

Department of Police, Fire and Emergency Management
Right to Information Services

GPO Box 308, Hobart, Tas. 7001
Phone: (03) 61732257 | Fax: (03) 62302601
Email: rti@dpfem.tas.gov.au
Web: www.dpfem.tas.gov.au



Our ref: RTI: 522/23
TRIM ref: A23/307096
Enquiries: (03) 61732363

20 December 2023

Clive Stott


Dear Mr Stott,

APPLICATION FOR ASSESSED DISCLOSURE – REFERENCE NO. RTI: 522/23

I am writing in relation to your application for assessed disclosure pursuant to the *Right to Information Act 2009* (the Act), where you seek information in relation to the Tasmanian Fire Service. Specifically, you requested:

1. The number and type of fire-fighting aircraft (water bombers) TFS has under contract now.
2. The number and type of firebombing aircraft TFS has contracted in addition to come to Tas this fire season and when will they arrive?
3. The total number of fire bombing aircraft
4. The total number and type of aircraft not used for fire bombing but used for fire mapping and reconnaissance work.

Enquiries with the Tasmania Fire Service (TFS) has located information relevant to your application. I have provided all the information that TFS has located in response to your application and no exemptions have been applied.

Definitions

Section 5 of the Act defines **information** as:

(a) anything by which words, figures, letters or symbols are recorded and includes a map, plan, graph, drawing, painting, recording and photograph; and

(b) anything in which information is embodied so as to be capable of being reproduced.

Disclosed Information

Each year Tasmania contracts firefighting aircraft through the National Aerial Firefighting Centre (NAFC). NAFC coordinates the leasing of a national fleet of specialised firefighting aircraft on behalf of State and Territory emergency services and land management agencies across Australia. This year Tasmania has received 15 aircraft through the NAFC. This fleet is an improvement to that available during the last bushfire season.

This includes 14 contracted to Tasmania Fire Service:

- 2 x "Air Tractor" AT-802F airplanes
- 4 x "Fireboss" AT-802F airplanes, equipped with amphibious floats
- 4 x "Bell" 214B helicopters
- 2 x "Twin Squirrel" AS355-F1 helicopters
- 1 x FB 700 AS350-B2 Special Intelligence Gathering (SIG) helicopter
- 1 x Aero Commander fire spotter airplane

And one contracted to Tasmanian Parks and Wildlife Service:

- 1x "HeliTreck" BK117

Tasmania's firefighting agencies also have access to up to 19 local "call when needed" aircraft, meaning there are up to 34 firefighting aircraft available in the state this summer, plus the ability to call in more from the mainland if required.

All aircraft are centrally managed by Tasmania Fire Service's Air Operations Unit.

The amount of water carried by each will depend on how each aircraft is set up on the day.











- The medium helicopters can carry 2500 litres in a belly tank;
- The bucketing aircraft can carry 1000-1500 litres in a bucket;
- The fixed wing aeroplanes can carry 2500-3300 litres

The SIG machine is purely used for intelligence gathering, this is a vital part of forecasting where a fire will go, the assets in danger, mapping, identifying spot fires, lightning strikes and providing intel to the planning section.

The two helicopter platforms (one each in the North and South) are used for coordinating and supervising the firebombing aircraft. They can also be used for transporting fire crews.

This year TFS are also contracting a fixed wing reconnaissance aircraft (Aero Commander BirdDog) which will be used for lightning strike fire detection, crew transport and can also be used as a lead plane for Interstate Large Air Tankers if required.

The below table provides details on the aircraft, where they are located and what day they will start their contract.

Aircraft Type	Aircraft Company	Length of Contract	Start Date	End Date	Nominated Base
SIG machine	 Microflite	90 days	4 Dec 23	3 Mar 24	State resource (Cambridge)
2 x Medium RW	 McDermott Aviation	70 days	8 Dec 23	16 Feb 24	Cambridge
1 x Platform	 Osborne Aviation	70 days	8 Dec 23	16 Feb 24	Cambridge
2 x Medium RW	 McDermott Aviation	70 days	20 Dec 23	28 Feb 24	Launceston Airport
1 x Platform	 Helicopter Resources	70 days	20 Dec 23	28 Feb 24	Launceston Airport
BK 117 (PWS Winching)	 HeliTrek	91 days	4 Dec 23	4 Mar 24	State resource (Cambridge)
2 x 802's (Single Engine air tractors)	 Field Air	70 days	15 Dec 23	23 Feb 24	State Resource (Cambridge)
2 x Fire Boss	 Field Air	70 days	15 Dec 23	23 Feb 24	State Resource (Cambridge)
2 x Fire Boss	 Kennedy Aviation	70 days	8 Dec 23	16 Feb 24	State Resource (Cambridge)
Aero Commander	 Kennedy Air	70 days	18 Jan 23	26 Feb 24	State Resource (Cambridge)

In assessing the information for disclosure, I am exercising powers delegated to me by the Principal Officer of DPFEM under Section 24 of the *Right to Information Act 2009*.

TFS, which forms part of Department of Police Fire Emergency Management (DPFEM), is the custodian of the information you seek and therefore is required to comply with the Act and the *Personal Information Protection Act 2004*.

If you seek to clarify the information provided, please contact our office and we will endeavour to assist you further in relation to this.

Right of Review

You have the right under Section 43 of the Act to apply for a review of this assessment. To apply for a review, you must write to the Secretary of DPFEM, GPO Box 308, Hobart, Tasmania 7001 or email rti@dpfem.tas.gov.au within 20 working days of receiving this letter.

Yours sincerely



Jessica Walshe
Right to Information Delegate