

FLIGHT JACKET

MCAS Miramar, Calif. May 2, 2008



ACH-53E Super Stallion from Marine Heavy Helicopter Squadron 466, Marine Aircraft Group 11 (reinforced) 3rd Marine Aircraft Wing fills its 900-gallon bucket at Lake Pulgas, Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton, Calif., Friday. The Marines trained with firefighters from Cal Fire to enhance the skills needed to battle wild fires in the San Diego area.

Pic By CPL GEORGE J. PAPASTRAT

3rd MAW, Cal Fire train to put fires out

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May 2, 2008

MARINE CORPS BASE CAMP PENDLETON – Marines with 3rd Marine Aircraft Wing worked together with Cal Fire here Friday to conduct fire bucket training.

Marine Heavy Helicopter Squadron 466, Marine Aircraft Group II (reinforced) suspended a 900-gallon water bucket from their CH-53E Super Stallion aircraft while being directed by state firefighters.

The training helped create a relationship between the two organizations in case they are called into action like they were during the San Diego wildfires in October 2007.

"It was good practice for the real thing," said 1st Lt. Michael A. Pigford, a pilot with HMH-466. "I look forward to using the knowledge in the future to help San Diegans' "

Throughout the training, the aircrew hovered their flying giant above Lake Pulgas to fill the water bucket.

Soon after, the firefighters on the ground directed the pilots over a simulated burn area marked with orange bags for the release.

Less than 200 feet above the ground, the Super Stallion dropped hundreds of gallons of water on a specific location.

The purpose of the training was to have the state firefighters on the ground work with the Marines in the air to put the water where it's needed to extinguish the burning brush below.

"The Marines did great;" said Ray Chaney, battalion chief, air operations, Cal Fire, San Diego operational unit. "The Marine aviators are highly trained professionals that are an important asset to fighting fires."

The training helped prepare the Marines and state firefighters for upcoming large-scale training events, May 14-16.