



COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES FIRE DEPARTMENT MODERNIZES SIKORSKY FIREHAWK FLEET WITH TWO NEW HELICOPTERS

News / Manufacturer



As the threat of wildfires continues to intensify, the County of Los Angeles today announced a new contract with Sikorsky for two [S-700 Firehawk](#) helicopters. New aircraft will enhance round the clock wildfire suppression, rescue, and emergency medical services missions throughout the county's 4,000 square mile area, where rapid, reliable aerial response can mean the difference between safety and catastrophe.

County of Los Angeles Fire Chief Anthony C. Marrone commented: "The FIREHAWK helicopter has been the cornerstone of our aerial firefighting capability for more than two decades. Adding two more proven platforms enhances our ability to respond to all types of emergency situations across the county and contain wildfires before they get out of control, even under the most challenging conditions."

Rich Benton, Sikorsky vice president and general manager stated: "We appreciate the confidence that the County of Los Angeles Fire Department places in Sikorsky to advance its lifesaving

mission. These new helicopters reinforce a partnership that began in the late 1990s and continues to set the standard for aerial wildfire and emergency response around the globe.”

Since the early 2000s, the County of Los Angeles Fire Department’s fleet of FIREHAWK helicopters has been the primary rotary wing asset for tackling the most challenging wildfires and a broad range of all hazard emergencies including medical evacuations, search and rescue, and disaster relief.

The aircraft’s distinctive capabilities make it uniquely suited to California’s demanding fire environment:

- 1,000-gallon water tank with a retractable snorkel that refills in under a minute, allowing rapid turnaround on the fire line.
- Twin turbine engines provide speeds up to 155 knots and the power to fly in strong Santa Ana winds, maneuver safely through canyons, and operate from sea level to 10,000 ft.
- Night vision compatible flight controls enable pilots and crews to attack wildfires after dark, when fire activity often slows and containment opportunities increase.
- Multi-mission flexibility, allowing quick reconfiguration for hoist rescues, air medical transport, crew haul, or aerial reconnaissance.

These attributes have been proven by California firefighters for 25 years, cementing the FIREHAWK’s reputation as an “all in one” aircraft that can drop water with pinpoint accuracy, and operate in challenging conditions that force other aircraft to remain grounded.

The FIREHAWK’s story began in the late 1990s when leaders from Los Angeles County’s firefighting community approached Sikorsky with a bold vision: adapt the Army’s Black Hawk® helicopter into a firefighting aircraft. Engineered to meet California’s rigorous firefighting needs, the FIREHAWK helicopter can deliver tons of water while ferrying a full crew to the fire line. Over more than a quarter century, field testing, operational feedback, and continuous upgrades have refined the FIREHAWK into the versatile, rugged emergency response aircraft it is today.

The contract underscores Sikorsky’s enduring commitment to Los Angeles County’s firefighting community and reflects a partnership that continues to evolve alongside emerging threats and technologies. As fire activity intensifies, the FIREHAWK will serve as a critical tool for safeguarding lives, property, and natural resources across the state for decades to come.

Today, seven agencies in California use the FIREHAWK including the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection, County of Los Angeles Fire Department, Kern County Fire Department, Orange County Fire Authority, San Diego Fire-Rescue Department, Santa Barbara County Fire Department, and the Ventura County Fire Department.

Sikorsky’s S-70i FIREHAWK is part of Lockheed Martin’s broader focus on accelerating the development and integration of digital technology to support faster decision-making capabilities for wildfire management, known as 21st Century Firefighting. This includes a range of solutions, such as firefighting fixed-wing aircraft, including the C-130 Hercules, and firefighting intelligence, which leverages AI-enabled technology to provide near real-time intelligence to first responders. Lockheed Martin has also funded a two-year pilot program with the Colorado Division of Fire Prevention and Control to demonstrate the effectiveness of these solutions.

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