

News Release

**Columbia Shuttle Recovery
Area Command Center
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For Immediate Release**

Helicopter Crash Kills Two; Injures Three

(Lufkin, Texas) -- A Bell 407 helicopter involved in the search for Space Shuttle Columbia debris crashed Thursday afternoon in the Angelina National Forest in San Augustine County. Five crew members were aboard the helicopter. There were two fatalities. Three crew members are being treated for injuries at Memorial Medical Center of East Texas in Lufkin.

Texas Forest Service employee Charles Krennek of Lufkin and Pilot J. "Buzz" Mier of Arizona were killed in the crash.

Injured in the crash were: Matt Tschacher, U.S. Forest Service, from South Dakota; Richard Lange, United Space Alliance at Kennedy Space Center of Florida; and Ronnie Dale, NASA's Kennedy Space Center of Florida.

The helicopter was operating under contract with Papillon Helicopters of Arizona.

All shuttle search aircraft operations have been discontinued until we are assured that operations can continue in the safest manner possible. Investigation teams will arrive today and their findings will assist us in determining when air operations will resume. The ground search for shuttle material will continue.