



Ventura CO Sheriffs receive first of two new aircraft

Main Rotor editorial staff
Professional Helicopter Pilots Association

On Tuesday, July 24th the Aviation Support division of the Ventura County Sheriffs Department received their newest aircraft - Designated COPTER 8



Ventura County Sheriffs Aviation Unit, based at Camarillo Airport, reports the delivery of the first of two "new" helicopters provided for by County approved funding.

Currently under the command of Captain Arve Wells, these aircraft will restore much of the capability the department lost when they grounded two of their UH-

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The Part They Forgot

By Officer Steve Thurston
Pasadena PD - Aviation Operations

Being a Police Officer for 16 years, I have been involved in many instances of doing good for people, many of which have gone unnoticed and undocumented. On the evening of February 4, 2002, I was involved in a mountain rescue over the city of Glendale. My partner and I flew almost three hours on this detail which concluded with the successful rescue of four teenage boys. This was a joint effort with LA County Fire, KCAL Chan. 9, LA County Sheriff Aero, and Pasadena PD1.

After returning to the hanger, we immediately tuned in to Channel 9 to view our fame only to hear that we had been written out of the story. HEADLINE: KCAL Chan 9 helicopter assists LA County Fire in the rescue of four teenage boys. I was more than understanding at this time thinking that some editors at the station, who had no idea of what really happened, had put this together for the general public. I had forgotten about the whole incident until March 26th when I read about the rescue in the *PHPA Main Rotor*. The article was captivating and informative and showed the dedication of the parties involved. But it failed to give credit where credit was due.

Pasadena PD1 received the request for assistance from Verdugo Fire Dispatch at 6:45pm. Upon responding, KCAL Chan. 9 Larry Welk, was already on scene searching for the hikers with his night sun. Our only contact with the stranded hikers was via their cell phone. Utilizing our night sun, I had my Observer, Officer Patrick Polimeni, pinpoint the light at the mountainside. I then had the Fire Official, who was talking to the boys, direct us to them based on where

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1's acquired previously via the Federal Excess Property Program. Instrumental in the program to recover their aviation capabilities are Dan Shea, Chief Pilot and John Davitz, Chief of Maintenance.

Under the funding package, the Department will acquire two helicopters. Both helicopters were acquired and will be built up under a \$6.4 million funding package delivered to the department by Ventura County Supervisors interested in maintaining the region's response levels.

First to of the deliveries is COPTER 8, a Bell 205-B featuring an upgraded Lycoming T53 - 17B engine and a 212 drive train. Dan Shea noted that very little training was required with the new Copter. "Collectively, we all have a lot of hours in the Bell products - our pilots were able to transition into COPTER 8 very quickly." Shea also indicated that both aircraft are being built up to a fully commercial-qualified status and have standard Airworthiness Certificates.

To support the multi-mission role of the Aviation Unit, both of the aircraft will be outfitted for mountain SAR / EMS medivac as well as general / tactical transport and fire suppression. In addition to the Lucas external hoist, both aircraft will feature FLIR, Nightsun searchlights and NVG capability. A Simplex 375-gallon drop-tank [water] and snorkel system is also installed.

The second aircraft is expected for delivery in 2-3 months. Subject to operational requirements, COPTER 8 is scheduled to support the American Heroes Airshow in Lake View Terrace on 27 July.

Additional research and contact information:

- **Ventura CO Sheriffs Department**
www.vcsd.org / air_unit
- **American Heroes Airshow**
www.heroes-airshow.com

End

DECISION - MAKING

By Keith Johnson
PHPA Board of Directors

Aeronautical decision-making (ADM) can be defined as a systematic approach to the mental process used to determine a course of action in a given set of circumstances during a specific period of time. Experts tell us that 80 percent of accidents can be attributed to human factor errors and almost all of these accidents involve flawed decision-making. Research has shown that if pilots and crew, supervisors, managers and maintenance personnel follow the accepted standards and rules, we would eliminate 80 percent of the accidents.

Developing good decision-making skills can sometimes be more difficult than developing good flying skills. Pilots can be their own worst enemy. Several human factors come into play in causing and preventing accidents. These include attitude, personality, training, knowledge, skill, judgment, and experience.

Every organization should have as its number one priority, a zero tolerance accident policy. Accepting that accidents are part of the cost of doing business is resigning your organization to having accidents. If you fail to achieve this zero accident objective, determine why, and make the necessary corrections so it won't happen again.

