

Helicopter crashes at Bend Airport

by Cheryl McDermott

Two pilots walked away unscathed after a helicopter crash at the Bend Municipal Airport Tuesday afternoon when they crashed during emergency landing exercises, authorities reported.

The pilots, 26-year old Brandon Knox of Bend and William Olson, 43, of Beaverton, are both employees of Leading Edge Aviation, Deschutes County Sheriff's Deputy Sgt. Vance Lawrence said. Their Robinson R-22 Beta II crashed on the tarmac at the south end of runway off Powell Butte Highway while practicing "autorotation" about 3:20 p.m., July 17.

Deputies and Bend Fire & Rescue personnel responded to the scene and found the helicopter on its side with significant damage. "The cabin of the helicopter remained mostly intact, although pieces of the aircraft were scattered for an approximately 50 yard distance," Bend Fire Inspector Cindy Kettering said.

"At this time it does not appear that pilot error was a factor," Sgt. Lawrence said. The FAA will continue the investigation.

The airport was closed for about one hour, Vance said, then was re-opened without damage to the runway.

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