ROBINSON® news

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10,000!

On 10 November 2011, Robinson Helicopter Company (RHC) marked the production of its 10,000th helicopter, R44 S/N 13217, with a celebration at its Torrance facility. Company employees, officials from the City of Torrance, FAA representatives and many of Robinson's suppliers attended.

Frank Robinson, the company's founder, spoke briefly to a crowded room about the company's humble beginnings. The company was founded in 1973 and the first Robinson helicopter was delivered in 1979. Today, Robinson manufactures more civilian helicopters than any other helicopter manufacturer in the world.

Robinson thanked the City of Torrance stating that it was the city's unwavering support in the early years that convinced him to keep the company in Torrance. He went on to describe leaner times noting that unlike other helicopter manufacturers, Robinson Helicopter has never received government subsidies or relied on government contracts.

Kurt Robinson, the company's president, stated that Robinson is excited to have reached such a significant milestone and is particularly pleased with the success of the R66. Orders for the R66, currently top 350. He thanked employees for making "what we believe are the highest quality helicopters in the world." Robinson noted that based on statistics provided by the AIA (Aerospace Industries Association), RHC has, since the early eighties, produced more civil helicopters than all other U.S. manufacturers combined. The company's current production rate is ten helicopters per week and Robinson predicts the company's total production for 2011 will more than double last year's.

Frank Robinson (far left) Rafael Audi (left), Kurt Robinson (center), Terry Hane (right), and Wayne Walden (far right).

Terry Hane, RHC Director of Sales & Marketing presented the keys to the 10,000th helicopter to Audi Helicopters. Audi has been a Robinson dealer for twenty-five years and is one of two Robinson dealers in Brazil.

RHC founder Frank Robinson talks about the early years.

This issue features:

R44 External Power Receptacle Available

An external power receptacle is now available as an option for R44 Raven II and Clipper II helicopters (an external power receptacle is standard on R66 helicopters). The 28-volt MS3506-compatible receptacle weighs approximately 2.75 lbs and allows starting and battery charging from an external power source (e.g., ground power cart or battery pack).

Robinson MT900 or MT950 tow carts can be used as an external power source when retrofitted with the new KI-205 Ground Handling Cart Booster Cable Kit. The KI-205 kit is designed to work with either the R44 power receptacle or the R66 power receptacle. The kit is sold as a field installation or as an option on new production ground handling carts.

Ground power assist allows easier aircraft starting, particularly in cold weather and provides cooler starts for the R66 turbine engine.

The optional MS3506 external power receptacle installed in a R44 Raven II.

R44 Helicopter Lifts Stanley Cup

Dean Russell used his R44 Clipper to transport friend Scott Bradley along with the National Hockey League's Stanley Cup trophy to the pediatric ward of the Abbottsford Regional Hospital and Cancer Center in Abbottsford, Canada.

Bradley is the Director of Player Personnel with the Boston Bruins, this year's Stanley Cup recipient. Following tradition, Bradley was granted one day with the Cup. A two-time cancer survivor, he wanted to spend the day in the pediatric cancer ward at the hospital where he had been treated.

Russell, Bradley, the Cup and the Keeper of the Cup took off from Vancouver Harbor. After numerous show-and-tell stops they eventually made their way to the Abbottsford Regional Hospital, landing on the hospital's heliport. This was the first time a private, single engine, non-turbine helicopter was permitted to use the heliport.

The trophy made its grand entrance and was ceremonially escorted through the hospital to the children's cancer ward where a lot of very excited kids got to have their pictures taken with Bradley and the Stanley Cup.

R44 Pilot Dean Russell and the NHL's Stanley Cup

R44 Helicopters Deliver Aid in Japan

The Nagoya-based Helicopter Conference of Japan (HCJ), a private helicopter pilots and owners association spearheaded relief efforts after the devastating 9.0 magnitude earthquake and tsunami struck Japan on 11 March 2011. Twenty-one HCJ pilots flying eleven R44s delivered aid and supplies to hundreds of isolated victims.

HCJ volunteers load R44 with supplies

Three days after the quake, HCJ contacted the Japan Civil Aviation Bureau (JCAB) requesting permission to conduct emergency aid missions. After establishing some rules and guidelines, the JCAB, in an unprecedented move, granted HCJ's request. HCJ quickly established the Sugo Race Circuit, just south of Sendai City, as their operations and supply base.

With the support of public donations, HOPE International, and Exxon Mobil, who donated 4000 liters of Avgas, eleven R44s flew in rotation bringing food, water, and basic supplies to isolated victims. In many instances the R44s were the first to provide aid, as was the case at the Miyako Elementary School where 500 evacuees had been drinking water from a swimming pool for twelve days. On 20 April, HCJ helicopters were the first to deliver much needed supplies to Ishinomaki, Miyagi Prefecture where for more than forty days 170 isolated survivors had been scavenging for food and water.

