



For Immediate Release
July 28, 2004

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U.S. Forest Service and Town of Payson praise Airport

MESA, ARIZ. --- In response to Williams Gateway Airport receiving nine noise complaints associated with this summer's U.S. Forest Service airtanker operations, the U.S. Forest Service and the Mayor of Payson thanked the Airport and East Valley residents for their support of the operations.

U.S. Forest Service Department Airtanker Base Manager Bob Madill said, "Williams Gateway Airport provided much needed aerial support for the second largest fire in Arizona history and was instrumental in helping to protect the communities of Payson, Pine, and Strawberry. The Airport also helped save the \$200 million Mt. Graham telescope complex. Without the use of Williams for airtanker operations, these fires could have had far more devastating results."

Town of Payson Mayor Barbara Brewer said, "The residents of Payson are grateful that Williams Gateway Airport assisted the airtanker operations as they helped save our community and surrounding areas. Our airport isn't able to accommodate the large tankers and having these airtankers so close really makes a difference. Thanks to all East Valley residents for your continued support and for your wonderful airport."

City of Mesa Mayor Keno Hawker said, "Airports provide many valuable services beyond creating jobs and economic opportunities and this is a fine example. The Airport's long runways and uncongested airspace assisted the airtankers in expediting their payloads to the fires, potentially saving lives and property. The operation also filled up many hotel rooms during what is traditionally a slow period for Mesa hoteliers."

The U.S. Forest Service stated between May 24th and July 15th, aircraft conducted 252 sorties, using more than 670,000 gallons of retardant on 17 fires in Arizona, California, and New Mexico, while spending an estimated total of \$880,000 on the local economy (breakdown):

- \$425,000 on fuel for the Military C-130 aircraft and lead planes

- \$140,000 on food, with an average number of 60 personnel a day

- \$210,000 on hotel rooms

- \$105,000 on miscellaneous supplies

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.