



VENTURA COUNTY AVIATION UNIT

MEDIA RELEASE

SHERIFF BILL AYUB | CHIEF MARK LORENZEN

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VENTURA COUNTY AVIATION UNIT ANNOUNCES FIREHAWK HELICOPTERS' ARRIVAL

CAMARILLO – The Ventura County Aviation Unit, a joint operation of the Ventura County Sheriff's Office and the Ventura County Fire Department, announce the arrival of its two new "Firehawk" helicopters today, just in time for fire season.

The helicopters are former military Blackhawk helicopters that were converted for public safety use. They are equipped with a 1,000-gallon belly tank to drop water on fires, a rescue hoist, and night vision technology.

"These new Firehawks are an important addition to the Aviation Unit's fleet," Fire Chief Mark Lorenzen said. "They can carry almost three times as much water as our Vietnam-era 'Huey' helicopters, which significantly enhances our ability to fight wildfires and keep them small."

The helicopters' primary mission will be assisting firefighters on the ground during a fire. The helicopters' larger cabin space can carry up to 11 wildland firefighters and their gear, enabling more personnel and equipment to be flown to a fire in less time.

"This is a big step in the 50-year evolution of the Aviation Unit, and a game changer when it comes to the services we are able to provide the residents of Ventura County," said Sheriff Bill Ayub. "The collaboration between the Sheriff's Office and the Fire Department is a model for public safety aviation units. These new aircraft will serve the community for a very long time."

The Ventura County Sheriff's Aviation Unit began in 1971. The Ventura County Fire Department entered into a cooperative agreement with the Sheriff's Office in 2009, making the Aviation Unit a joint operation.

The current fleet of helicopters is typically staffed by a pilot, two crew chiefs, a Search & Rescue Paramedic, a Search & Rescue Physician or a nurse. In addition to aerial firefighting, Aviation Unit crews are trained in such specialties as night vision goggle operations, scuba diving, hoist rescue, swift water rescue, and emergency medical procedures.

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VENTURA COUNTY AVIATION UNIT FACT SHEET

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The Ventura County Aviation Unit is proud to announce the latest additions of two Sikorsky Firehawk helicopters to its fleet. These aircraft were formerly Blackhawk helicopters used by the Army National Guard prior to their purchase and conversion to Firehawks.

These Firehawks are twin-engine, four-blade, heavy-lift helicopters and typically have a flight crew of three (1 pilot and 2 crew chiefs). Enhancing Ventura County's aerial firefighting's abilities, the Firehawks can deliver almost three times the amount of water in a single drop compared to the unit's legacy rotorcraft. They are also outfitted with the latest technology in avionics, mapping systems, high-definition camera systems, and forward looking infrared (FLIR) systems.

SPECIFICATIONS

- **Crew:** 1 pilot + 2 crew chiefs / fire manager
- **Overall Capacity:** 6000 lbs. of cargo internally, including 10 firefighters or 2 litter patients, or 9000 lbs. of external cargo
- **Length:** 64-ft 10-in including rotors
- **Fuselage Length:** 50-ft 1-in
- **Width:** 7-ft 9-in
- **Height:** 16-ft 10-in
- **Equipped Weight:** 14402 lbs.
- **Max Takeoff Weight:** 22000 lbs.
- **Powerplant:** 2 General Electric T700-GE-701C/D turboshaft engines, 1890 Shaft Horse Power (1410 kW) each
- **Main Rotor Diameter:** 53-ft 8-in
- **Maximum speed:** 159 knots (183 mph)
- **Cruise speed:** 120 knots (140 mph)
- **Fuel Capacity:** 360 gallons
- **Water Capacity:** 1000 gallons (ability to drop in 1/4, 1/2, and full loads)
- **Hoist Capacity:** 600 lbs