

R-22, Where Are You?

**Date, Mission:**

22 SEP, 05M1784

Incident Commanders: Maj. Margot Leveque and Capt. Bob Keilholtz

Briefing: Eight new R-22 helicopters left the factory and headed for Las Vegas. Only six made it through stormy weather that closed in the choppers quickly. As it turned out, one was forced to land at a truck stop, but no one had reported either of them missing. An ELT went off, indicating an emergency near the California/Nevada border, then closed out.

Find: Robinson R-22, eastern Mojave Desert, 35 39.03 N by 115 49.50 W. After multiple

weather delays for fog and low ceiling, the crashed R-22 was found in a canyon, through a six-minute window in the cloud cover. The pilot did not survive.

Citations: Keilholtz: "When an ELT goes off in this area of the desert, it's always tough to find an IC and a ground team. Communication is bad. It's a long way to drive or fly. It will turn out to be a six to eight hour operation. Then people think after they respond the ELT will go away. If I put out a page for the missing airplane, my response will quadruple. In this case, we had no positive airborne signals, and had to rely on our instincts that this was an actual crash. In the end, nobody

knew they were missing a helicopter until we found it."

Asche: "ELTs are often taken for granted. The outstanding result we achieved came from prosecuting the mission as if it was for real. The aircrew located a very difficult to find target."

And the ESSy Goes to...

1st Lt. Ron Brewster, Bakersfield Composite Squadron 121, and Lt. Col. J.J. Gianquinto, attached to California Wing, awarded Distress Finds.

