



United States Department of Agriculture Forest Service

Aviation Safety Alert

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Subject: Troutdale Airtanker Base Closure

Area of Concern: Aviation Operations

Distribution: Aviation Managers, Dispatchers and Pilots

Discussion: Last week during Airtanker Base reviews in Region 6 it was determined that the Troutdale airport can not be used for airtanker operations. Currently it is impossible for a loaded airtanker to depart the Troutdale airport to the east because they can not safely clear the trees.

The Code of Federal Regulations Title 14: Aeronautics and Space, Part 77 – Objects Affecting Navigable Airspace establishes the requirement for obstruction clearance. The Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has advised the Port of Portland that if the trees are not removed to provide an adequate approach surface then the runway will be shortened by displacing the landing threshold; thus allowing for the necessary landing and takeoff clearance. By displacing the landing threshold, the Troutdale airport would be unusable in any direction for airtankers because the runway would then be too short for that type of aircraft.

Safety at the Troutdale airport has already been affected by the trees growing to the east because the approved FAA landing system, Visual Approach Slope Indicator (VASI), was removed from service due to unsafe obstruction clearance. The VASI is a system of lights arranged to provide visual descent guidance information during the approach to a runway. These lights are visible from 3-5 miles during the day and up to 20 miles or more at night. The visual glide path of the VASI provides safe obstruction clearance within plus or minus 10 degrees of the extended runway centerline to 4 NM from the runway threshold. The Port of Portland would like to have this system reinstated.

The Forest Service has a strong interest in the continued use of the Troutdale Airtanker Base to protect the Bullrun Watershed, the source of Portland's water supply, and to protect the ever increasing wildland urban interface within the entire Columbia River Gorge. There are many groups interested in the trees east of the Troutdale airport; several groups are not in favor of cutting the trees because of how it may look.

Until these issues are resolved, Troutdale Airtanker Base is closed to all large airtanker operations until further notice. Other aircraft traffic using the Troutdale airport are advised to use caution due to the close proximity of trees to the active runway and the loss of the VASI landing system.

Please direct any questions to the Forest Service Fixed Wing Specialist, Kathy Allred at 208-387-5625 or kallred@fs.fed.us

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