

Documentation of events surrounding the crash of SEAT 857 on the Schill Fire on 09/22/2020

Boise Dispatch Area, responded from Boise Airport at 1733 hours

Mark Winkelman, ATGS on N711PB, the exclusive use airplane for the forest

Arrived at the fire and established communications with Helicopter 64H and verified altimeter 2998. 64H doing bucket drops at the head of the fire. I set his altitude limitation to 4000 feet and below.

I established our flight level at 6000 feet and briefed incoming SEAT's 806 and 894 and gave them entry into the FTA at 5000 feet. 806 and 894 were asked to make the initial drops on the head of the fire into a canyon on the southeast portion of the fire at coverage level 3. This portion of the fire was active and set as a priority by Schill Operations. The pilots and I had a brief discussion about the depth of the canyon and the necessity to release high on the drops due to the terrain. These drops were made without incident. 806 and 894 reloaded in Boise and repeated a similar drop sequence with an emphasis on moving closer to the black (left) to reinforce the line. These drops were at coverage level 4 and were successful and without incident. 806 and 894 returned to Mountain Home on a hold.

SEAT's 820, 857, and 877 arrived on scene from Vale and were briefed on the FTA and cleared in after a brief pause to clear GA traffic from the area. 64H was clearing to Garden Valley at the time. All SEAT's received the target description and were asked to set for coverage level 3. We also had a discussion about the steepness of the drop and the rising terrain on the exit. 820 made a successful drop on the same line as previously described for the first drops of 806 and 894. 857 was asked to move to the left and reinforce the line closer to the black. This was intended to reinforce the second drops of 806 and 894.

857 confirmed clear to maneuver and called the appropriate flight legs. He confirmed his gate was armed and called final. He was cleared to drop and was on the correct line. He crossed the target ridge and continued past the drop start and flew into the canyon without releasing any retardant. He started to pull up but was unable to clear the opposite ridge and impacted it. This threw him up and across a small draw into the next ridge where the plane impacted again in its final resting place. After the initial impact, retardant was seen trailing from the plane. I immediately notified Boise Dispatch and Schill Operations. 802 was still on scene and stated that the 857 pilot and airplane had experienced issues with the gate on previous fires. 877 was advised to jettison his load at altitude and level 1 setting. 820 and 877 returned to Vale.

I remained on scene to assist ground units until air ambulance services arrived and established patient contact and then returned to Boise.

Mark Winkelman

2035 hours 09/22/2020

