



Charleston County News Release

Release Number: 2862
Date: February 20, 2008

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Charleston County Mosquito Control and Sheriff's Office Rewarded for Safe Flying

Charleston County Government has received an aviation insurance safety bonus check for \$4,175. This bonus check was awarded because Charleston County Mosquito Control Aviation Division pilots experienced an accident-free year from Jan. 2007 through Jan. 2008.

Charleston County's Mosquito Control Division has earned the safety bonus every year since the incentive has been offered, for a total of eight years. To date, the eight annual safety bonus checks total \$46,000.

During the same eight-year period, Charleston County Sheriff's Office pilots have also been accident-free, resulting in its insurance premiums being reduced by 39 percent. In addition, this is the first year that the Sheriff's Office aviation insurance program has been eligible for safety bonuses. Because the County only insures the Sheriff's Office plane for hull coverage (helicopter hulls are self-insured due to being government-issued), the safety bonus check is for \$626 (11 percent) of the hull premium.

The following pilots are congratulated for their outstanding and accident-free safety record:

Charleston County Mosquito Control Division

Michael Haines, Chief Pilot
Mark Kennedy, Pilot and Mechanic
Martin Hyatt, Mosquito Control Superintendent and Pilot

Charleston County Sheriff's Office

Lt. Bill Britt, Chief Pilot
Sgt. Scott Martray, Pilot
Sgt. Matthew Cole, Pilot

Charleston County Government's aviation insurance company includes the "safety bonus incentive" for the Mosquito Control Division to promote flight safety and help the County control insurance costs. The annual safety bonus can only be achieved if the client remains "accident-free."

Charleston County's Safety & Risk Management Director, Larry Hodge, said he was pleased to announce the news. "The pilots and mechanics who work on the County's aviation equipment that is used to serve the public are outstanding, and they deserve to be rewarded again this year," Hodge said.

Mosquito Control's chief pilot, Michael Haines, plays a major role in attaining and sustaining the division's excellent safety record. Haines is an airframe and power plant licensed mechanic as well as a commercial rated helicopter pilot with over 5,000 hours of flying time.

Haines performs over 95 percent of all the flying for the County's Mosquito Control Division and completes a significant amount of the aircraft maintenance required to keep the helicopters in operational condition. Haines, who lives in Goose Creek, has worked with county government since 1973, and has been flying for the county since 1985. Haines is a certified pesticide applicator in several categories including public health and aerial application.

Martin Hyatt, who has been the Superintendent of the Mosquito Control Division since 1988, has worked for the county since October of 1977. Hyatt, who lives on James Island, has been flying for Charleston County Government since 1985.

"Our helicopter operations are critical to the success of the mosquito control program. Safety, when it comes to flying, has been our number one priority since initiation of helicopter operations in 1982," Hyatt said.

The bonus funds will be used to purchase a nurse tank that will enable ground spray operations to move closer to areas that are traditionally treated by helicopter.

The Sheriff's Office Air Support Unit provides a full range of airborne law enforcement support to patrol and specialized units.

As the only full-time airborne law enforcement unit on the coast of South Carolina, it routinely provides assistance to local, state and federal agencies operating in the Tri-county area. The unit is actively engaged in homeland security operations and supports Project SeaHawk, a multi-agency task force, headed by the U.S. Attorney General's Office, which is responsible for security operations in the Port of Charleston.

The Sheriff's Office Air Support Unit is manned by three full-time pilots and 10 collateral duty flight observers from other local government agencies. A crew is on call 24 hours a day.

The Sheriff's air unit operates both rotary and fixed wing aircraft. Two surplus military helicopters are used to support daily law enforcement missions. Primarily, these missions include patrol, pursuits, fugitive searches, missing persons, drownings, overdue boaters, search and rescue, marijuana eradication, ship escorts, reconnaissance/photo, homeland security missions, and aerial backup during traffic stops, disturbances and domestic calls.

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- Written by Jennie Davis -