



Public Information Release

June 30, 2009

Captain James Bauman, Public Information Officer

Last Thursday, June 25th at about 3:00 pm, a helicopter leased by the Sheriff's Department for on-going ariel surveillance of illegal marijuana grows was damaged during a forced landing in an open meadow on Cow Mountain, about 7 miles north-west of Lakeport. The Robinson R-44 helicopter, owned by Cutting Edge Helicopters out of Sacramento, was substantially damaged. The crew, consisting of a Sheriff's Major Crimes Unit member and a company pilot, were not injured.

The helicopter crew had spent the morning conducting ariel surveillance over Lake County and were returning to Lakeport on a training flight after refueling in Ukiah. During the training flight, the crew was simulating an emergency 180 degree autorotation and power recovery procedure at an altitude of about 500' over Cow Mountain when they experienced an engine failure. When attempts to recover engine power failed, the crew committed to a forced landing and due to the lack of RPM(s), the main rotor blades impacted the helicopter's tail boom as the craft touched the ground causing substantial damage.

The helicopter was crewed by a member of the Sheriff's Major Crimes Unit undergoing flight instruction and a company pilot, who was also a certified flight instructor. There was no property damage other than to the helicopter. The cause of the engine failure is being investigated by the National Transportation Safety Board and Cutting Edge Helicopters.