

City, County Officials and Fire Agencies Join SDG&E to Announce Cooperative Firefighting Agreement

SAN DIEGO, Sept. 13, 2013 – [San Diego Gas & Electric](#) (SDG&E) today announced it has renewed agreements with the County and City of San Diego and firefighting agencies to continue to make a heavy-lift air-crane available to support fire suppression efforts this high-risk fire season. The Erickson Air-Crane helitanker, with the capacity to drop up to 2,500-gallons of water, will be on standby and can be en route to assist firefighting efforts in as few as 20 minutes.

“At SDG&E we recognize a regional approach is what’s needed to address one of the most significant threats in our region – wildfires,” said Michael R. Niggli, SDG&E’s president and chief operating officer. “Contracting the air-crane for use by fire agencies throughout the region is just one step SDG&E has taken to improve wildfire prevention and response, efforts that help to protect our communities.”

SDG&E has renewed two cooperative agreements that establish protocols for the use of the air-crane during critical fire emergencies. The Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between SDG&E and the City of San Diego establishes that the San Diego Fire-Rescue Department will be the lead agency that would dispatch the air-crane to a wildfire upon request.

“The arrival of the helitanker means that our region is better equipped to respond to wildfires,” said Chief Javier Mainar of San Diego Fire-Rescue Department. “The carrying capacity of the aircraft, and the ability for the air-crane to leave the airfield with as much as 1,000 gallons of water allows us to attack the fire early in its development.”

“We’ve seen a major increase in the number of wildfires throughout the state,” said Chief Thom Porter of CAL FIRE and the San Diego County Fire Authority. “With the extreme dry conditions it is a matter of when, not if, we will need to call on the air-crane to help support our fire suppression efforts.”

The pilots and mechanics, which are provided by Erickson Air-Crane, are trained to maneuver this type of helicopter for both utility construction and precision water-dropping to target wild-land fires. If the helitanker is not needed for fire-fighting, it could be used for electrical transmission work.

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A second MOU between SDG&E and the County of San Diego establishes a \$300,000 operating budget for fire season, with SDG&E covering the cost to operate the helicopter during the first two hours of any new fire and the County of San Diego covering the second two hours from the County's Aerial Fire Protection Fund.

"By working together we can enhance the county's firefighting capability immeasurably," said San Diego County Supervisor Ron Roberts. "Thank you to SDG&E for again contracting this vital asset to support the county's fire preparedness efforts."

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