

Airbus upgrades A400M firefighter prototype kit



Getafe, Spain - 5 December 2023 – Airbus Defence and Space has conducted a new flight-test campaign of the A400M Roll-on/Roll-off firefighting prototype kit, dropping 20,000 litres of retardant and creating high concentration lines over 400 metres long on ground.

Over a period of two weeks, the A400M carried out a ground and flight-test campaign in south-western and central Spain, including six drops, three of which used red-coloured retardant and three using water.

“We have tested a new version of the kit, improving dropping efficiency and reducing discharge time by over 30% compared to last year, while combined with rapid deployment and easy installation on the A400M aircraft,” said Jean-Brice Dumont, Head of Military Air Systems at Airbus Defence and Space. “We continue to pioneer new solutions and capabilities for our A400M fleet, in this case protecting populations and natural environments from fires.”

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An easy-to-install solution

This roll-on/roll-off kit does not require any modification to the aircraft and, therefore, is interchangeable to any aircraft in the A400M fleet. The water or retardant is stored in a tank in the cargo hold of the aircraft and, by using a mechanical lever, a door is opened to allow the liquid to flow out of the aircraft by gravity means through a discharge pipe. The current design of the prototype is capable of dropping 20,000 litres in a single discharge.

The tanks can be filled in less than 10 minutes using standard high-pressure pumps on ground. The A400M is characterised by its ability to take off and land on short and unpaved runways, and a wide range of air bases and airfields.

During the campaign, the 43rd Firefighting Squadron of the Spanish Air Force has been involved as technical advisors and assuring that this capability in the A400M has operational value for any potential operator.

In July 2022, Airbus tested a removable firefighting demonstrator kit on the A400M for the first time. The company concluded that the A400M firefighting kit offers additional capabilities not available on the market thanks to its high-dropping capacity, high manoeuvrability with the latest safety standards, day and night operation and the potential to convert any regular A400M in any fleet to a firefighting aircraft at very short notice.

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@AirbusDefence #A400M #Firefighter

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