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**Chadrad Communications, Inc.**  
226 Bordeaux St - Chadron, NE 69337  
308-432-5545 fax 308-432-5601  
E-mail: [kcsr@chadrad.com](mailto:kcsr@chadrad.com)



**(U.S.)-Feds Add Bigger, Faster Planes To Wildfire Fleet**



By: Roxie Graham-Marski Posted at: 05/07/2013 08:27 AM

By JEFF BARNARD  
Associated Press

GRANTS PASS, Ore. (AP) - The U.S. Forest Service is gearing up for a tough wildfire season by adding to its large air tanker fleet seven planes that fly faster and will drop a bigger payload of fire retardant than in the past.

The long-anticipated contracts announced Monday total \$158 million and include several models of aircraft, including one for a converted DC10 that's bigger than anything the Forest Service has used on a regular basis.

The newer planes join the aging fleet of eight large tankers, mostly Korean War-era submarine chasers.

The agency says the new planes can meet the same demands as the larger fleet of smaller and slower fleet of years past.

The large air tanker fleet has dwindled from 46 in 1990, partly due to a series of fatal crashes.