



CFS FACT SHEET

Aerial firefighting

Although aircraft are often the most visible part of the response to a fire, and therefore believed to be the most important, almost all fires are still extinguished by ground crews.

The Country Fire Service (CFS) currently has a base fleet of 26 aircraft which can be relocated across several airstrips across the state to offer aerial firefighting support to ground crews.

Aircraft are particularly valuable for fires in difficult terrain or fast moving fires that are too dangerous for ground crews to be placed in front of.

They may not be able to fly if wind speeds are too high, dust or smoke covers the fire, or when daylight is fading.

Firefighting aircraft will also be grounded if Remotely Piloted Aircraft (drones) are flown without permission over a fire ground.

Although other places in the world may be experimenting with night aerial firefighting, the Country Fire Service can only legally and safely operate during daylight hours.



Single Engine Air Tanker (SEAT)

The CFS currently contracts 14 SEATs, or fire bombers, throughout South Australia.

The SEATs can fly at almost 300kph and carry 3,200 litres of water and firefighting chemicals.



Tactical Coordination aircraft

Four helicopters and one airplane make up the CFS tactical coordination fleet.

These aircraft help to coordinate SEATs to specifically support firefighters at problematic parts of the fire ground where ground crews may not be able to access the fire, or where people, homes and buildings may be in danger.

Crews can also help to advise bomber crews of the type of fire retardants best suited to the fire's behaviour and fuels.

Tactical and Strategic Overview aircraft

Four helicopters and two airplanes make up the CFS tactical and strategic overview fleet.

These aircraft are used to observe, collect information to help predict the path of the fire, gather and relay information, and map the perimeter of the fire.



Erickson Airplane (S-64E)

The Erickson Airplane can carry 7,500 litres of water and firefighting chemicals and can use its pump to refill from open water sources in just 45 seconds.

The Erickson is based in the Mount Lofty Ranges, where it is close to multiple open water supplies.



Large Air Tankers (LATs)

As part of a national firefighting agreement LATs may be requested from interstate.

LATs are currently operated by the New South Wales and Victorian firefighting organisations, and may carry up to 20,000 litres of water and firefighting chemicals.

CFS air support teams work with the support of the Royal Australian Air Force at Edinburgh to refill LATs at the airbase if multiple drops are required.

Cleaning up if firefighting chemicals are used on your property

The concentrations of chemicals used in drops are not harmful to animals or humans and are biodegradable.

It is recommended that you wash in cold water with a mild soap as a precaution to avoid possible skin irritation if you come in contact with the products.

If your house is doused and your gutters run off to a rainwater tank, you should drain and flush the gutters and tank, then refill with fresh water.

The concentrations of chemicals used by the CFS do not pose health risks but may change the taste and potability of drinking water.

Water mixed with aerial drops in rainwater tanks can still be used for cleaning and firefighting.

Animals, cars or buildings that are doused in firefighting drops can also be washed with water and appropriate shampoos or soaps to remove residue.

If fruit trees or vegetables are doused it is recommended they are washed thoroughly before consuming to remove any possible residue taste.