Accidents are generally preceded by a series of mistakes referred to as the "Poor Judgment Chain." There are two principles generally associated with this chain: One bad decision often leads to another, and a string of bad decisions reduces the number of safe alternatives for continued safe flight.

The fact is, accidents can be eliminated as seen in the safety records of several professional aviation organizations. From year-to-year we average 8-9 accidents per 100,000 hours of flight time, while some organizations go 200,000 or more hours without any accidents. So why do some organizations go accident free for extended periods of time, and others do not?

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The Part They Forgot - Officer Thurston

the light was on the mountainside. Within 10 minutes we had the boys located, but now had to figure out how to get the rescuers to them. I asked Larry to keep his night sun on the hikers as we flew to the other side of the mountain and began directing the rescuers up the maze of fire roads in the dark. This turned out to be a more difficult task than finding the stranded hikers.

When we finally had the rescuers in close proximity to the hikers, KCAL Chan 9 departed the scene due to fuel limitations, leaving only Pasadena PD1. Within about 45 minutes, we were also getting low on fuel. Our heliport is less than five miles to the North/East, but I did not want to leave the hikers or rescuers on the mountainside without any light. I began to call for assistance from other police agencies monitoring 123.02. After several broadcasts, Sheriff Aero inquired what I needed. I advised them of my situation and requested their assistance. They responded from the City of Compton and provided light service during our absence.

Upon returning to the mountain, there was discussion about calling LA County Air 5. Then there was further discussion that Air 5 was EOW for the evening. I advised that I had seen LA County Fire 12 parked at Camp 2 during my fuel run and suggested they give them a call. I then coordinated with the pilot as he lifted and responded to the area. It wasn't until KCAL Chan. 9 learned that there was going to be an air rescue that they returned back to the scene for newsworthy coverage.

The rescue took a long time to get started and included LA. County Fire 12 to have to land prior to reconfiguring their setup. The wind was blowing and the terrain was mountainous. Being a fairly new Police pilot, I do not have much experience hovering for long periods of time, especially in such conditions. I was confident that Larry Welk was much better qualified to come in low and provide the light service that was needed to get County Fire 12 in as close as possible. So I traded positions with Welk giving him the lower altitude as I orbited above providing what light [illumination] assistance I could.

After the first two boys were rescued, County Fire 12 had to land to drop them off before rescuing the others. I then heard a disturbing transmission from Larry Welk stating that his station wanted him to depart the location. The pilot of County Fire 12 advised Welk that his light was providing the needed visual references to effect the rescue and asked if there was any way he could stay. Welk apologized [for having to depart] and left. I am not certain if County Fire 12 was aware that there was a pursuit in the valley that all the other news helicopters were going to. I wonder if *Channel 9* covered that pursuit?

I dropped down and my Observer did what he could with the light to offer assistance. I believe a total of 4 hikers and two rescuers were hoisted off the mountainside that evening. It was a joint effort by more than just LA County Fire and KCAL Chan. 9. I commend all the involved agencies that worked together to make the rescue happen. I just wish that when the story went to print it was as accurate as I remember.

End

Decision Making - Continued from Page 2

The most immediate answer is the people and their ability to make good decisions and follow the rules.

Some examples of failure to follow the rules include: Failure to do thorough preflight planning, violating weather minimums resulting in "inadvertent IMC," and likely loss of control of the aircraft or controlled flight into terrain, fuel exhaustion, and exceeding the performance capability of the aircraft. At first glance this does not seem too difficult, until we look at why we don't always follow these rules. Most often this involves letting the mission take priority over safety. This should never occur.

We know that the nature of people in our business is to get the job done. Some pilots become mission focused and fail to make good decisions due to lack of knowledge, but far too often it is the result of the human tendency to rationalize a situation until it appears justifiable. This is not acceptable.

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Every pilot has a moral responsibility to operate in the safest manner possible.

There are some “do’s and don’ts” that can ensure the prevention of most accidents, all of which are safety related. The most immediate is to follow the rules. The most important decision a pilot will make is to learn to adhere to published rules, policies, and procedures. Pilots, by following these rules, can take most of the hazards out of flying.

So the next time you find yourself thinking about shortcutting a rule remember that doing the same thing has already cost other people their lives. There are no new causes of accidents, just different people making the same old mistakes. **Don’t you be the next pilot dying to get the job done. END**

Keith Johnson is a former Lieutenant/pilot with the Los Angeles Police Department Air Support Division where he was assigned for 20 years. He has more than 4,000 hours of flight-time, and currently works as an aviation safety and accident prevention consultant.



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