

Quiet Helicopter Operations To Take Flight At Grand Canyon Dec. 16

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A new era of quieter helicopter operations for environmentally sensitive areas will be commemorated by The Boeing Company during a special ceremony Dec. 16 in Tusayan, near Grand Canyon National Park.

The ceremony will recognize steps taken by AirStar Helicopters, Papillon Grand Canyon Helicopters and the National Park Service to assist in preserving the canyon's natural quiet.

AirStar operates the eight-place, single-engine MD 600N for tours and is the first to put the aircraft into air tour service. Papillon flies the eight-place, twin-engine MD Explorer under contract with the National Park Service for a variety of missions, including search and rescue, firefighting and humanitarian service.

Both the MD 600N and the MD Explorer are equipped with the NOTAR® anti-torque system, which replaces the conventional tail rotor and provides exceptionally safe and quiet performance. Boeing's NOTAR system-equipped helicopters -- the MD 600N, MD Explorer and MD 520N -- are certified by the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) as the world's quietest helicopters.

By selecting the MD Explorer and the MD 600N, the National Park Service and AirStar are among the first to commit to reducing aircraft noise over the Grand Canyon.

Proposed FAA regulations would require all Grand Canyon air tour operators to gradually replace their aircraft with quieter models by the year 2008.

Park Superintendent Robert Arnberger praised Papillon and AirStar for their leadership, foresight, and willingness to purchase quiet technology aircraft. "They have demonstrated their commitment to helping us achieve the balance between aircraft overflights and protection of sensitive park resources we have been seeking for so long," Arnberger said.

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