



**2014 Inaugural Season
Year End Report**

Prepared By: Corey M. Lewis

2014 Season Overview:

Fire season 2014 marked the first year for the Northern Colorado Helitack Crew on the Arapaho Roosevelt National Forest (ARF). The 100 day Exclusive Use helicopter contract commenced on June 9, 2014 and ended on September 16, 2014. Fire activity was relatively slow, in comparison to past years, with minimal initial attack (IA) occurring during the first few weeks of the contract. Late June and into early July conditions provided more IA activity on the ARF as well as on neighboring forests. Northern Colorado Helitack assisted with IA and extended attack incidents on the Medicine Bow and Routt National Forests, as well as Rocky Mountain National Park. In addition to fire support, the crew also assisted with multiple Search and Rescue (SAR) missions in Rocky Mountain National Park. Monsoonal moisture in July, provided opportunity for Northern Colorado Helitack to mobilize nationally, being assigned to the Camp Creek Complex and 790 Fire on the Rogue Siskiyou National Forest in Southern Oregon.

Cooperation:

The success of the 2014 Northern Colorado Helitack Program is attributed to the cooperation of the Canyon Lakes Ranger District and the Arapaho Roosevelt National Forest along with Boulder County Sheriff's Office Fire Management (BLX), Colorado Division of Fire Prevention and Control (DFPC), and Rocky Mountain National Park.

Crew:

Northern Colorado Helitack consisted of a diverse, highly qualified, and reliable eight person crew. Constraints with the USFS hiring procedures led ARF forest leadership to fill three required supervisory positions (Helitack Manager, Assistant Manager, and Lead Crewmember) as temporary promotional details. Three of the remaining five positions were hired as USFS Temporary Helitack Crewmembers at the GS 4 and GS5 levels. The final two positions were filled by cooperating agencies. DFPC provided one crewmember for the entire contract period and BLX provided crewmembers on an alternating bi-weekly schedule.

The professionalism and performance of Northern Colorado Helitack resulted in an exceptional safety record for the 2014 fire season, with no injuries or accidents to report.

Aircraft/Contractor:

2014 marked the first year of a five year contract with HeliQwest International Inc. The aircraft is an AS 350 B3 (type 3 helicopter) capable of carrying up to five passengers with a minimum allowable non-jettisonable payload of 800 pounds at an elevation of 8000' and at a temperature of 25 degrees centigrade. The A-Star's high altitude performance and high airspeed make this a very cost effective and safe aircraft.

In addition to the helicopter, the contractor supplied a pilot, mechanic/driver, and fuel truck to support operations. HeliQwest International Inc. provided outstanding service and maintained a clean safety record this season, with no lost availability time for any reason.

Training:

Prior to the commencement of the contract, crew personnel were very busy with pre-season training. USFS temporary crewmembers completed all agency required annual trainings as well as many Interagency Aviation Training (IAT) courses. Following the start of the contract period an annual Helicopter Crewmember (HECM) Refresher training was performed for all HECM qualified personnel on the ARF. In addition to this refresher, a NWCG Helicopter Crewmember Course (S271) was held at the AD Site in Fort Collins. Participants in this course included students and cadre from the ARF, DFPC, Larimer County Sheriffs' Office, and Rocky Mountain National Park. Over 25 students attended this class including firefighting personnel and National Park Service Rangers.

Additional inter-crew training throughout the season included sand table exercises, map and compass exercises, informal leadership training, chainsaw training, and numerous helicopter weight and balance scenarios.

Many on the job training opportunities were also utilized during the 2014 fire season. The trainee assignments covered Operational positions ranging from Firefighter Type 1 to Incident Commander Type 5 and Air Operations positions from HECM to Helibase Manager Type 1. Further Information on training accomplishments can be seen in the attached Training and Qualification page.

Future Plans are to continue supporting the interagency group here in the Northern Colorado area and in the region by hosting aviation training and providing experience through detailer positions when opportunities exist.



Medivac/Search and Rescue Summary:

With three qualified Emergency Medical Technicians (EMT), the crew offered medical support and medivac capability throughout the season. The aircraft is equipped with a litter kit that could be easily reconfigured inside the helicopter. The kit allows for proper handling and care of patients who may have sustained serious injury. Although medivac is not a primary mission, incidents do arise where Helitack is called upon to provide emergency medical care in the field.

Northern Colorado Helitack assisted with one non-fatal serious injury accident while assigned to a fire on the Medicine Bow National Forest. Lessons learned from this incident were valuable and identified some necessary additions to medical gear normally carried by the crew on a fire response mission. The aircraft and EMT's also provided support on two non-life threatening injury and illness occurrences while assigned to the Camp Creek Complex in Oregon.

An agreement with Rocky Mountain National Park allowed Northern Colorado Helitack to participate in four SAR missions in 2014. These SAR missions utilized the helicopter and crew to provide reconnaissance, rescuer transportation, recovery, and logistical support to each incident. Excellent cooperation between agency personnel (NPS and USFS) proved to be the key factor in completing these missions safely and effectively.

Fire Support:

The 2014 ARF fire season was less active than the past couple of fire seasons. This slower than normal season still provided the Northern Colorado Helitack crew opportunity for IA and extended attack fire support.

Northern Colorado Helitack responded to six initial attack fires on the Fort Collins Dispatch Zone, while three additional fires were supported for IA on neighboring jurisdictions. Initial attack support included delivering firefighters on incidents, providing helicopter water drops, and transporting essential cargo and supplies to on the ground fire personnel.

Extended attack fire support occurred on and off of the local unit. Two extended attack fires took place on the Medicine Bow National Forest (Owen and Camp Creek Fires), one in Rocky Mountain National Park (Spruce Fire), and the remaining on the Rogue Siskiyou National Forest (Camp Creek Complex and 790 Fire). In addition six IA fires occurred while assigned to the Camp Creek Complex.



Granite Gulch
Fire near Estes
Park, Colorado
6/20/14

Statistics:

Northern Colorado Helitack's commitment to safety and situational awareness resulted in an exceptional performance record for 2014. Over 150 hours of flight time occurred, more than 17,000 person days on fire were accrued, and nearly 14,000 miles were driven this season alone. No accidents or injuries occurred, resulting in lost time. Both agency and contract personnel operated safely and efficiently during many highly complex missions. The safety record and safety attitude of the crew exemplifies the expectation of the Arapaho Roosevelt National Forest and the Canyon Lakes Ranger District.

Specific contract statistics can be seen on the following page...

