

Helicopters Help Fight Freeway Fires

Helicopter adaptability in fighting fiery freeway accidents will be demonstrated at Texas A&M's Fireman's Training School later this month.

Chief Henry D. Smith, school director, said the helicopter-mounted fire suppression system presentation July 24 will be conducted by its developer, Textron's Bell Helicopter Co. of Fort Worth, using a UH-1D.

Smith noted the use of a helicopter in freeway fires offers great advantages in mobility, not

only in fighting the blaze, but in evacuating victims.

Frequently, he observed, firemen, policemen and medical personnel attempting to reach the accident site are detained by traffic jams.

"A helicopter, however, can simply fly over this congestion and arrive on the scene without delay," the chief pointed out.

Bell designed the system for the Army to help aero-medics remove trapped personnel in crashed and burning aircraft. The air-

craft applications also will be demonstrated at the A&M school.

R. S. Stansbury, Bell project engineer for the system, pointed out the technique also obviously has application at civilian airports.

"With this system, the aircraft and its crew and passengers would be protected from crash fires after the ship goes over the airport fence," Stansbury emphasized. "Surface equipment now cannot reach the craft in many instances. We feel this is opening

a new era in flight safety."

He said the demonstration helicopter will be equipped with a fire suppression kit of two 25-gallon tanks containing a "light water" concentrate mixed with plain water, a telescoping boom for discharging resultant foam, emergency extraction equipment and evacuation provisions for three litter and two ambulatory patients.

Arriving at the crash site, the helicopter hovers at the fire's edge, allowing aero-medice fire-

fighter personnel to exit. Simultaneously, the pilot, operating the movable boom, begins applying foam to open a 15-foot path to the burning object.

Rescue personnel follow the path and carry the occupants to safety, Stansbury noted. He said the helicopter then reverts to its original role as a medical evacuation aircraft.

Smith said studies are now being made regarding the use of helicopters to remove vehicles from the accident scene.

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