

Airservices Australia rolls out new airport fire trucks

Ruth Barnard

Airservices Australia is in the process of a progressive rollout of new airport fire trucks, which are part of an AUD70 million (USD49 million) upgrade of the country's airport rescue and firefighting (ARFF) capability.

The investment will modernise the fire and rescue services at [Australia's](#) busiest airports.

The new ultra-large Panther Mk 8 fire trucks, manufactured by Rosenbauer of Austria and valued at more than AUD1 million each, will carry approximately 10,000 litres of water and foam when fully equipped. It can empty its tank in less than 2 minutes, with its water cannon capable of shooting over 80 m.

Airservices Australia Chairman David Forsyth said the new vehicles, which weigh 30 tonnes and can accelerate to 80 km/h in under 30 seconds, will more than meet the required response time of less than 3 minutes to the end of the runways and extinguish all fires around the aircraft in less than 60 seconds after arrival.

The 8x8 Panthers feature a new bright 'yellowish-green' fluorescent colouring. This replaces the traditional red of [Australia's](#) firefighting vehicles after testing revealed it matched or out performed the red in all weather and lighting conditions and had the most powerful visual impact of all colours on observers.

Mark Parsons, Airservices' Aviation Rescue and Fire Fighting engineer, said exhaustive in-house testing and collaboration with the Civil Aviation Safety Authority (CASA) and the ACT Ambulance Service had confirmed the new colour improved the visibility of these important service vehicles.

"The new colour is the safest for vehicles operating in the airport environment and we're pleased to see that CASA is looking at potentially using it for all airside vehicles in the future," Parsons said.

Commissioning of the Panther Mk 8s is part of a nationwide rollout of 74 new ARFF vehicles to be introduced at Australian airports over the next three to five years. The first stage of the rollout has been completed with 41 Mk 8s already delivered to airports including [Darwin](#), [Canberra](#), [Melbourne](#), [Perth](#), [Adelaide](#) and Rockhampton. The next stage of rollout will start at the end of 2009, with a further 33 vehicles to be delivered to other Australian airports. The precise schedule and placement for these vehicles is to be determined.

Airservices is spending a further AUD7 million on building a training facility at the Country Fire Authority facilities in Fiskville, [Melbourne](#), to ensure that the equipment is manned by highly trained personnel. Fiskville will be run in conjunction with the Airservices Learning Academy in [Melbourne](#) and will provide operational training for ARFF personnel. The training facility, which is due for completion by August 2010, will have a full-size mock up of an aircraft, recreating realistic environments for students to practice various fire fighting and rescue scenarios.

Airservices' Manager of Public Affairs Rob Walker said the upgrade of ARFF capabilities was designed to ensure the agency was well positioned to meet its international obligations and domestic regulatory requirements to provide ARFF services. "We have made a major commitment to investment in new equipment, training and recruitment to ensure we continue to deliver world class services to the aviation community," he added.

The Airservices investment package also includes: fire control centre alarm monitoring at 20 locations nationwide where Airservices has ARFF locations - this work is expected to be completed around mid-2011; new fire stations at [Perth](#) and [Maroochydore](#) airports, in Western Australia and Queensland respectively; and new vehicles to deal with potential A380 emergencies.

The first A380 emergency vehicle, manufactured by Morita of Japan, was deployed to [Melbourne](#) in October 2008. More vehicles will be purchased over the next three years for [Sydney](#), Brisbane, [Perth](#) and the training academy. Other investment will be made in new response vehicles at [Melbourne](#), [Perth](#) and Brisbane airports.

*One of the ultra-large Rosenbauer Panther Mk 8 crash fire rescue vehicles ordered by Airservices Australia, which is spending AUD70 million on upgrading its airport firefighting and rescue capability. (Airservices Australia)
1354069*

Copyright © IHS (Global) Limited, 2009