

NEWS RELEASE FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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On Monday 29th Sept 2008, the first Firefly Helikite gave a successful demonstration flying above the famous Rig 5 disaster training area at the Fire Services College, Moreton-in-Marsh, England.

The Firefly Helikite is a new design of tethered lighter-than-air aircraft. Within a few minutes of arriving on the site it was providing valuable real-time streaming video of the scene, transmitted via radio to various receivers and ground stations in the command centre.

It also took numerous high resolution 10 megapixel aerial photographs of the site from all altitudes up to 200ft. Such images are invaluable to commanders and first-responders at the scene of a disaster. They provide overview to help planning, locate victims, assess building structures and protect civilians from danger areas.

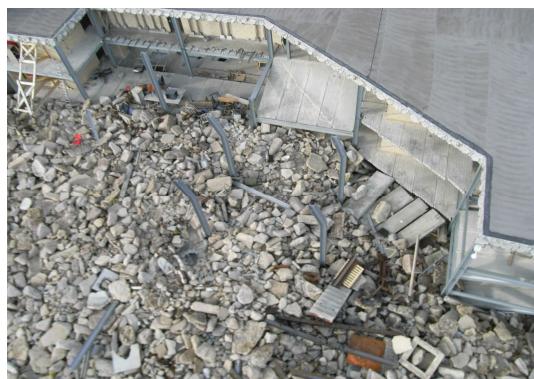
Previously, short-term aerial footage was only possible using scarce and expensive helicopters. The Firefly Helikite allows first-responders to have a permanent aerial surveillance camera system, operating within moments of arriving at a site, in almost all weathers and situations - for minimal cost.

The tiny one cubic metre all-weather Firefly Helikite is a modification of the Helikite design to suit the testing requirements of the emergency services. Rapid deployment is essential, so the Firefly can be inflated in under two minutes, or transported fully inflated in the back of a Landrover – providing instant deployment if necessary. Being very small (6ft x 4ft x 3ft) the Firefly is very easy to fly. Rescue crews can increase or decrease altitude easily and “walk” it around the site for better views even in high winds. The outstanding stability of the Firefly allows it to be flown within a few feet of buildings allowing close-up views through windows or over rooftops.

The Firefly flies itself automatically and so the flying line can be tethered to a stake and the Firefly left to fly itself, while the operators concentrate on viewing and manipulating the aerial images from the high altitude pan/tilt video camera. These images can be also viewed by any first-responder equipped with a pocket-sized video receiver/ viewer. This allows everyone an overview of a disaster situation in real-time.

Larger six cubic metre Firefly Helikites can lift highly efficient thermal imaging cameras on pan/tilt mounts. Allowing hot-spots within fires to be identified and warm bodies of disaster victims to be spotted within cold rubble, beneath undergrowth or on water. These Helikites can be kept fully inflated in standard box trailers or inflated within a few minutes as required.

Helikites are a new type of all-weather, high-altitude, tethered aircraft. Helikites are novel because they are the only aerostats in the world that are pushed up by both helium and by wind. This means that very compact Helikites are highly weather-survivable. Helikite systems provide an inexpensive, all-weather and permanent aerial platform. Everything needed to lift the cameras to 1,000ft for extended periods only weighs 15Kg and can easily be fitted into a small rucksack. This includes the Firefly Helikite, helium cylinder, flying-line and reel.



About Allsopp Helikites Limited

Allsopp Helikites Ltd is a designer and manufacturer of advanced lighter-than-air, miniature, all-weather aerostat systems. The company delivers a full range of products including Helikite aerostats, Helibases, Helikite winches, flying line, video surveillance cameras, aerial photographic equipment, radio-relay systems, Jungle Marker Helikites, balloon cut-down devices, helium, and aerostat trailers. Allsopp Helikites Ltd is a privately owned SME operating from its aerostat test flying base in Damerham, Hampshire, England.

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