



For Immediate Release
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Expect low-flying airtankers in East Valley

MESA, ARIZ. --- East Mesa and Apache Junction residents should expect a temporary increase in large aircraft overflights as the result of a forest fire near Payson. The U.S. Forest Service has increased its firefighting operations at Williams Gateway Airport with two additional Air National Guard C-130 cargo planes that have been modified to serve as wildland firefighting airtankers. The additional aircraft have been added to the existing fleet of two Air Force Reserve airtankers that have been based at Williams Gateway Airport since May 24.

Brian Sexton, community relations coordinator for the Williams Gateway Airport Authority, said, "The Airport Authority has distributed the Airport's noise abatement procedures to the crew of the airtankers. However, their mission to the Payson area fires requires them to fly a straight line to the fire, over east Mesa and Apache Junction. These operations will continue until the Payson fires are contained."

The military C-130 aircraft are equipped with modular airborne firefighting systems (MAFFS), which are capable of holding up to 3,000 gallons of fire retardant. They are designed to slow the rate in which a wildland fire spreads, which allows ground crews time to establish containment lines around the fire. Each aircraft is rigorously maintained by the military for airworthiness and safety.

Residents can call the Airport's 24-hour noise complaint line at 480-929-7902, if they are disturbed by the overflights.

The Airport is owned and operated by the Williams Gateway Airport Authority, which includes the Gila River Indian Community, Gilbert, Mesa and Queen Creek. For more information, visit www.flywga.org.