



NEWS RELEASE

Lt. Ricardo Lopez
Media Relations Director

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New ASTREA Helicopter and Wildfire Safety Video



With record-breaking heatwave conditions, our county is under a Red Flag Warning and Fire Weather Watch this Labor Day weekend. Disasters won't wait for a pandemic to be over. It's critical you take steps now to help your family and community prepare.



In observance of National Preparedness Month, the San Diego County Sheriff's Department and CAL FIRE San Diego launch a wildfire preparedness public service announcement (PSA). The video also features other public safety partners. Click on the photo above to watch the video.

This public safety campaign coincides with the delivery of a new Bell 407 GXi to the Sheriff's Aerial Support to Regional Enforcement Agencies ([ASTREA](#)). This patrol helicopter can be equipped with a bucket to help with water drops during a fire. The newest helicopter bears the initials of Sheriff William Gore. It was unveiled as a [surprise during his visit at Gillespie Field in El Cajon on Wednesday, September 2nd](#).

A fact sheet about the new helicopter is on page two of this news release. To download video of the new helicopter and the PSA for broadcast, visit: <https://spaces.hightail.com/space/yDddoHD3tT>.

Sheriff's ASTREA is a regional asset that has been providing support to the department and partner agencies in the county since 1971. It currently has nine helicopters. It averages 2,000 missions per year responding to patrol, fire, as well as search and rescue calls around the clock. There are currently three Bell 407 GXis in the fleet. ASTREA is a dynamic team of 26 deputies, pilots, tactical flight officers, mechanics and support staff.



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San Diego County Sheriff's Department - Media Relations Office

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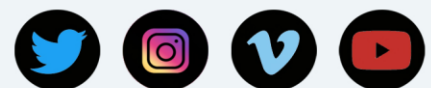
ASTREA BELL 407 GXi

- This is a patrol helicopter, but can be equipped with a bucket to help with water drops during a fire.
 - It is not a hoist helicopter, but it has sliding doors so it can hover just above the ground.
- Cost: \$5.4 million
- Among the new features include high tech displays which give the pilots critical flight information at a glance for quicker information, response and increased safety.
- We can fly at night with improved heat detecting/infrared camera. Increased zoom capabilities. Better GPS location on the camera image to help deputies on the ground. This enables the helicopter to fly higher and reduce noise over a search area.
- The crew is made up of a pilot and a Tactical Flight Officer (TFO). The pilot flies the helicopter. The TFO communicates with ground personnel, operates the search light, public announcement system, infrared camera, map system, etc.
- The helicopter can carry a total of seven people.
- This helicopter replaces an aging fleet of MD500 helicopters. The oldest patrol helicopter we have was built in 1981 and we retired it in lieu of expensive repair.
- The helicopter was certified by the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) on September 2nd and is mission qualified.
- Including this helicopter, ASTREA has a total of nine helicopters in its fleet.
- Learn more about Sheriff's ASTREA: <https://www.sdsheriff.net/astrea/index.html>

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