

August 27, 2009 Timeline for Morning Activities at FOX Air Tanker Base

At the end of the day on August 26, 2009, the aircraft assigned to the Station fire were released that evening and reassigned to the Morris fire for August 27th. Crews were required to be on duty by 0700 at FOX. This was the established starting time set by the Morris Fire Air Operations.

0700: Aircraft and crews were on duty at FOX. Aircraft assignments were made for the day with some resources being reassigned to the Station fire instead of the Morris fire. Aircraft and crews assigned to the Station fire are Lead 57, Air Tanker 11, Air Tanker 43, Air Tanker 45, and Air Tanker 55.

Upon arrival to the Air Tanker base by all Air Tanker crews they opened up their aircraft and stored their personnel gear and performed an aircraft security inspection to assure no tampering or vandalism had occurred before they began fueling the aircraft and doing a preflight check of the aircraft. This took approximately 5 minutes.

As stated in the National Air Tanker Contract, "The Air Tanker Base Manager shall provide meals, ice, and drinks at Government's expense in order to sustain fire fighting operations. If the crews are required to be on site/base due to potential fire emergencies, or the crew is flying, then appropriate meals shall be provided. In addition, extended standby ordered by the Government in excess of 1 hour requires dinner to be provided."

Breakfast meals were available for the crews when they started their shifts at 0700. The meal period was concurrent with all the other activities that morning and did not necessarily delay aircraft departure time to the Station fire.

0705: After preflight checks were performed, fuel was ordered for all aircraft, including Lead 57. The Airport was only able to provide one fuel truck for the four aircraft assigned to the Station fire. Fueling duration was approximately 30 to 45 minutes per aircraft (normal length of time). This task was mostly performed by the copilot.

0710 - 0720: A morning briefing was given for both the Morris fire, and initial attack to the Station fire. Expectations were that both fires would be supported during the current operational period. The briefing took about 20 to 30 minutes, which was a little longer than normal. Aircraft safety was a particular concern that day due to the close proximity of the Morris and Station fires and the aircraft orbital patterns. Coordination of aircraft to avoid collisions was critical. All base personnel were required to attend the "morning briefing", so little other activity is occurring during this time.

0740: After the briefing aircraft were loaded with retardant, which took approximately 5 to 8 minutes per aircraft (normal length of time).

As stated in the Interagency Air Tanker Base Operations Guide, Page 46, section "IV, B.8.(b)"a, the simultaneous fueling and loading of aircraft is prohibited.

0758: Air Attack 310 was on scene at the Station fire doing recon and after determining the area was safe, placed an order for Lead 57 to report to the Station fire through the aircraft desk at ANF dispatch.

0802: Lead 57 departed for the Station fire as ordered by Air Attack 310

0804: Lead 57 returned to FOX, aircraft was losing fuel.

0822: Lead 57 departed for Station fire after correcting fuel loss problem. Flight time to fire is 10 minutes.

0842: Air Tanker 55 departed for Station fire.

Lead plane pilots make requests for Air Tankers after they make an on scene safety assessment of the fire area for smoke, power lines and other aerial hazards. Lead 57 placed the request for Air Tankers through Fox Air Tanker base victor frequencies which are not recorded.

0851: Air Tanker 11 departed for Station fire.

0856: Air Tanker 43 departed for Station fire.

0903: Air Tanker 45 departed for Station fire.