

# Emergency Wildfire Fighting Technology Act of 2023

Sponsored by Congressman David Valadao (R-CA) and Congressman Jim Costa (D-CA)

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**SUMMARY:** The legislation provides an opportunity for the latest aerial firefighting technology, Containerized Aerial Fire Fighting Systems (CAFFS), to be evaluated, and deployment protocols to be updated based on the results of the evaluation. The continuous escalation of wildfires underscored the need for increased investment in alternative firefighting systems that provide the Incident Commanders with the ability to respond to the ground crews calls for cover from the air. Technologies such as CAFFS enable scores of additional aircraft to come alongside firefighters to provide a rapid surge of the full spectrum of payloads as a direct attack on the live fire and help attack the fires at early detection, even in remote areas.

**BACKGROUND:** The current aerial firefighting systems for C-130 planes consist of tanks and compressed air release mechanisms that allow for the firefighting agent to be dropped or pumped overboard from the aircraft. To ensure that the agent reaches the wildfire with minimal evaporation, it needs to be released around 150 to 300 feet above the target. Traditionally, aerial firefighting aircraft use a "dive-bombing" tactic that requires clear visibility and a safe climb-out path. However, this leaves little room for error or recovery from turbulence or downdrafts.

Using a Containerized Aerial Fire Fighting System allows for the use of airdrop-capable disposable containers for water or fire retardant, which significantly increases the number of airlift assets available for wildfire emergencies. Well-established USAF Containerized Delivery System (CDS) protocols enable direct attacks and extinguishing of wildfires using single or multi-ship formations without requiring modifications to the current inventory of cargo aircraft and helicopters. This capability is less expensive than current aerial firefighting operations, which are dependent on single-mission aircraft. CDS is a longstanding and standard training mission for the US Air Guard and USAF aircrews.

The Containerized Aerial Fire Fighting System (CAFFS) is dropped from 500 feet Above Ground Level (AGL) during the day and 1000 AGL at night, which safely enables 24-hour operations due to the higher drop altitudes and increased aircraft options.

## **SPECIFICALLY, THE ACT...**

- Requires USDA and DOI to conduct an evaluation of the Containerized Aerial Fire Fighting System (CAFFS) to mitigate and suppress wildfires. The evaluation would be conducted in consultation with the National Interagency Aviation Committee and the Interagency Airtanker Board.
- Updates deployment protocols for the appropriate use of the Containerized Aerial Fire Fighting System based on the results of the evaluation.
- Requires a report to be submitted to the appropriate committees within 90 days after the date of the enactment of this Act.

# Emergency Wildfire Fighting Technology Act of 2023

**Short Summary:** The Emergency Wildfire Fighting Technology Act of 2023 is a bill that requires the Secretary of Agriculture and the Secretary of the Interior to conduct an evaluation with respect to the use of the container aerial firefighting system (CAFFS) to mitigate and suppress wildfires. The evaluation will be conducted in consultation with the National Interagency Aviation Committee and the Interagency Airtanker Board. The respective deployment protocols for the appropriate use of the container aerial firefighting system will be updated based on the results of the evaluation. The bill also requires reports to be submitted to the appropriate committees within 90 days after the date of the enactment of this Act.

## Section-by-Section

### **Section 1. Short Title**

The Emergency Wildfire Fighting Technology Act of 2023

### **Section 2. Container Aerial Firefighting System (CAFFS)**

Requires the Secretary of Agriculture and the Secretary of the Interior to conduct an evaluation with respect to the use of the container aerial firefighting system (CAFFS) to mitigate and suppress wildfires. The evaluation will be conducted in consultation with the National Interagency Aviation Committee and the Interagency Airtanker Board.

The respective deployment protocols for the appropriate use of the container aerial firefighting system will be updated based on the results of the evaluation.

The bill also requires reports to be submitted to the appropriate committees within 90 days after the date of the enactment of this Act.