

Fire fighting liquid makes every drop of water count

TECHNOLOGY

A LIQUID that greatly improves the ability of water to douse a blaze is helping firefighters battle wild fires in North America and Europe.

Developed in South Australia by [BioCentral Laboratories](#), [BlazeTamer380](#) has been used this fire season in the air and on the ground in five states in the US while testing of the product has begun in Portugal and France.

BioCentral Laboratories Managing Director John Stepanic said mixing BlazeTamer with water binds molecules together, increasing the effectiveness of air drops by up to 44 per cent.

“What you want to do is hold that body of water together as best as possible so that it hits in a uniform manner which gives it the capacity to absorb as much energy as possible without leaving behind patchy areas that continue to burn,” he said.

“You can get the same job done with just a single drop and that’s what the pilots like about it most, we’re finding they’ll use the product in one state and then when they fly in another state the next month they’re asking to use BlazeTamer again.”

BlazeTamer is also one of the most environmentally friendly fire fighting agents in use, approved by the EPA and Australia’s Water Quality Centre as the only product that can be used near water catchments and other sensitive areas, provided that manufacturing instructions are followed.

The liquid is designed to be mixed with water in low quantities, ranging from 2 litres per 1000 for ground based fire fighting to 6.5 litres in 1000 for aerial drops from fixed wing aircraft.

The BlazeTamer required to mix a standard 3000 litre would cost about US\$305 (AUD \$400).

“That means we’re about a third of the cost of the most commonly used fire retardants, which are about \$1300-\$1500 (AUD) per 3000-litre load,” Stepanic said.

“It’s also cheaper because aircraft are in the air for less time, because they can eliminate more of the fire with a single drop.”

Stepancic said the efficiency of BlazeTamer mixed water made the liquid more effective at not just containing fires, but eliminating them in initial attack water drops.

As a result, pilots and ground firefighters were able to more easily control fires before they began to burn out of control, he said.

“The problem is trying to manage a fire doesn’t work all the time – fires are by nature very unpredictable and you’ll get wind shift.

“So the whole idea is to stop the fire with those initial attack drops rather than it getting out of control and then looking at how you can manage it best when there’s property and lives at stake.”

The 2015 United States fire season was the worst since 1960, with more than 11 million acres of land burned, according to the National Interagency Fire Centre. The rise in fire damage has been attributed to a greater number of homes in fire-prone areas and hotter, drier seasons.

BioCentral Laboratories hopes to expand usage of BlazeTamer to more states in the US during the next fire season.

“The States have been very encouraging at using new technology and looking at how best to adapt it,” Stepancic said.

“We’re still going through the process of educating fire-fighting authorities about BlazeTamer, but the pilots who have actually used our product have really championed us to different area commanders.”



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