



IDENTIFICATION

Department	Position Title	
Environment and Climate Change	Air Attack Officer	
Position Number	Community	Division/Region
23-9001	Fort Smith	Forest Management

PURPOSE OF THE POSITION

The Air Attack Officer (AAO) provides specialized expertise in directing and coordinating the aerial management of wildfires throughout the Northwest Territories (NWT). A key requirement of the position is training, mentoring, and coaching of new AAO trainees.

SCOPE

The Forest Management Division (FMD) provides the policy, planning and regulatory framework for the stewardship, protection, and sustainable management of forest resources on 80 million hectares of land in the Northwest Territories. The forest fire management program is a key area of responsibility. The Division has 30 full-time staff and 17 seasonal positions in the areas of sustainable forest resources, forest fire management, and program support. The Aviation Services section is responsible for providing aircraft services in support of Departmental programs including fire management, forest resources, wildlife, and environmental protections at both the headquarters and regional levels. The Section ensures that the GNWT fleet of Air Tractor 802A Fire Boss amphibious airtanker aircraft is appropriately maintained and provides for the operation of 6 air tanker bases across the NWT. They also provide for and coordinate the Air Attack Program that is an essential part of aerial management of forest fires in the NWT.

This seasonal position is with Forest Management Division (FMD) Headquarters located in Fort Smith and reports to the Air Attack, Supervisor. The Air Attack Officer working within the guidelines of established standards and policies, provides specialized expertise and technical support for directing, coordinating, and controlling air attack operations and ensuring aviation and operational support functions are maintained. The position also provides support in the daily operations of the program.



Aerial wildland fire management is used by Environment and Natural Resources as a wildfire suppression strategy. Directing and controlling of air operations by AAO is critical for effective aerial wildland fire management and wildland fire fighting.

The AAO has control over the management of aerial response to wildland fire events where the use of airtankers is essential to the effectiveness of the suppression response. The function and decisions are carried out in field environments with no technical support.

The AAO works directly with the aircrew of the airtankers and Regional and Territorial wildfire operations staff, ensuring that air tanker response needs are met during mission-critical activities. The decisions made by the position have the capacity to affect directly the ability of the Department's wildland fire suppression program to provide a safe and effective response.

Key contact requirements include Division and Regional staff, aircrews of aviation companies and wildland fire management staff in other jurisdictions. Individuals in this position are often exported to other jurisdictions within Canada and the United States to provide aerial wildland fire management support.

The AAO requires an in-depth understanding of aerial fire suppression strategies, methods and techniques. The position also requires the ability to analyze, plan, implement and direct aerial fire suppression and to provide clear and credible directions on how to attack forest fires from the air. Failure to effectively control air operations may result in losses to life, property, resources, and socio-economic, cultural and/or historical values and will put forest fighting crews and aviation services personnel at significant risk.

RESPONSIBILITIES

1. Directs, coordinates and controls air attack operations in order to ensure effectiveness, efficiency and that safety standards are maintained.

- Controls aircraft within the restricted airspace around a forest fire by assigning flight zones, flight patterns, altitudes and radio frequencies.
- Selects targets for airtanker drops.
- Determines types of airtanker drops required and load placement to ensure effectiveness of aerial attack.
- Develops and initiates aerial attack plans in conjunction with ground crew efforts to meet fire control objectives.
- Provides detailed instructions and information to airtanker pilots regarding the drop zone, hazards, safety exits and smoke and wind conditions that may affect the safety and effectiveness of the aerial attack.
- Provides ground crews with reports on the fire situation and makes recommendations to provide safe and effective fire control.



- Conducts aerial reconnaissance of forest fires to evaluate fire behaviour and make recommendations for control measures.
- Evaluates, assesses and records results of each airtanker drop for retardant quality, placement and accuracy.
- Conducts post mission debriefings to identify areas affecting safety, effectiveness and efficiency and to develop appropriate solutions.
- Determines when air tanker action is to be undertaken, continued or discontinued through consideration of safety, priority and cost benefit factors.

2. Ensures aviation and support functions in order to ensure they are maintained in a state of preparedness.

- Adheres to established daily airtanker base alerts.
- Monitors activities to ensure that Transport Canada and Departmental policies are adhered to.
- Reports aircraft or other deficiencies that may affect program delivery to the Manager, Aviation Services.
- Communicates with district, regional and divisional staff to advise on operational problems that may affect coordinated ground and air attack objectives.
- Conducts sufficient practices to maintain operational proficiency, accuracy and procedural development.
- Monitors weather and storm patterns, fire hazard information, resource availability and participates in daily fire control plans.
- Provides tactical information and recommendations to regional and territorial duty officers for daily fire control planning.
- Analyzes complex fire conditions to recognize and predict fire potential and assist in effective fire control planning.

