

News

fire information

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NEWS RELEASE

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Single engine air tanker crash investigation continues

St. George, UTAH – Federal aviation investigators will be arriving this afternoon to the Dammeron Fire, where a single engine air tanker pilot died when his plane crashed Thursday evening. The fire is 14 miles north of St. George, Utah. The investigation is expected to take several weeks to complete. Critical stress counselors have arrived and are available for firefighters.

The pilot who died in the crash was Wayne Turner, 58, from Big Sandy, Montana. He was a contract pilot working for New Frontier Aviation, which is based in Fort Benton, Montana. Having been a pilot for more than 40 years, Turner had logged more than 21,000 hours flying.

The single engine air tanker (SEAT) that crashed was a Dromader M-18. SEATs are crop-dusting planes that have been converted to drop water or retardant on wildfires. They play an important role in fire suppression due to their maneuverability.

This plane was one of 76 SEATs contracted by the Bureau of Land Management to fight wildland fires throughout the country. It was one of two SEATs routinely stationed in St. George to fight wildland fires in northwestern Arizona and southwestern Utah.

Firefighters continue to make progress on the Dammeron Fire. Hand crews and bulldozers are establishing fireline, and a heavy helicopter is working hotspots. The second SEAT that has been working the Dammeron Fire will not fly today.

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