



NEW CONTRACTS GIVE NEPTUNE AVIATION A SOLID BASE FOR GROWTH

News / Airlines



Neptune Aviation is thrilled to have four **new contracts** to provide firefighting jets to the U.S. Forest Service, saying the new agreements mean all of their planes will be at work next fire season.

The U.S. Forest Service has been working for the past several years to upgrade its contracted stock of propeller-driven fire tankers to newer, faster jet-powered tankers with larger capacities.

However that process has been going with fits and starts for nearly five years, as the various vendors jockeyed for position and tried to bring new jets online.

The news is huge for Missoula-based Neptune.

"Absolutely. You know we've been working since 2011 trying to get these long-term, next gen contracts. And we were notified yesterday that the Forest Service awarded four of those to us," Neptune Aviation CEO Ron Hooper said. "And each one is a five year contract, with the potential for five more years, for a total of 10-years per aircraft. So we're real excited about that."

Neptune has been among the leaders in developing the new jet tankers, retrofitting the BAe-6 jets from Europe into computer-controlled tankers capable of dropping up to 3,000 gallons of water or retardant.

When you add the new contract to the existing "legacy" contract awarded last year, it means Neptune will have six of venerable P2-V prop tankers and six jets under USFS or state contracts next year. Crews are already building a seventh jet and making future plans...

"It is. Obviously it provides a lot of stability for us going forward. We'll be able to develop some things out here in terms of capital investment that we've been hesitant to do," Hooper said. "We'll be able to hire more employees based on this program of work now. So it's been a real plus for us. A real stabilizing effect."

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