

Carson Helicopters - A Very Sad Day

Â Today, August 6, 2008 is a very sad day.Â We all learned today of the tragic loss of life in California in a helicopter accident the evening of August 5.Â As of now there are 9 confirmed deceased and 4 more struggling for their lives.Â There are many different news reports from various sources but the main points are that a Carson Helicopters S-61N (N612AZ) operating as a troop transport with 13 total aboard crashed on takeoff from a remote wooded area about 35 miles northwest of Redding, California.

Â Â The ground personnel on board were apparently part of the private firefighting contractor, Grayback.Â I have personally assisted numerous Grayback crews from the air and have met some later at fire camp.Â While not actually an official Helitack crew I believe anyone certainly deserves recognition for their dedication and willingness to place their lives in other people's hands as they are flown from place to place in doing their jobs.

Â Â My heart is heavy with the loss and injury to so many people that knowingly risk themselves in order to fight our nation's fires.Â My thoughts and prayers go out to everyone involved and their families.Â I try not to think about the risk every time I strap into my aircraft and just hope to do a good job for everyone and land safely.

Â Â To everyone at Carson Helicopters and Grayback, you are in my prayers.

Â Â God Bless.

Update: 8-07-08

Â Â The missing and presumed dead pilot was Roark Schwanenberg of Lostine, Oregon.Â His co-pilot, William Coultas of Cave Junction, Oregon is currently in serious but stable condition.

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Update: 8-15-08

Â Â Not all of the passengers were Grayback personnel.Â James Ramage, an OAS Check pilot, was also aboard.Â Â Â