3. Provides assistance to the Manager, Aviation Services in program delivery.

- Prepares, updates and delivers training materials on all elements of aerial operations to Departmental personnel.
- Assists in the training and development of other air attack officers.
- Compiles statistics and reports on each years' activities and submits reports in an approved format.
- Reviews records and reports relating to aerial and fire control activities and makes recommendations for improvement.
- Provides input and recommendations for the planning and development of air operations facilities, new products and equipment, aircraft roles, procedures and techniques.
- Monitors logistical support of all aerial activities and recommends methods of improvement if required.



- Acts as a member of a fire overhead team or as an Air Operations Branch Director (AOBD), as required.
- Attends appropriate and relevant meetings, seminars, and training sessions.

4. Participates in the daily function of the Air Operations Program

- Ensures that daily records such as retardant costs, flight times and mission summaries are completed and received by headquarters and regional offices when required.
- Reports daily status and requirements of airtanker groups and air crews.
- Maintains good working relationships with contractors, district, and regional offices and community service organizations.
- Purchases airtanker base supplies when required.

WORKING CONDITIONS

Physical Demands

Subject to significant physical fatigue as a result of the duties of this position during periods of peak wildfire activity. Will be exposed to positive and negative “G” forces that produce feelings of airsickness and disorientation.

Environmental Conditions

The incumbent is required to sit in a hot, cramped, congested aircraft as part of the hazardous aerial suppression duties and may be exposed to aircraft fumes. Adverse flight conditions include reduced visibility due to smoke, turbulence, rough weather and rough and uneven terrain. The incumbent will be subject to a variety of weather conditions including extremely hot, dry weather, thunderstorms, rain and cold.

Sensory Demands

The incumbent must exercise extreme concentration and attention to detail while directing airtankers and other aircraft in order to ensure the safest and most effective use of personnel and equipment. The incumbent is exposed to high-pitched noise aircraft.

Mental Demands

The incumbent operates in highly stressful conditions due to crisis reaction situations and is required to make rapid decisions under extreme conditions. The results of these decisions may impact the safety of air and ground personnel at or near aerial operations, have legal or political implications, or result in high costs and damage implications. The incumbent also may experience disrupted home life resulting from prolonged absences.



KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS AND ABILITIES

- Knowledge of forest fire fighting principles, practices and forest fire suppression techniques.
- Proficient with Canadian Forest Fire Danger Rating System field guides.
- Understanding of fire behaviour and fire weather.
- Knowledge of aircraft specifications and aerial fire suppression techniques.
- Knowledge of forestry legislation such as the Forest Protection Act and Forest Management Act and applicable aviation legislation, regulations and procedures
- Understanding of direction of aerial attacks.
- Knowledge of computer software and hardware in support of general operations and communications technology.
- Highly technical analytical and problem-solving skills to determine best methods and strategies for aerial suppression of forest fires.
- Planning and management skills to ensure availability of required resources and equipment.
- Communications skills to clearly direct aerial suppression activities and prepare detailed reports.
- Judgment based on experience, sound data gathering techniques, and reflection on the potential ramifications and precedent setting of decisions.
- Ability to remain composed when under pressure from staff, clients and management to meet their demands and expectations.
- Interpersonal skills including an ability to form strong collaborative networks.
- A desire to learn and adapt, as well as an ability to instill a learning work environment.
- Ability to commit to actively upholding and consistently practicing personal diversity, inclusion, and cultural awareness, as well as safety and sensitivity approaches in the workplace.

Typically, the above qualifications would be attained by:

Graduation from an Environment and Natural Resources Technology and/or Forest Technology Program with a minimum five (5) fire seasons progressive experience in ground related firefighting and a minimum of two (2) fire seasons experience in aerial wildfire management.

Must have completed the National Air Attack Officer Level 3 Training Program, have a Communications Canada Restricted Radio Operators License and a valid Class 5 NWT Driver's License. Must hold a valid Canadian Passport.



Equivalent combinations of education and experience will be considered.

ADDITIONAL REQUIREMENTS

Proof of immunization in keeping with current public health practices is required.

Position Security

- ☐ No criminal records check required.
- ☒ Position of Trust – criminal records check required.
- ☐ Highly sensitive position – requires verification of identity and a criminal records check.

French language (check one if applicable)

- ☐ French required (must identify required level below)

Level required for this Designated Position is:

ORAL EXPRESSION AND COMPREHENSION

Basic (B) ☐ Intermediate (I) ☐ Advanced (A) ☐

READING COMPREHENSION:

Basic (B) ☐ Intermediate (I) ☐ Advanced (A) ☐

WRITING SKILLS:

Basic (B) ☐ Intermediate (I) ☐ Advanced (A) ☐

- ☐ French preferred

Indigenous language: Select language

- ☐ Required
- ☐ Preferred