



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**Police welcome brand new helicopters**

The Kansas City Police Department will celebrate the arrival of its three brand new helicopters with a ceremony Friday.

Police and City officials will welcome the three new helicopters at 2 p.m. Sept. 7 at the KCPD Helicopter Section, 4601 Eastern Ave. The three MD 500E helicopters, valued at about \$8.6 million, will be on display.

KCPD's helicopter fleet has been in desperate need of an upgrade for some time. The three in the current fleet were Vietnam War-era, built in 1968 and 1969. KCPD was one of the first police departments in the nation to implement airborne patrol in 1967. All helicopters the department has used since that time have been U.S. Army surplus. These are KCPD's first new turbine-powered helicopters.

Police will use the helicopters to apprehend fleeing suspects and find missing persons. As the only law enforcement agency with helicopters in the Kansas City metropolitan area, KCPD also frequently aids other departments and will continue to do so.

Two of the choppers were funded by the quarter-cent Public Safety Sales Tax, which voters approved in 2002 and renewed in 2010. The third was paid for by a combination of a federal grant and asset forfeiture funds. About half the cost of the helicopters is in crime-fighting equipment. (Each helicopter costs \$1.725 million with no equipment.) KCPD's helicopters will feature a live video feed that officers on the ground can see, an infrared camera, and a "moving map" system that will overlay addresses on what police see on the camera so officers know exactly where a person is.

After testing several aircraft, the officer-pilots in the Helicopter Section chose MD 500Es as the best fit for Kansas City. They and KCPD's mechanics are undergoing training on the new choppers and equipment now. The new helicopters should take to the air patrolling in early October.

The old helicopters will be returned to the U.S. Department of Defense and could be reallocated to other police departments.

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