

Media Release

The Hon James Merlino MP
Deputy Premier
Minister for Education
Minister for Emergency Services



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Monday, 26 February, 2018

VICTORIA LAUNCHES NIGHT TIME TRIAL OF FIREFIGHTING AIRCRAFT

In an Australian first, aircraft will take to the sky at night to test the use of night-vision technology to drop water on fires.

Emergency Services Minister James Merlino said the trial, led by Emergency Management Victoria (EMV), will guide the future use of night-time aerial firefighting in this state.

The trial will be based out of Ballarat Airport, and will involve two aircraft. One aircraft will conduct reconnaissance flights during the day and provide strategic oversight during the night, while the other will collect water and drop it on a series of controlled fires and targets after dark.

The trial has been approved by Civil Aviation Safety Authority and will start this week. It will also test the ability to hover-fill helicopters at night and the efficiency of night-vision technology, including infrared systems and night-vision goggles.

Night-time water-bombing is used in limited overseas locations, but was not currently deployed in Australia. The results of the trial will be used to inform operations in all Australian jurisdictions, not just Victoria.

Quotes attributable to Minister for Emergency Services James Merlino

“Victoria is a global leader in firefighting, and this night-time trial of water-bombing aircraft is another example of our emergency services looking at innovative ways to keep communities safe.”

“The results of the trial will help determine whether water-bombing aircraft will be deployed at night during future summer-fire seasons.”

Quotes attributable to Emergency Management Commissioner Craig Lapsley

“Night-time aerial firebombing has the potential to significantly improve Victoria’s firefighting capability by building on the number of hours aircraft have to respond to fires.”

“While the use of night-vision goggles and infrared technology is not new, this has not been used together in Victoria for firebombing – or Australia. I look forward to seeing how we can implement this technology here to increase our operational capability at night.”