

# NEWS



**Forest Service**

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For TDD assistance, please dial (530) 252-6624.

## **Lassen National Forest Acquires Helitanker For 2004 Fire Season**

Chester, Calif.... On June 18<sup>th</sup>, a Sikorsky S-64 Skycrane landed at the Chester Airbase. Helitanker 780 will be stationed in Chester and will supplement the Forest Service aviation fleet until the airtanker issues have been resolved. The Skycrane is on contract to the Forest Service through the end of September from Siller Bros. Inc. in Yuba City, CA.

Commonly known throughout the firefighting world as a Type 1 helicopter, there are 2 pilots on board the Helitanker. They are able to control the volume, flow rate, and coverage levels of water/foam-retardant drops. The Helitanker is able to hover over natural water sources, deploy a drafting hose, and fill the 2,500-gallon tank in less than 60 seconds. It is able to fill from water sources as shallow as 18 inches. It is able to refill on the ground as well. The effectiveness of water drops is increased by injecting class "A" foam concentrate into the drafted water from a tank on the aircraft.

The Helitanker is considered a highly effective firefighting tool for initial attack. On numerous occasions the Helitankers have knocked down small and medium size fires that would otherwise have resulted in large fire suppression costs, natural resource damage, and residential structural losses. The helitanker has the ability to make frequent drops in short periods of time with a high degree of accuracy; it is well adapted to work with other helicopters in narrow canyons and mountainous terrain. The Helitanker has a 2.5-hour flight range, with a cruising speed of 100 knots per hour.

Helitanker 780 is considered a national resource for the aerial firefighting fleet and is currently working on the Nickel Fire near Mesquite, Nevada.

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