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**City of Chico**  
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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:** October 6, 2023

**\*\*\*MEDIA ALERT\*\*\***

## **CHICO REGIONAL AIRPORT CONTINUES TO EXPAND SUPPORT FOR AERIAL FIREFIGHTING OPERATIONS**

**CHICO, CA — (October 6, 2023)** — As the summer of 2023 ends and autumn rolls in, Chico Regional Airport is supporting firefighters with their aerial operations.

CAL FIRE Chief Joe Tyler, addressing a press conference in July, stated although this is the slowest start to a fire year in California history, rains in winter and spring of this year have created an abundance of fuel that is now putting the state at risk for a critical fire season akin to the one it faced in 2017. To combat this risk and the risk posed by fire seasons past, present and future, the City of Chico proudly offers the fullest support to aerial firefighting operations at the Chico Regional Airport.

The Chico Regional Airport has seen its position as a regional firefighting leader expand in 2023. According to City of Chico Airport Manager Tom Bahr, the airport joins thirteen other airports throughout the state of California which serve as air tanker bases in servicing aerial firefighters.

Beginning in July of 2023, the Chico Regional Airport assumed a leading support role in heavy air attack operations ranging as far north as the Oregon Border, welcoming Coulson's 737 "Fireliner" and Erickson's MD-87 Tanker amongst several other air-tankers on contract with the US Forest Service.

CAL FIRE Battalion Chief Shem Hawkins oversees the air attack base at the Chico Regional Airport. He says there is a strategy to managing the base, "With the various air attack bases that have been set up throughout the state, CAL FIRE can get to any fire within 20 minutes of an air attack base. Chico Airport has been a great partner and provides a strategic location for us to fight fires. We appreciate the cooperation with the airport on our regional aerial efforts."

In Spring 2023, the Chico Regional Airport played host to training operations for Aero-Flite Aerial Firefighting. Additionally, a new water tank operated by CAL FIRE recently installed at the Chico Regional Airport offers an immediate response ability to wildfires for local helitack operations. Beyond state resources, the City of Chico Airport Manager's Office and local entities operating at the Chico Regional Airport remain in collaboration with the United States Forest Service to ensure airtanker and helitack operations receive the fullest level of support.

On the northern-end of the Chico Regional Airport, the Chico Air Attack Base played host to a CH-47 Chinook on contract from Billings Flying Service utilized throughout the local area to assist ground crews with fire suppression throughout the summer.

Chico Fire Chief Steve Standridge noted, “The Chico Fire Department and CAL FIRE Butte have an exceptional working relationship and we value the presence of the air attack base in the city, which provides an economic boost and gives our firefighters an operational advantage having immediate access to CAL FIRE air resources that are used to rapidly combat fires in the City’s wildland-urban interface areas. Conversely, the Chico Fire Department provides firefighting support for CAL FIRE, the U.S. Forest Service, and military air assets that fly into and out of the airport throughout the fire season, which further enhances the collaboration between the City, CAL FIRE, the U.S. Forest Service, and the military. We thank CAL FIRE, the U.S. Forest Service, and their associated private contractors for their continued presence and drive in combating wildfires.”

For more information regarding the Chico Regional Airport, please visit <https://chico.ca.us/chico-regional-airport> or call 530-896-7699. The Office of the Airport Manger can be reached directly at 530-896-7216. To learn more about the operations of the Chico Air Attack Base, please visit <https://www.buttecounty.net/563/Chico-Air-Attack-Base>.

*Located in Butte County, California, Chico is the cultural and economic center of the northern Sacramento Valley and the largest city north of Sacramento. Known as a college town, the home of California State University, Chico and for Bidwell Park, one of the largest urban parks in the world. For more information, visit [www.chico.ca.us](http://www.chico.ca.us).*

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