News Release:

The Los Angeles County Fire Department Air Operations Section has been extremely busy this past week battling the large Woolsey Fire in Los Angeles and Ventura Counties. The fire started on Thursday, November 8, in Ventura County near the old Rocketdyne Facility in the Simi Hills at approximately 2:24 PM. As of today, November 14th, it had taken 3 lives and consumed over 97,620 acres while destroying over 480 homes.

Unit aircraft and crews have been flying almost non-stop around the clock on the fire since it started last Thursday and as of today they had flown over 90 flight hours and dropped almost 400,000 gallons of water on the fire utilizing their fleet of Sikorsky S-70 Firehawk’s (4) and Bell 412’s (5). Because of the unit’s unique qualifications for NVG firefighting operations, the majority of the flight time was between sunset and sunrise. In addition, the unit’s contract aircraft program has been active on the fire with their exclusive-use partners from Erickson Incorporated providing a Sikorsky S-64F Skycrane and the Province of Quebec’s two CL-415 “Super Scoopers” assisting as well.

The strong and dry Fall Santa Ana winds have pushed the fire from the time of origin through the first several days with crews battling winds over the fire in excess of 40 mph with gusts to 60 mph. As the fire grew in size, the fire aircraft response grew to include additional resources from the State of California, USFS and neighboring counties.

The Los Angeles County Fire Department Air Operations Section has been a long time player in night firefighting with an NVG program going back to early 2001. All pilots and crews are NVG qualified in all models of the unit’s aircraft and are frequently called upon to assist neighboring counties and the USFS in fire suppression, search and rescue and medical evacuation missions. The unit celebrated its 60th anniversary last year and has recently added two new Sikorsky S-70i Firehawk’s to its existing fleet of aircraft.

Approved:

Patrick Sprengel
Battalion Chief
Chief, Air Operations Section
Air and Wildland Division
Los Angeles County Fire Department