By May, the HCJ had completed over 300 missions delivering more than forty tons of supplies to the hardest hit areas. As roads and bridges became more accessible, HCJ continued its support by flying medical personnel to afflicted areas saving hours of travel time.

R66 Passes Lower Temperature Test

The FAA has approved -40ºC as the minimum ambient temperature for the R66.

In February 2011, Robinson conducted a ten-hour cold soak test in Yellowknife, Canada to substantiate a lower minimum operating temperature. Temperatures in Yellowknife, located in the country's North West territory, are known to drop as low as -50ºC. With the help of Robinson's longtime dealer, Eric Gould (Aerial Recon), the R66 was subjected to an average temperature of -35ºC for 10 hours. The test requires the aircraft start and fly at the end of the ten hours. With the use of an external battery pack and an electric car warmer to warm the helicopter's fuel control unit (FCU), the R66 successfully started on the third attempt. According to Transport Canada's test pilot, Serge Massicotte, the R66 performed satisfactorily.

R66 Turbine hovers in freezing temperatures in Yellowknife, Canada.

Based on these findings, the FAA approved Robinson's amendment to the R66 POH allowing for -40ºC at all altitudes. Robinson will conduct additional tests to amend the current restrictions with regards to falling or blowing snow.

Arctic Scientists Use R44 for Research

Stan Hermens of Hermens Helicopters in Bethel, Alaska uses his R44 to transport scientists and archaeologists to remote locations in the Alaskan wilderness.

Hermens, who has logged more than 3500 hours in R44s, contracts with various government agencies, (e.g., Bureau of Land Management) providing researchers with reliable, cost-efficient air transportation.

USFW tags polar bears to track population levels.

Hermens finds the work very rewarding and has established a good reputation amongst the various agencies and research teams. He often works with the same scientists on ongoing projects. For the past four summers, he has been flying a group of archaeologists to and from a promising archaeological site that was discovered in 2007. The site, dubbed Raven Bluff, is 100 air miles north of Kotzebue and has proven to be a rich source of artifacts dating back thousands of years. In 2008, Hermens helped researchers document the migration habits of the Bristle-thighed Curlew, a rare bird that flies nonstop from Alaska to New Zealand. More recently in 2011, Stan found himself tracking the dwindling populations of the elusive polar bear. Using his R44, he flew United States Fish & Wildlife (USFW) researchers to the bears' habitats where the bears were tranquilized and fitted with tracking devices.

Stan has flown R44s since 2001, and is currently operating his third R44, a red Clipper II.

Following Robinsons

R44 Pilot Helps Bear-Attack Victim

Pilot Ben Rowe

Ben Rowe, a Bering Air R44 pilot aided Wes Perkins, a longtime resident of Nome, AK and the city's former fire chief, after he was mauled by a large grizzly bear on 15 May 2011.

Perkins along with friends had been tracking the grizzly on snow machines when the attack occurred. Perkin's friends shot the bear within seconds and immediately radioed for help. Responding to the call, Rowe and two medics flew to the scene. The crew assisted Perkins, 54, who suffered severe injuries to his face. He was quickly transported in the R44 to a hospital in Nome.

Alaska Trooper Finds Downed Plane

Alaskan trooper's R44 located downed plane

While on fishing patrol in an R44, Alaska State Trooper Shane Stephenson located survivors of a Cessna 185 that had crashed into Cook Inlet, just east of Kalgin Island.

On 24 July 2011, Stephenson was patrolling over Cook Inlet when he received word of a nearby plane crash. Alone in an R44 Clipper, he flew approximately twelve miles to the crash site and spotted four people standing on the tail of a nearly submerged Cessna. Stephenson hovered over the site, but due to rough waters, opted not to land. He managed to drop a life raft to the survivors, and then flew to a nearby fishing camp where he elicited the aid of campers who had a large skiff.

Robinson Ramps Up Manufacturing

With strong sales week after week, Robinson ramps up manufacturing and strengthens its workforce.

Robinson machines nearly 90% of all machined parts in-house. An idea that the company believes is critical in controlling lead times, quality and costs. Earlier this year, Robinson invested in several state-of-the-art CNC (Computer Numerically Controlled) machining centers, including two horizontal milling machines, a high-speed laser cutter, and an abrasive waterjet machine (the company's sixth and largest). The factory's west building, which last year was expanded by 133,000 sq. ft., now houses a total of eighty-two CNC machines. Each machine operates eight hours a day, five days a week. Robinson's goal is to maximize efficiency without sacrificing quality.

During the economic downturn of the last two years, Robinson lost more than 400 employees, almost one-third of its workforce. A deep cut that included some longtime, skilled workers. Rebuilding the company's workforce has become critical as production demands have increased. Since the beginning of 2011, 200 employees have been hired or rehired. The company expects to continue hiring into 2012.

RHC's west building houses 82 state-of-the-art CNC machines.

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