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Ranking Member Westerman, Mr. Fulcher, and Members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to be here today with you, your colleagues and your other guests. My name is Bart Brainerd and I am President of Firehawk Helicopters. We are a second-generation family company with 100 employees. Our company was founded in 1973 by my father Chuck Brainerd, a Vietnam Vet. He joined the aerial firefighting community in 1987. Today we operate as Firehawk Helicopters and we are based in Leesburg, Florida. We also operate a large western fire support base in Boise, Idaho. We have been involved in many forms of aerial firefighting through the years, including large campaign fires such as the ones that burned in Yellowstone National Park in 1988, when lightning ignited fires were allowed to burn uncontrolled, to accomplish the then stated purpose of resource objectives. The fires grew to catastrophic proportions and escaped the park and devastated many homesteads and towns in the vicinity. The blazes were so intense, that the many of the fire scars are still evident in the park even today.

Today our company operates a dozen helicopters in support of many government agencies including the US Forest Service, the Bureau of Land Management, The US Park Service, and the Bureau of Indian Affairs. We operate from Florida to Alaska and everywhere in between and even Puerto Rico. We execute a diverse range of missions that include aerial prescribed burning, initial attack, aerial rescue, firefighter transport, resource missions, and large fire support. Some of our aircraft support aerial prescribed fire operations in the lower 48, especially in Region 8 of the southeastern United States, during the winter and spring seasons. During the remainder of the year, our aircraft are generally located out in the western states, and sometimes in Alaska, primarily engaged in initial attack and large fire support.

One of our aircraft was assigned to the Hermit's Peak fire near Las Vegas, New Mexico earlier this year. Our crews spent 46 days assigned to the incident. Our team dropped tens of thousands of gallons on the fire and helped to save many homes. Our crews also flew Aerial Recon and Aerial coordination missions and prescribed fire missions in support of burnout operations to help contain the fire. We were one of many companies present helping to battle this extremely large fire. Some of the other companies in our community like 10 Tanker Air Carrier's Very Large Air Tankers based out of Albuquerque, New Mexico dropped over 2 million gallons of retardant on the fire, and Billings Flying Service's CH-47 Chinook's helicopters dropped over 3 million gallons of water on the fire.

Congressman Westerman, Congressman Fulcher, Firehawk Helicopter is very proud of the service we provide to the communities of our Nation and look forward to doing so for many years into the future, however there are tremendous challenges facing our industry that go hand in hand with the overall challenges our Nation faces in fighting increasingly catastrophic wildfire.

I'm happy to stand for questions from the panel and thank you again for the opportunity to present to you today.