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For Immediate Release

Fontana Police receive New R44 Raven II Police Helicopter

Torrance, CA – A new R44 Raven II Police Helicopter went into service with the Fontana Police Department in California last month just in time to assist emergency personnel with the large wild fires that struck the region. The helicopter flew the city mayor and chief of police over fire-damaged areas in and around Fontana, allowing city officials to make immediate tactical decisions concerning additional resources, evacuations and reopening roads.

“It saved time and money being able to take these people immediately into the air to survey the damage rather than attempting to see it by driving,” explains Lt. Chris Tronaas, Emergency Services Coordinator and Air Support Unit Supervisor for Fontana Police. “But what was even more remarkable is both of them identified hot spots during their flights. In each instance the pilot called in fire fighting helicopters to extinguish the blazes, which was done while the R44 hovered a safe distance away. The mayor and chief are now firmly set in their appreciation for the aircraft.”

Owned and operated by California Aviation Services, Inc. (CAS) of Riverside, Calif., the Police Helicopter flies 4 nights a week, for a total of 40 hours, over Fontana. It went into service October 8 and within 30 minutes started earning its keep. “We were right at the beginning of the shift when the Lo Jack went off,” explains CAS owner and pilot Leo Bell. “We were over the stolen car before dispatch could give us the description and it was successfully recovered. The next day we apprehended robbery suspects. We’ve been busy almost every night since.”

After 7 years of annual contracts with San Bernardino County Sheriff for air support, the City of Fontana was forced to seek alternative air support options when the county raised rates it charged to cover increased expenses. The Raven II Police Helicopter was exactly what the City wanted. “We needed something we could afford; something that was fast enough to keep up with cars racing 110 mph down the freeway, carry 3 people, have a FLIR, and be flown by police-trained pilots.”

Bell, a sworn police officer and helicopter pilot, hired local off-duty police officers with helicopter piloting experience to staff his operation. The arrangement not only met Lt. Tronaas’ needs but has also sparked interest in surrounding communities. “It took eight days from delivery of the aircraft to our first shift for Fontana; enough time to train observers from Fontana Police and

familiarize our pilots with the new aircraft,” Bell explains. “We could conceivably provide the same service for other agencies in the same time frame.”

Equipped with the latest in police technology, including the FSI Mark II Infra-red camera system, police radios, PA/Siren, Lo Jack receiver, Searchlight, and Sony GV-D300 Digital Recorder, Fontana’s dedicated Police Helicopter is now more popular than the former contracted aircraft from San Bernardino County. “We have our own call sign now and it is more personal to the department,” Tronaas says. “The officers have taken ownership of it and, as a result, it has been busier than the aircraft we’ve had in the past.”

Robinson Helicopter Company is the world’s leading manufacturer of civil helicopters. For more information, visit the website at www.robinsonheli.com.

Photo Captions:

FontanaPolice: Officer Adam Clabaugh, CAS President Leo Bell, and Lt. Chris Tronaas pose before the new R44 Raven II.

FontanaV: Fontana Police Department’s new R44 Raven II patrols the city.

FontanaH: Fontana’s new R44 Raven II patrol’s Fontana 40 hours a week.

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