

News Release

Susanville Interagency Fire Center

California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection Lassen National Forest
Bureau of Land Management Lassen Volcanic National Park

For Release: **Tuesday, July 27, 2004**
Contact: Steve Gasaway (530)-336-7193; Jeff Fontana, (530) 257-9553

INVESTIGATORS PROBING STRAYLOR HELICOPTER CRASH *Fire is 85 Percent Contained; Spot Fires a Continuing Problem*

Accident investigators are on the scene of the Straylor Fire in northwest Lassen County, working to determine the cause of a Monday afternoon helicopter crash that injured the pilot and two fire observers.

Officials from the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection said the helicopter pilot was treated at Mercy Medical Center in Redding for back injuries. His name has not yet been released.

CDF employee Bill Baxter from the Mendocino Unit, who was aboard the aircraft performing reconnaissance and mapping work, was treated at Mercy Medical Center for a broken leg. The second passenger, also a fire observer, was CDF employee Rich Sampson of the Santa Cruz Unit. He was treated at Mayers Memorial Hospital in Fall River Mills for a fractured sternum.

The Bell 206 Jet Ranger helicopter is owned by Aris Helicopters of San Jose and was under contract for fire fighting. It was one of more than a dozen helicopters that have been assigned to the fire to drop water, shuttle crews and perform reconnaissance and mapping work.

Fire crews are continuing to work on containing the 3,600-acre fire that was started Thursday, July 22, by sparks from a saw being used in a logging operation. The fire is now 85 percent contained. Officials estimate the blaze will be fully contained by Thursday, July 29, at 8 p.m.

Spot fires, caused when winds carry hot embers into unburned brush and timber, have been a continuing problem. Crews yesterday used six air tankers to support fire engines and hand crews to battle a spot fire that grew to about 300 acres.

(MORE)

STRAYLOR FIRE 2 2 2

Today, there are 59 hand crews, two helicopters, 102 fire engines, 14 bulldozers and 30 water

tenders assigned to the fire. Crews will continue building and improving fire lines and watching for spot fires.

The fire has burned on the Lassen National Forest, private land, and Bureau of Land Management-administered public land. There were no structures threatened or damaged.

Because of heavy fire traffic, Lassen National Forest officials have closed Forest Road 22 to the public. The closure is from the Davis Creek area on the west to Russell Dairy Creek on the east, and will be in effect until further notice.

Officials at the Susanville Interagency Fire Center are reminding local residents and visitors that fire dangers are high and increasing in northeast California. They urged all back country visitors to be careful with fire.

Fire restrictions, which will limit campfires, woodcutting and off highway vehicle driving, will go into effect on the Lassen National Forest and on public land administered by the Bureau of Land Management on Sunday, Aug. 1. The last day for firewood cutting with chainsaws on the Lassen National Forest will be Saturday, July 31. On BLM-managed land, chainsaw use will be allowed until 1 p.m. daily when the fire restrictions go into effect.

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