



SAFETY COMMUNICATION

CAL FIRE HELICOPTER NUMBERING

The modern aircraft that have recently entered service provide many advantages, however, one of the effects of increased capabilities is an increase in recurrent, flight hour driven maintenance. Due to the recurrent maintenance, aircraft must be moved appropriately to distribute the hours which allow for an efficient maintenance plan. As a result of these factors, CAL FIRE will be adjusting the helicopter and Sacramento aircraft numbering to a generic based system. This model is in line with aviation industry standards for military and commercial operators of this scope.

By moving to a generic based system, CAL FIRE will be able to effectively:

- Minimize unnecessary redundant movement and related costs.
- Allow for rotation of helicopters to better spread maintenance needs and balance hours, thereby increasing aircraft longevity.
- Allow for helicopters to be brought into maintenance as Aviation Management Unit (AMU) schedule efficiencies allow, rather than work around given base openings or closings.
- Keep bases in-service by eliminating the need to shuffle aircraft out of their areas of responsibility multiple times.
- Ensure physical equipment standardization remains within the program.

While there is no known Federal or State established numbering system, trends have developed over time. In order to minimize conflict with these trends to the extent feasible, CAL FIRE will move to the following numbering system:

- 600-619: CAL FIRE HAWKS (S70i)
- 620-629: CAL FIRE Type II helicopters (UH-1H)
- 630-639: Reserved for CAL FIRE Type III helicopters
- 640-649: Intel Platforms
- 650-659: Aerial Supervision Module (ASM), Spare Air Attacks, Air Tactical Group Supervisor (ATGS) Training Aircraft
- 690-699: Spare helitenders

To avoid routine crew identifier adjustments due to this new numbering system, the following system will be used:

- To maintain base identity and provide situational awareness for aerial supervisors, Emergency Command Centers (ECCs), ground crews, and cooperating agencies, helicopter radio identifiers will be the base name, followed by "Copter" and the number on the helicopter (ex: Prado Copter XXX, Bieber Copter XXX)
- Helitack crew radio identifiers will be the base name followed by "Helitack" (ex: Prado Helitack, Bieber Helitack)

- Helitenders will be identified by the base name, followed by “Helitender” and the first two digits of the Unit identifier (ex: Prado Helitender 35, Bieber Helitender 22)

Since numbering changes will be phased in as aircraft maintenance occurs, there will be a transition period when 600 and 900 series numbers are concurrently in the system.

Due to this transition time, the new radio identifiers explained in this Safety Communication shall be used effective July 31, 2023.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding these changes, please route them through your respective chain of command to Tactical Air Operations Deputy Chief Aaron Burrough at Aaron.Burrough@fire.ca.gov.