

Tanker makes emergency landing in Minden; 2 die in Utah

Updated: June 3, 2012, 9:40pm:

Two firefighting P-2V air tankers went down Sunday afternoon – one in Minden where the crew was safe, the other on the Nevada-Utah border that killed two people.

An air tanker fighting a fire in Douglas County slid off the runway Sunday afternoon because of a malfunction with the landing gear. The plane sustained significant damage because the pilot had to land using only one of three landing gear components. Two malfunctioned by not lowering, according to authorities.

The Lockheed P-2V spent nearly 90 minutes in the air burning fuel before making the emergency landing at the Minden Tahoe Airport on June 3 at 3:30pm.

The tanker was being used to fight the Preacher Fire near the Pinenuts in Douglas County. That fire is 90 percent contained; having burned 1,070 acres since June 1 when lightning sparked the blaze.

While firefighters are mostly in mop-up mode, a red flag warning has been issued for Monday.

Across the state and into Utah, Capt. Todd Neal Tompkins, 48, and first officer Ronnie Edwin Chambless, 40, of Idaho were flying a P-2V heavy air tanker that went down about 2pm Sunday in the area of the White Rock Fire. The private plane, which was contracted through Neptune Aviation Services of Missoula, Mont., was dropping retardant on the fire, according to the *Salt Lake Tribune*.

National Transportation Safety Board officials were en route to the crash site.

– *Lake Tahoe News staff report*