



Two New Helicopter Pilots Increase DPS Readiness

DPS search-and-rescue helicopters in Anchorage and Fairbanks fully staffed.

March 9, 2021 (Anchorage, AK) — This year the Alaska Department of Public Safety has hired two additional full-time commercial helicopter pilots to bring both the Anchorage and Fairbanks-based advanced search-and-rescue helicopters up to full staffing. These new civilian pilots will allow for seven days a week daylight coverage for both HELO2 in Fairbanks and HELO3 in Anchorage starting this summer.

Combined, HELO2 and HELO3 launched for nearly 300 missions in 2020 for everything from search and rescue, fish and game violation patrols, law enforcement and investigation aerial assistance requests, and requests for assistance from other public safety agencies in Alaska. The current pilot staffing left multiple days each month without a pilot available to launch if needed.

“The Alaska Department of Public Safety patrols and responds to emergencies in some of the most geographically remote areas of the country, and without aircraft and pilots to operate them, we would not be nearly as effective at carrying out our sworn duty to Alaskans,” stated **Major Bernard Chastain, Deputy Director of the department’s Operations Support Bureau**. “Our highly equipped helicopters and their pilots save lives, locate missing persons, and assist in apprehending dangerous criminals across the state on their near-daily missions.”

The Department of Public Safety owns two Airbus H125 turbine helicopters. The helicopters purchased in 2012 and 2014, respectively, accommodate up to six persons and are equipped with advanced imaging equipment, communications, and other specialized search and rescue equipment. They are among the most advanced non-military aircraft based in Alaska.

The Alaska Department of Public Safety has over 43 aircraft comprised of both fixed-wing and rotary-wing assets; the department also has over 50 civilian and commissioned pilots.

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Media Contact: Austin McDaniel, Public Information Officer, austin.mcdaniel@alaska.gov, (907) 269-5413