



STAR Flight and Austin Fire Department Conduct Wildland Firefighting Training

October 18, 2012



Today, **STAR Flight** and the Austin Fire Department conducted a joint firefighting exercise to stay prepared during the fall and winter fire weather seasons. **STAR Flight's** helicopter crew and AFD firefighters simulated firefighting tactics that decrease the threat of fires by attacking them on multiple fronts.

“In the air and on the ground, this training is a joint effort,” said **STAR Flight** Program Director Casey Ping. “We learned from the 2011 fires that when we work as a team, we get better results. Pilots must maneuver the aircraft while listening to the crew and firefighters, who direct them to specific locations.”

During training, **STAR Flight** crews flying an EC-145 helicopter fill a “Bambi” bucket with water from a “pumpkin” dip tank and coordinate with firefighters to drop the load where it is most needed. Using the EC-145 means crews must fill an externally attached bucket with a 130-gallon capacity.

When the County receives the new UH-1H (Huey-type) helicopter, training will become even more important as flight crews adjust to the differences in the aircraft, its operation and how they work with firefighters. The UH-1H's deployment of 350 gallons of water from an underbelly tank will bring changes, such as less refill flights for a greater amount of water.

“We are fortunate to have recently received rain, but many parts of the county remain dry,” said Austin Fire Chief Rhoda Mae Kerr. “We know that wildland fires will happen again, and through multiagency cooperation and training, we become better prepared.”

Service Areas: **STAR Flight** responds within the following counties: Bastrop, Bell, Blanco, Burnet, Burleson, Caldwell, Comal, Fayette, Gillespie, Gonzales, Guadalupe, Hays, Kendal, Lampasas, Lee, Llano, Milam, San Saba and Williamson Counties. **STAR Flight** also responds outside the above-listed counties as needed. For more information about **STAR Flight**, please go to <http://starflightrescue.com/>.

The Austin Fire Department is now one of the 20 largest departments in the country, with 45 fire stations in the city of Austin and more than 1,100 employees. For more information about life-saving fire prevention, please visit www.austinfiredpartment.org.

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