



National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

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Grand Canyon News Release

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Park Helicopter Exhibit a Hit at Air Force Open House

Grand Canyon, AZ. – Grand Canyon National Park was once again invited to display its contracted MD 900 Explorer helicopter at the recent “Thunder in the Desert” Open House and Air Show at Luke Air Force Base on March 21 and 22 in Glendale, Arizona. The world-class event is hosted by the 56th Fighter Wing (the largest in the Air Force) every other year; and the park last participated in 2007.

The exhibit consisted of the MD 900 helicopter, various handouts, posters, and wildland firefighting and other rescue equipment. The display was staffed by Assistant Park Helicopter Program Manager Robert Dauphinais, Papillon Pilot Mike Brinkworth and Interagency Unit Aviation



Early morning visitors enjoy the Grand Canyon Helicopter exhibit at Luke Air Force Base' Open House.

Officer/Pilot Mike Ebersole. Despite warm temperatures on Saturday and extremely high winds on Sunday, the exhibit was continuously surrounded both days by crowds of people asking questions and taking hundreds of photographs. Luke Air Force Base estimates that more than 200,000 visitors witnessed the displays and aerial demonstrations available to the public during the Open House.

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The public showed particular interest in the MD 900's NOTAR (NO TAil Rotor) quiet technology system and wildland firefighting capabilities (including initial attack and helicopter rappel). Military and general aviation pilots also asked numerous questions about the Grand Canyon National Park Special Flight Rules Area. The exhibit in particular and government aircraft in general received high praise for the hard work they accomplish.

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