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Sustained flight operations fire season 2006 - 07

For information

It has been no surprise that the 2006-07 fire season commenced early for the State of Victoria. A culmination of rainfall deficient winter periods, exceptional and extensive dry summer periods and other weather related phenomena over several years has resulted in the most significant fire threat for decades.

Since the middle of September 2006 there has been numerous lightning events, which have resulted in multiple ignitions occurring, many of which have generated into significant and large fire operations involving extensive use of aircraft.

Parrelled with this has been the commencement of availability for State fleet aerial firefighting aircraft. Availability periods commenced six weeks early for some resources with the average being four weeks ahead of normal.

Currently there is 35 fixed wing and rotary wing aircraft engaged on State contracts. There has been a significant number of Call When Needed resources engaged for short-term periods to supplement the fleet during peak threat and response periods.

With the extended period of fire activity and the number of fire incidents that aircraft have been deployed to there has been a relative increase in the number of operational flying hours.

As a result the maintenance requirements for aircraft are occurring more frequently than they would in a season with less activity.

Comments

Despite the fact that there appears to be a sense of urgency in some fire situations the SAU reminds agency aviation related personnel and aircraft operators that strict adherence to aircraft maintenance requirements and standards is imperative.

If at any time the requirement for maintenance and or corrective work on aircraft is needed, notification at the earliest possible time would be greatly appreciated by the State Airdesk. This will enable long term resource planning and operational preparedness planning.

As well as maintaining and fulfilling maintenance requirements the SAU reminds all involved to consider fatigue management. It is essential that agency personnel and aircrew are aware of and are actively managing fatigue levels to ensure we continue to deliver a high quality performance for the remainder of the season. Please see **SAU Briefing Note Number 16**.

As we enter the New Year of 2007 we may only be a partially through what remains.

The key messages from the SAU are:

- do not over commit yourself,
- do not over commit the aircraft and
- do not allow yourself to be overwhelmed by an uneasy sense of urgency.

Contact for further information

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