



Bell 505 Testimonial Southern Utah University



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Interview with Richard Cannon

Director of Flight Operations and Safety for Southern Utah University

TELL US ABOUT YOUR BACKGROUND AND THE UNIVERSITY'S BACKGROUND?

“OUR TRAINING PROGRAM CONSISTS OF 200 FLIGHT HOURS. WE TAKE STUDENTS FROM ZERO FLIGHT TIME ALL THE WAY TO CFII”

Flying helicopters is kind of my mid-life crisis, although not really mid-life because I was in my early 30s. I got my degree in construction management and worked in construction financing in northern Utah. I quickly realized it wasn't for me and I needed to do something else with my life. I jumped ship and started helicopter training. After completing all of my ratings I started working at Southern Utah University. Since then I've flown a season firefighting and two and half years of HEMS work.

I'm now the director of flight operations and safety for Southern Utah University. We have 35 total aircraft between fixed wing and rotorcraft. For fall semester, we'll have about 140 fixed wing students and 200 rotorcraft students. We do the initial training with a piston aircraft and then move them, as soon as we can, into a 206 Long Ranger or now, the Bell 505.

Our training program consists of 200 flight hours. We take students from zero flight time all the way to CFII. We'll do the first lab and half in the piston aircraft which is Private and Commercial/Instrument combined. They'll get all their instrument training plus 10 hours of NVG training. After that, we put them into a turbine transition and mountain flying lab, which had been the Long Rangers. That course we'll be using the 505 now. We take them up into the hills now that we have a more powerful aircraft. After that, we do 10 hours of long line training. This will continue to be completed in the long ranger since they're set up for it, but we've had the conversation about transitioning to the 505 in the future. They then finish up their CFI and CFII in the piston aircraft. Every student will get 20 hours of turbine time all in Bell products.





WHY ARE HELICOPTERS THE RIGHT TOOL FOR THE JOB?

“IT’S NOT JUST A ONE MISSION AIRCRAFT; YOU CAN GO OUT AND COMPLETE 10 DIFFERENT MISSIONS WITHIN THE SAME YEAR WITH USING JUST ONE AIRCRAFT”

For me it’s just a no brainer, they’re awesome. Don’t get me wrong, I have my private license in fixed wing; those platforms serve a great purpose. For me personally, I wanted to fly HEMS. After digging into it, seeing all the different careers with helicopters, I was convinced of their capabilities. You can land anywhere you need to and quickly get out of all sorts of situations. The downfall is you don’t want to fly long distance all the time, but there’s a market with many short distance jobs you can do with helicopters that planes just can’t do. It’s not just a one mission aircraft; you can go out and complete 10 different missions within the same year using just one aircraft! The worst day flying is better than the best day I’ve had in any other job.



WHAT FEATURES ATTRACTED YOU TO THE BELL 505?

“THE PRICE POINT IS RIGHT AND THE POWER IS PHENOMENAL. I LOVE THE FACT THAT BELL CHANGED THE INTERIOR TO THE OPEN CABIN, YOUR VISIBILITY IS AMAZING. ONCE WE FIGURED OUT THAT IT COULD FLY AT OUR ALTITUDE, IT WAS A NO BRAINER”

We initially thought about purchasing a used Long Ranger but, for the same price we realized we could get a new Bell 505 with all the great features of a dual channel FADEC and the glass cockpit. It’s got everything we want and it’s a safe aircraft to train in.

We initially didn’t have super high hopes on performance, but then we loaded it up and hovered out of ground effect at 9000 feet and didn’t even have to think about it. We were like, okay wait a minute, this is actually a helicopter that can do what we need it to do. From there we fell in love with it and knew it’d work great for us. The price point is right, the power is phenomenal and I love the fact that Bell changed the interior to the open cabin. Its’ visibility is amazing. Once we figured out that it could fly at our altitude, it was a no brainer.



“ELIMINATING HOT STARTS WAS A HUGE FACTOR IN OUR DECISION”

We've had Robinsons where people have started in the open position, we've had Bells that have started in the open position. Even in a piston engine it's a few hours of down time if you catch it in time, but if you go too far it's a \$30,000 hit. We've had to replace hot sections in turbine engines before too. With the FADEC on the 505, it's near impossible to hot start this helicopter. Even if you start it in the fly position, it's still okay. If my battery voltage is high enough, it's going to do what it needs to start the helicopter. Eliminating hot starts was a huge factor in our decision. I see this as the direction all aircraft is going to move with a flip throttle vs. a twist grip throttle and the FADEC control.

Two thirds of our piston aircraft have the G500 TXi installed, so our students are used to seeing all the flight information on the glass. The big difference with the 505 is all the engine information is integrated now too, instead of using steam gauges. From an ease of flying the aircraft standpoint, talk about a low workload for the pilot. Instead trying to find which gauge to look at, I just look at the green arrow on the Power Situation Indicator and know I'm good to go. Flying the aircraft back from Mirabel, the range ring display on the G1000 was phenomenal. "What's the next airport we're going to? Oh it's inside the ring; we're good to go!"

“OUR INTENT IS TO PUT STUDENTS IN THE BACK AS WELL TO WATCH AND LEARN. IN THE 505, THEY HAVE THE CAPABILITY TO SEE EVERYTHING DURING THE LESSON”

Our intent is to put students in the back as well to watch and learn. It's something we push where they're not stressed having to fly and learn and they can sit back and focus on just following along with the lesson. In the 505, they have the capability to see everything during the lesson.

All of our instructors picked up the Bell 505 very quickly. It usually takes a few hours to be comfortable flying a new aircraft. With the 505, within 30 minutes, most pilots were comfortable flying the aircraft. We haven't had too many low time pilots in the 505 yet, but I anticipate them picking it up more quickly as well.



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“THE BELL 505 AUTOROTATION CAPABILITY IS GREAT. WITH THE FLY/IDLE SWITCH, THE ROTOR BLADES GO BACK UP TO FULL SPEED AND JUST STAY THERE”

The Bell 505 autorotation capability is great. We're doing both full touch down autos and power recovery autos. This was another big reason for the FADEC requirement. A power recovery with a twist grip throttle can be a little hairy. With the fly/idle switch, the rotor blades go back up to full speed and just stay there. I've always loved doing autos in the Long Ranger and the 505 performs them very similar to the Long Ranger.

We flew the 505 through Denver and went up and landed in Leadville, Colorado with no problem, which is the highest airport in the country. We were flying the aircraft back with a BO105, which wasn't able to land at the airport. The performance in the mountains feels very similar to flying a Long Ranger.

Absolutely, 100% I'd recommend the 505 for training. It's a phenomenal platform to train in.

WHAT'S IT LIKE TO WORK WITH BELL?

“I'VE PICKED UP 6 OR 7 AIRCRAFT FROM OTHER OEMS, BUT WHEN I WENT THROUGH THE BELL DELIVERY PROCESS, I WAS DUMBFOUNDED AT HOW WELL BELL TREATS THEIR CUSTOMERS”

This is the first new aircraft we've bought from Bell. We've typically flown used Bells, so we've had the relationship with Bell through the Customer Service side, but never picked one up from the factory. The customer service side has always been amazing, and they're always available to come out and walk us through things at our facility.

I've picked 6 or 7 aircraft up from other OEMs, but when I went through the Bell delivery process, I was dumbfounded at how well Bell treats their customers. Everything was completely outstanding. We walked out of there thinking "this is what a delivery should be like." I can't speak highly enough of Bell, the service, the awesome training facilities in Fort Worth and the great delivery in Canada.

