National Park Service Chooses Ultra-Quiet MD Explorer for Grand Canyon Operations

The National Park Service has chosen the environmentally friendly Boeing MD Explorer for its operations at the Grand Canyon.

The eight-place, twin-engine MD Explorer, owned and operated by Papillon Grand Canyon Helicopters, is slated to begin operating Dec. 15 under a $4.5 million Park Service contract.

The NOTAR® system-equipped MD Explorer is certified as the quietest helicopter in its class. In fact, the MD Explorer passed the Federal Aviation Administration's (FAA) most stringent noise test -- known as Appendix H -- with the largest compliance margin of any helicopter tested. Other NOTAR system-equipped quiet helicopters include the MD 600N and the MD 520N.

By selecting the MD Explorer, the Park Service is among the first to comply with new FAA regulations that require all helicopters operating in the Grand Canyon National Park Special Flight Rules Area to gradually replace their fleets with quieter aircraft. All companies are required to complete the conversion by 2008.

Park Service missions for the MD Explorer will include search and rescue operations, fire fighting, and carrying food, equipment and other supplies to residents in the canyon's most remote regions. It will be equipped with two litters for air medical missions. Sling load and rappelling operations also will be possible.

"The MD Explorer offers anything and everything the Park Service needs in an aircraft," said Mike Bashlor, Papillon's director of maintenance. "It can be ready to go for any mission required in just five minutes. Plus, it's a sweet, smooth-flying machine."

Another one of Boeing's quiet-technology helicopters, the MD 600N, also is slated to begin operations at the Grand Canyon. AirStar Helicopters is scheduled to begin using the MD 600N for tour operations within the next few weeks.

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