



AMERICAN HELICOPTER SERVICES & AERIAL FIREFIGHTING ASSOCIATION

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For Immediate Release:

Aerial Firefighters Helping To Contain Texas Firestorm

Washington, D.C., September 8, 2011...Airborne firefighting companies continue to deploy assets to central Texas to help contain one of the worst wildfires ever experienced in that area. According to the US Forest Service, some 26 fires in the region have burned over 113,678 acres, and destroyed as many as 1,400 structures to date.

"We now have four air tankers and a staff of 20 support personnel, operating under a US Forest Service contract, out of Abilene Regional Airport," said Dan Snyder, President of Neptune Aviation of Missoula, Montana. Snyder reported the company has had its signature P2V airtankers working all of the fires in the Dallas-Austin-Houston triangle since August 31. Each airtanker carries 2,000 gallons of retardant and has flown over 50 hours on the Texas wildfires.

A spokesman for Erickson Air-Crane reported the Central Point, Oregon-based company has deployed one of its S-64 helitankers to Texas, under contract with the US Forest Service. The Skycrane has flown more than 39 hours on various fires throughout Texas since Aug. 24, using a 2,650 gallon tank system which can dispense water, retardant, or a foam mix. As of Sept. 6, the Erickson Air-Crane S-64 has been flying in support of ground firefighters in their efforts to contain the Bastrop wildfire near Austin, which has destroyed nearly 500 homes and burned about 25,000 acres--so far.

Also working the Bastrop fire is one of Columbia Helicopters' twin-rotor Vertol 107-IIs, based at the Smithville-Crawford Municipal Airport, just southeast of Bastrop. According to Dan Sweet, Public Relations Manager for the Portland, Oregon-based company, that helicopter flew nearly 20 hours over the Labor Day weekend in support of ground crews. The helicopter has been operating in Texas under a US Forest Service contract for the past several months, and is supported by a staff of seven pilots, and five mechanics. "The helicopter uses an 1,100-gallon SEI Bambi Bucket equipped with a Powerfill system attached to the aircraft with a 180-foot line," Sweet noted. "This allows the pilot to draw from tree-lined lakes, streams, ponds or--in dire emergencies --even backyard swimming pools."

Neptune Aviation, Erickson Air-Crane, and Columbia Helicopters are members of the American Helicopter Services & Aerial Firefighting Association (AHSafa), a Washington-based trade association representing commercial operators of helicopters and fixed wing aircraft engaged in aerial wildland firefighting.

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