

# Leadplane Training Lesson Plan

## Target Descriptions

02-05-N9065-HO

### Objective:

To familiarize the student with target descriptions (Phase 1).

To develop the students proficiency in giving target descriptions (Phase 2).

### Content:

Primarily a target description is used to describe where an airtanker is to place a load of retardant. Target description skills will also aid in communicating with helicopters, ground firefighters, ATGS', and dispatch.

Elements of a Target Description:

- Drop objectives.
- Target location.
- Type of drop.
- Hazards.
- Start point or end point.

Describing the objective and the tactics will aid in communicating a target description to the airtanker. The objective will give the overall goal for the retardant and the tactics will give more specifics. Objectives will be suppression, contingency lines, etc. while tactics will be structure protection, indirect line, direct line, reinforcement, etc.

When giving target descriptions, start with a big picture and then get more specific. Focus the airtanker pilot's attention on an obvious landmark that is near where the retardant is needed. Example: "Do you have the heel of the fire at bottom of the slope?" After getting positive confirmation, try to narrow the airtanker's focus down to the drop area. Example: "If you come up the right flank there is a rock outcropping near the right shoulder." Break up the transmissions to some degree so feedback and confirmation can be given by the airtanker. "Tie into the rock outcropping and bring the retardant direct down the right flank towards the heal."

Establish the heel, flanks, and head of the fire to help communicate the retardant location.

**Descriptors for fire anatomy:**

Heel (tail in AK), flanks, head, shoulders, island, finger, spot fire, slop over.

**Descriptors for line building:**

Tag on and extend, building line backwards/roll the retardant up to the existing retardant line, indirect or direct, center your load where the fire is burning through the retardant line, anchor the retardant into the road/rocks/etc.

**Descriptors for smaller fires:**

V the head, box the fire in, side step the drops, center your load on the fire.

Communicate the start point or end point of the retardant drop as well as where the retardant is to go on the ground.

There are some words that need to be used judiciously, ie spot and here. "Spot" can carry very different meanings to people on the ground versus people in the air. There are also multiple words for similar things depending on different areas of the country. An example is a canyon can be described as a draw, holler, drainage, etc.

Be careful using the word "spot" over the radio. "We will put the next load of retardant on that active spot on the north side of the fire." When the word spot is used to describe an active area of the main fire, firefighters on the ground may interpret this as there is an "active spot fire" outside the main fires perimeter. Spot fires can be dangerous to firefighters and hamper control efforts. Try to only use the word "spot" to describe an actual spot fire outside control lines or the main fire.

Limit the use of the word "here" to describing the retardant start point and only when the leadplane is over the start point.

Only use cardinal headings for large scale or strategic descriptions. "We will be working on the south side of the fire", or "the helibase or the dip site is east of the fire." If the fire line has several turns, it may be hard for the ground forces to get a good idea how the fire lays out. They will tend to use cardinal headings and because of their limited overall picture of an irregular fire perimeter, their descriptions may not make sense to someone in the air.

Gaps in the retardant line can be difficult to describe. If the gap needs to be filled, don't try to describe a start point. Use a phrase like "center the load on the gap in the retardant line" or "center the load across the drainage with the heavier fuels."

Giving good target descriptions is a learned skill and takes practice. Continually work on target descriptions. Practice target descriptions while over the fire and waiting for tankers. Think about what is going to be said as well as saying it out loud. Over long breaks, like winter, target description skills will get rusty.

**Completion Standards:**

The lesson is complete when the student can demonstrate clear and concise target description in a training environment for Phase 1 and in a fire environment for Phase 2. Safety will never be in question and the target descriptions will be accomplished without the reliance on the evaluator.