



BOARD OF SUPERVISORS  
AGENDA LETTER

Agenda Number:

Clerk of the Board of Supervisors  
105 E. Anapamu Street, Suite 407  
Santa Barbara, CA 93101  
(805) 568-2240

Department Name: Sheriff  
Department No.:  
For Agenda Of: March 12, 2013  
Placement: Departmental  
Estimated Tme: 30 Minutes  
Continued Item: No  
If Yes, date from:  
Vote Required: No Vote Required

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**TO:** Board of Supervisors  
**FROM:** Department Sheriff Bill Brown, 681-4100  
Director(s) Fire Chief Michael W. Dyer, 681-5550  
Contact Info: Undersheriff Jim Peterson, 681-4100  
Deputy Fire Chief Chris Hahn, 681-5500

**SUBJECT:** Status Report: County Air Support Unit

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**County Counsel Concurrence**

As to form: N/A

**Auditor-Controller Concurrence**

As to form: N/A

**Recommended Actions:**

Receive a presentation from the Sheriff's Office describing the status of the County Air Support Unit.

**Summary Text:**

On July 10, 2012, the Board received a presentation from the Sheriff's Office and the Fire Department concerning the implementation status of the County Air Support Unit. The Board asked us to return with an update. This presentation will update the Board in regards to current personnel and training status, air asset deployment, standardization of the operations manual and budgetary status.

**Background:**

The County Air Support Unit was established on July 1, 2012. This program combined the personnel and assets of the Sheriff's Office and Fire Department to form a unit that responds to Law Enforcement, Fire, Emergency Medical Service, and Search & Rescue calls for service. An Operational Agreement was signed between the Fire Chief and Sheriff on June 28, 2012. Over the past seven months, management and personnel from their respective agencies have identified goals and are working every day to achieve these goals. These include:

- Qualify and train Pilots for all missions in both Type 2 (Huey) and Type 3 (OH-58) helicopters
- Qualify and train Crew Chiefs for all missions in both Type 2 and Type 3 helicopters
- Train Paramedics in all Type 2 helicopters
- “Card” all helicopters

The accompanying PowerPoint presentation addresses the following topics:

- Personnel Status
- Air Asset Status
- Operations Manual Status
- Challenges
- Accomplishments

**Personnel Status:** The County Air Support Unit is comprised of one sheriff’s lieutenant, four full time pilots, two full-time crew chiefs, one half-time crew chief and two full time mechanics. Extra help pilots and collateral crew chiefs are utilized to complete the cadre and provide for seven day per week coverage. A schedule has been adopted that utilizes these personnel to staff and operate two helicopters each day.

**Air Asset Status:**

- Copters 1 and 2 (Type 3, observation/patrol) are operational and awaiting final approval from Cal Fire for official “carding” for calls for service involving fires in the State and Federal Responsibility Areas. This will allow for reimbursement and operational inclusion for incidents in those respective responsibility areas.
- Copter 3 (Type 2, medium lift/fire/rescue) is operational and has been “carded” by Cal Fire.
- Copter 4 (Type 2, twin engine/medium lift/fire/rescue) is out of service with a major engine issue. The engines have been shipped to Alabama and the initial inspection is being funded through Project Rescue Flight, a local non-profit foundation that has contributed significant funds for the aviation program.
- Copter 308 (Type 2, medium lift/fire/rescue) underwent a complete inspection by Rotocraft in Van Nuys. Several issues were identified on this helicopter and it is in the process of being repaired.
- Copter 309 is not operational and is in need of a major inspection. It is awaiting a management decision for its future use that will depend on the status of Copters 4 and 308.
- Air 50 (Cessna 172 fixed wing) is out of service receiving its annual inspection

**Operations Manual:** Sheriff and Fire personnel have spent a significant amount of time editing and combining the Sheriff and Fire operation manuals into one document. In essence, the crews are already working under the guidance of these manuals. This review of the manual has been extensive and is awaiting signatures by the Fire Chief and Sheriff within the next thirty days.

**Challenges:** Training continues to be an ongoing challenge due to the complexity of the various skill and experience categories, multiple models of deployed aircraft, repair/maintenance issues, and the training needs and requirements for inter-agency carding status.

One pilot is out on extended medical leave which has affected the flexibility in scheduling the training necessary to fully implement the mission of the Air Support Unit. There has also been a change of

personnel in the fire crew chief position. As the air assets come back into service and the personnel come back to full duty status, we will continue to cross train in all disciplines. The mechanics, as well as outside vendors, are being fully utilized to keep the air assets properly maintained and serviced. It is anticipated that by the end of March 2013, all of the full-time pilots will be fully trained and qualified to handle any Fire, EMS, Search & Rescue or Law Enforcement mission.

Due to the program implementation and the required initial cross training to qualify the pilots in each aircraft, as well as the unanticipated maintenance and repair issues with two of the helicopters, the overall budget of the unit has been challenged. Copter 4 and Copter 308 have experienced significant mechanical issues that were unanticipated and which have rendered them unavailable for training and missions. With the help of Project Rescue Flight, some of the costs for Copter 4 have been covered through private funding without the use of general fund dollars. In order for Copter 308 to be operational, it will require us to spend approximately \$158,000 more than anticipated in our maintenance budget line item. However, having this helicopter available for firefighting and redundancy when the other Type 2 helicopters are being serviced is important. We anticipate there will be sufficient resources in other areas of the department budget to cover this unexpected maintenance cost.

**Accomplishments:** With the commissioning of Copter 3, we have an air asset that can perform all disciplines of the Air Support Unit. This newly renovated airship has conducted water drops on fires, performed medical rescues and conducted search and rescue missions. The personnel of the Air Support Unit and paramedics from Fire Station 32 have trained on this aircraft in order to provide medical and rescue services. With the “carding” of Copter 3 and the anticipated “carding” of Copters 1 and 2, along with Copter 308 and Copter 4 after repairs, we will have the assets necessary for initial attack to fires in our County.

All of the fulltime pilots are now fully qualified in all missions. They have been “carded” by Cal Fire on our Type 2 helicopters. This is a major accomplishment that now allows the pilots to drop water from the medium lift helicopters for initial attack and to remain within Cal Fire standards for reimbursement and operational inclusion.

The following data represents the County Air Support activity since July 1, 2012:

Total Flight Hours:	Type 2 helicopter: 182 hours
	Type 3 helicopter: 125 hours
	Fixed Wing: 31 hours

Total Training Only Hours:	Type 2 helicopter: 66 hours
	Type 3 helicopter: 10 hours

General Fire Missions: 36 hours

Number of People Rescued: 12

Law Enforcement Calls for Service (all assets): 180

The members of the County Air Support Unit are working hard to deliver the services envisioned by your Board. They will continue to progress with training and maintenance of air assets to fully realize the most efficient and cost effective means of delivering this essential service to the community.

**Special Instructions:**

N/A

**Attachments:**

County Air Support Presentation

**Authored by:**

Undersheriff Jim Peterson

**cc:**