases:

- Phase 1: I-OFE airtankers will only carry FR-200 and will reload at the Fortress MRBs.
- Phase 2: I-OFE airtankers will reload at the closest airtanker base regardless of the product used, excluding Perimeter solutions LC-95, and the airtankers will return to the MRB location each night.
- Phase 3: Includes all federal-contracted large airtankers utilizing FR-200 and Perimeter Solutions MVP-Fx, LCE20, and LC-95 (with some restrictions).

The I-OFE started June 15th at the Fort Huachuca Airtanker Base in the Southwest Region/Geographic Area with one MRB. Two MRBs are scheduled to start July 1st and will be strategically placed to allow for effective I-OFE airtanker operations. The I-OFE will be organized and administered by the Forest Service in coordination with interagency partners and managed by the I-OFE Program Manager (PM). The I-OFE PM will maintain communication and coordination with cooperators, participants, Forest Service regional offices, and geographic areas.

Government oversight of MRB operations will be provided by an agency Retardant Integration Specialist (RIS). The RIS will coordinate with the Airtanker Base Manager (ATBM) to provide daily on-site support and oversight for retardant integration operations during hours of aircraft readiness. The RIS will ensure that all required product testing and sampling is performed and will be responsible for mass-flow meter and/or other government property during set-up or movement of the MRB.

The on-site ATBM will maintain responsibility for the airtanker base and ramp operations. The ATBM will continue to serve as the liaison with airfield management and any regularly contracted on-site LTFR vendor representation on concerns or issues related to the retardant integration. The ATBM will ensure aircraft and retardant use is recorded in FLIGHT and work with the RIS on any operational concerns or issues.

For more information on FR-200 visit the LTFR Characteristics and Mix Factor Table at https://www.fs.usda.gov/rm/fire/wfcs/documents/MixFactorTable_Long-term_Retardants_2021-1005.pdf

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