



NEWS RELEASE

Communications and Public Affairs
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The Orange County Fire Authority is Staffing its Helicopter 24 Hours a Day and with a Firefighter/ Paramedic Rescuer on the Weekends.

Irvine, CA – The Orange County Fire Authority’s (OCFA) Air Operations Section will begin staffing a helicopter 24-hour a day, seven-days a week beginning March 20. A Firefighter/Paramedic Rescuer will be added to the flight crew on Saturdays and Sundays.

“Having a helicopter staffed daily for 24 hours per day will greatly improve OCFA’s Air Operations program. This asset will now be available to respond to all emergencies, wildland fires and rescues, around the clock,” says Division Chief and Air Operations Program Manager Dave Steffen.

OCFA helicopters are currently staffed 12-hours a day. Moving forward there will be a single aircraft staffed daily for 24-hours. A second helicopter will be deployed in the event of fire weather conditions.

Currently, OCFA helicopters are staffed with a Pilot and Fire Captain/Crew Chief. By adding the Firefighter/Paramedic Rescuer, patient care, increased safety and response times will be improved.

In 2008 after the Santiago Fire, an independent auditor completed an after action report reviewing OCFA’s air response capabilities. The report recommended improvements to OCFA’s Air Operations program. Many of these improvements have already been enacted, including the purchase of two new Bell 412 helicopters with night operation capabilities. This will improve the availability of this valuable resource that provides search and rescue, fire suppression, and air medical evacuation.

At the February 26, 2015 OCFA Board meeting, the OCFA Board of Directors approved enhancing the Air Operations delivery model to a 24 hour operation. This service level enhancement provides significantly improved hours of coverage to our customers and the citizens of Orange County.

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The OCFA is a joint powers authority that serves more than 1.8 million residents in 23 cities and the unincorporated areas of the county.