

USFS helicopters ready for fire season



The Forest Service is operating the Bell 212 helicopter (H514) out of Auburn, Station 10, for a month during the early part of fire season.

“Due to the wet winter and heavy snow pack the Forest Service moved their helicopter to the CalFire station in Auburn so that it would be more available for lower elevation fires while the high country is still under snow,” Jeanne Pincha-Tulley, Tahoe National Forest fire chief, said in a statement.

In early July, this helicopter will move back to White Cloud, east of Nevada City, where it’s normally based. “Helicopter 514 is very versatile and used for transporting 8 firefighters to the fire, carrying buckets of water and providing general support flights,” Pincha-Tulley said.

Also in July, the heavy helicopter, a Boeing Vertol 107, (H74D) will be stationed at the Truckee airport. This helicopter is larger and can carry 1,300 gallons of water. Both helicopters are national resources and will be on call for fires or other emergency response throughout Northern California and the nation.

A TNF 25-person helitack crew provides support to the firefighting operations involving both helicopters, plus the crew responds as an initial attack unit for wildfires. This is the 10th year that helicopters and a helitack crew have been stationed on the TNF.

The Forest Service will again be using a Shrike Commander as its Air Attack Plane (Air Attack 17). This critical resource

is used for directing aerial firefighting and providing information to the ground troops regarding location and condition of a fire. Air Attack 17 will again be stationed at the FS/CalFire Air Attack Base. The air attack base located on National Forest land east of Grass Valley is operated jointly by the Forest Service and CalFire.