

MEDIA RELEASE

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High-flyer rescue chopper supporters

On Saturday 19 April, a group of 30 or so lucky Far North power consumers were treated to free helicopter rides.

They won the rides as part of the 2008 Electricity Rescue Helicopter Appeal incentive prize draw for having donated \$5 or more. Supporters who donated \$20 or more also went into a draw to win one of two prizes of \$1,000 credited to their power accounts.

The 2008 Appeal, which celebrated the 20th Anniversary of Northland's independently operated rescue helicopter service, was promoted through a high-profile advertising campaign by joint sponsors Top Energy and Northpower and raised a total \$341,415.77. This amount includes the matching, dollar-for-dollar by Top Energy and Northpower, of all public donations. The funds went to the rescue helicopter service operator, Northland Emergency Services Trust (NEST), to help offset standing costs, which include pilot's wages, rescue crew training, insurance and interest on loans.

The machine, a Sikorsky S-76A, was flown up from its Whangarei base to the Bay of Islands Aero Club especially for the occasion. It cruises at 160kts (almost 300km/h), burns Jet A1 fuel at 330ltrs/hour and has a range up to 3hours 10 minutes normal flying time. Fortunately, the lucky high-flyers all managed to get their chopper experience in, before the afternoon's poor visibility weather closed in.

According to Top Energy CEO, Russell Shaw, the free helicopter rides have been a regular feature of the annual fundraising appeals and a great way for winning donors to get a first-hand encounter with the service they so generously support. "We've had a long association with NEST and the Electricity Rescue Helicopter - almost 21 years in fact and are pleased to continue our support for such a vital community service", he said. END.

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PIC: Electricity Rescue Helicopter Appeal supporter, Melanie Krebs of Kawakawa, enjoying her chopper experience.

