

FALLBROOK AIRPARK ADVISORY COMMITTEE
May 2, 2016
AGENDA ITEM #6
PROPOSED HELICOPTER LICENSE

Background

Fallbrook Airpark does not currently have a Public Use Helicopter Landing Pad available for privately owned based or transient Aircraft. The Airport's Master Record and the Airport Facilities Directory states "Helicopter Pad is closed to transient aircraft. Pad's restricted use preserved for public safety."

In 2004 the County Board of Supervisors determined that an enhanced provision of fire suppression and life safety services would be provided for the citizens of San Diego County if additional helicopters were available to respond to emergencies in the unincorporated and incorporated areas of the County of San Diego. It was determined that an appropriate location for the Helicopter Fire Suppression and Life Safety Rescue Operations Base would be at Fallbrook Community Airpark, as part of the County's Aerial Support to Regional Enforcement Agencies (ASTREA). ASTREA is a regional asset to San Diego County and currently has a fleet of nine helicopters (6 assigned to the law enforcement program and 3 assigned to the fire program).

In order to accommodate this need, County Airports worked with the Sheriff's department to specifically design and build a Helicopter landing Pad and at Fallbrook Airpark to support the Sheriff's ASTREA Helicopters and ancillary support facilities. The area was exclusively leased to the Sheriff's department at market rates beginning in July of 2004. In addition, the Sheriff's Department paid the full cost of the landing pad. The Sheriff department is solely responsible for the safety, security and maintenance of its facility, including the Helicopter Landing Pad. This was done with coordination with the FAA.

The County recently received a request to allow a helicopter to be based at Fallbrook airport. County Airports staff approached the Sheriff's Department to explore if it would be willing to amend its exclusive agreement to allow limited shared public use with privately owned helicopters, with prior permission required, of the Helicopter Landing Pad on its leasehold. Airports offered to develop Prior Permission Required guidelines to help limit impacts to liability, safety and security. However the Sheriff's Department responded that after careful review it was unable to approve this request. It explained that although it wants to be good neighbors at the airport, allowing a private individual to use the leased helipad could create liability for the Sheriff's Department if there was an incident and/or impact emergency operations. The Sheriff's department further explained that besides the fire staffing it uses the pad on high risk days (i.e. Santa Ana conditions) and for other unforeseen public safety emergencies.

Airport Use License for Based Helicopter Operations

After determining that use of the leased helipad was not an option, Airports staff looked for any alternate options for safe Helicopter Operations at the airport. It was determined that the only way these operations could be accommodated would be if an **Airport Use License for Based Helicopter Operations (Helo License)** were issued. The Helo License would allow a based helicopter to operate at the airport utilizing a tow vehicle with aviation lighting, an airport radio and helicopter trailer. The Helo License would

require operational activities and locations that are specific. It would also request the operator provide advanced notice to Airport Contract Management, George Watson and/or Meadow Chase. The Helo License would contain indemnification and insurance requirement to protect the County. Although there is only operator expressing interest at this time a Helo License would be required for any based Helicopter operations, other than Sheriff's ASTREA which has a Helo Pad on its leasehold. Transient operations would still not be allowed and the Airport's Master Record and the Airport Facilities Directory will continue to state "Helicopter Pad is closed to transient aircraft. Pad's restricted use preserved for public safety."

Before issuing the proposed License staff is seeking advice from Fallbrook Airport Advisory Committee to determine if there are any additional requirements or guidelines that should be included to increase efficacy or safety at the Airport.