

Russia Offers California Aerial Firefighting Aid

Santa Barbara County first responders plan to host Beriev Be-200 wildfire suppression aircraft at Santa Maria Airport.

SANTA MARIA, CA, USA, September 22, 2015 /EINPresswire.com/ -- The Russian Ministry of Emergency Situations (EMERCOM of Russia) has offered to help the United States fight wildfires in California with aerial resources including the Beriev Be-200 amphibious firefighting jet, according to USA Firefighting Air Corps (USAFAC).

Emergency Minister Vladimir Puchkov last Tuesday sent the offer to Federal Emergency Management Agency

(FEMA) Administrator Craig Fugate, stating, "As there are wildfires raging across California, I would like to offer practical free assistance of the Russian Emergencies Ministry."

A state of emergency had been declared on Sunday in Lake County and Napa County. Today, thousands of firefighters from across the United States struggle to contain 10 active fires in California, according to USAFAC. Tens of thousands of residents have been forced to evacuate their homes, and 1600 homes have been destroyed.

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Fire Chief Eric Petersen

Puchkov stated that the Ministry is ready to send modern aircraft, as well as specialists and rescuers with necessary equipment to fight wildfires and organize ground support for the firefighting fleet.

First responders in California welcomed EMERCOM's offer. The Santa Barbara County Fire Department immediately made plans with Santa Maria-based fire aviation company International Emergency Services, in association with Airbus and USAFAC, to host the EMERCOM initiative and provide a home base for the fire suppression aircraft at Santa Maria Airport.

In expressing his appreciation for the EMERCOM offer, Santa Barbara County Fire Chief Eric Peterson said, "The current fire activity throughout the state, and the fire activity in our area during the last several years, demonstrates a threat that demands a quick and forceful response."

The Beriev Be-200 amphibious firefighting jet specializes in dropping large amounts of water on wildfires. In 18 seconds, it can scoop up 12 tons of water from a nearby lake or river, or from the ocean.



EMERCOM of Russia Beriev Be-200 amphibious firefighting jet

On a single tank of fuel, the Be-200 can fly back-and-forth between a wildfire and a body of water many times without stopping. In 20 cycles it can douse a forest fire the size of 29 football fields.

"This aircraft would be a tremendously valuable resource given the extreme fire conditions we are now experiencing," said Peterson.

Puchkov and Peterson await the approval of the United States Forest Service and other Federal and state agencies to activate the EMERCOM aerial firefighting resources in California.

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