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San Diego Fire Chief Jeff Bowman thanks Sunroad Enterprises for pledging to give \$1 million during the next five years to help purchase the county a fire and rescue helicopter.

FIRM GIVES \$1 MILLION TO HELICOPTER EFFORT

By Jessica Long

A round of golf at one local course will soon be more than a fun afternoon in the sun — it'll help purchase fire and rescue helicopters sorely needed in San Diego county.

Sunroad Enterprises announced last week that some proceeds from golf rounds played at Maderas Golf Resort in north Poway will be donated to the San Diego Regional Fire and Helicopter Program. The company, which owns Maderas along with car dealerships and a

marina, has promised to donate \$1 million to the program during the next five years.

In addition to proceeds from golf rounds, Sunroad announced a percentage of every car sale at Pacific Honda on Convoy Street and Kearny Mesa Ford on Clairemont Mesa Boulevard would be donated to the program. Every rental at Sunroad Resort Marina mean more money for the program.

It has yet to be decided just exactly how large a percentage from each sale will be donated, but, under the contract recently entered upon by Sunroad, a minimum of \$200,000 will be given to the county each year.

A celebrity golf tournament scheduled at Maderas on April 27 will officially kick off Sunroad's obligation to donate the money.

"We're thrilled to be starting such an important program," said Rick Vann, executive vice president of Sunroad Enterprises.

Vann, along with other Sunroad execs, is encouraging other large companies in San Diego County to join his company in supporting the purchase of fire and rescue helicopters for local use. Experts have said that if San Diego had such helicopters that last falls' wildfires, including the Cedar Fire that ravaged Scripps Ranch and Poway, would not have been so devastating.

A fire and rescue helicopter costs about \$3.5 million, and an additional \$1.5 to \$2 million is needed per year to man the helicopter with pilots, firefighters and paramedics.

"Most counties in California have a fire rescue chopper," said San Diego Fire Chief Jeff Bowman. "It's imperative for our region to have at least three dedicated helicopters that offer both fire fighting and rescue capabilities."

During the Paradise and Cedar fires, water was airlifted from the Maderas course to help fight the fires. All resort employees were evacuated and some were displaced from their homes. Vann said the company's close ties to the historic disaster were a driving force in the decision to help county officials obtain fire and rescue helicopters.



RICK VANN
"Thrilled" to start campaign