



# Helitack for the Western Cape, South Africa

**A**t the request of the Western Cape Disaster Management and Fire/Rescue Services, two private companies have come together to improve the effectiveness of the Western Cape Provincial government's proactive approach to the management of wildfires, which occur in many parts of the province.

This proactive approach to managing wildfires in veld, forest and mountain fires, includes the rapid deployment of resources, aerial and ground, to such wildfires, whilst in their incipient stages. It comprises of a rapid initial attack with the primary objective of preventing and reducing a mega wildfire.

NCC Environmental Services has a three-year contract with the Western Cape Government to provide Type 1 ground crews to respond to wildfires on behalf of the various municipalities and organisations in the Western Cape. At the same time the Western Cape Government has contracted Kishugu Aviation, who in turn is sub-contracting Leading Edge Aviation, South Africa, who own, operate and crew a Black Hawk helicopter, to aid with rapid response to wildfires. Leading Edge Aviation, via a term contract with Kishugu Aviation, provides a Sikorsky UH-60 Black Hawk helicopter, to aid with the rapid response to wildfires. This is the only Black Hawk of its kind in South Africa that provides wildfire services.



NCC and Leading Edge Aviation have come together to ensure that resources are deployed to the fireline more efficiently. Without ground crews the effectiveness of a helicopter's fire fighting effort is greatly reduced. Likewise, not having water to assist ground crews working in remote areas, makes containment much harder and at times, more dangerous.



Putting these two resources together makes a highly efficient and effective fire fighting resource.

NCC's Type 1 ground crews have been trained by Leading Edge Aviation and received their certification. They now have the capability to respond together as an initial attack for wildfires throughout the Western Cape. This enables ground crews to get to the fireline faster, be inserted into generally inaccessible areas and importantly, obtain an overhead situational awareness of the fire behaviour on arrival.

This is another first for the Western Cape Government, NCC Environmental Services and Leading Edge Aviation. ▶



