

Community Preparedness



Safety from the Skies: Enhancing Saskatchewan's Emergency Air Response



When wildfire approaches communities, response time matters. Saskatchewan's approach emphasizes readiness, co-ordination and the ability to act quickly when access is limited or conditions become unpredictable. The Saskatchewan Public Safety Agency (SPSA) supports this work through an integrated emergency response system that includes ground crews, specialized personnel and a modern airtanker fleet that delivers rapid aerial support when fires threaten communities.

Land-based airtankers play a vital role when waterbombers cannot safely access lakes or fires are burning far from suitable water sources. To strengthen this capacity, Saskatchewan is adding four repurposed Dash 8 aircraft – two Q400AT and two Q400MRE models – to its fleet.

These Canadian-built aircraft represent the next generation of aerial response, designed to operate quickly, reliably and across long distances. The two Q400AT aircraft serve exclusively as air tankers, while the Q400MRE models can be configured for multiple roles, including wildfire suppression, evacuation operations, patient transport and cargo delivery when communities are cut off by fire or other hazards.

The first aircraft, a Q400AT airtanker, was received in the summer of 2025. The second aircraft, a Q400MRE, is due to arrive late August 2026. These four planes will replace the agency's aging land-based fleet with modern, versatile aircraft designed to support emergency operations for an expected service life of 25 years.

Why It Matters

The speed and versatility of modern airtankers expand Saskatchewan's ability to rapidly respond to wildfires and support evacuation efforts. By converting these aircraft for multi-role use, the province is also strengthening an all-hazards response system that extends well beyond wildfire. The upgraded fleet enhances operational efficiency, increases response capacity across a wide range of emergencies and produces 30 per cent fewer emissions than comparable aircraft. Together, these investments help ensure Saskatchewan remains ready to respond – from the first call through recovery – when emergencies put pressure on communities and the systems that support them.

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