

Painting a Helicopter

The school I used to work for painted this Enstrom a while back to match the company colors. Here is a sequence of it being painted:

At this point I think the entire base coat of white had already been applied. The entire helicopter has now been masked so that Pat can put the stripes and tail numbers on:



Now the tail numbers have been applied:



Now the helicopter has been re-masked. The parts where you can see the white undercoat is where the blue and maroon are going to be applied. The blue and maroon are broken up into thinner stripes with some tape...



The maroon strip being applied to the nose:



The stripes have been painted on, and the doors and engine cowling are being put back on:



Blades being put back on:



Doing a final maintenance runup:



The finished paint job:



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Lawrence Municipal Airport, North Andover Massachusetts

We have a single Robinson R22 up at the Lawrence airport. We mainly do training at this facility, and we rent office space out of Four Star Aviation. Four Star is a fixed wing FBO as well as being one of the two big Jet-A FBOs on field (i.e. they do a lot of biz jet fueling). They are also one of the friendlier FBOs I've ever been at.



From left to right are Marilyn (runs the office on the week end) Bill (among other things drives the fuel truck), Bruce (a customer) and Dana (another All Star instructor).

This is one of my students, Bruce (not the same Bruce as in the office picture) starting a preflight inside the (unheated) hangar at Lawrence. Note the machine on the floor to his left. The temperature this day was about -10C, so we had to preheat the helicopter. This consists of using the portable heater which burns kerosene and has a blower to force the hot air out some ducting. The ducting is pointed at the engine so that by the time we are finished with the preheat, the engine oil is warm enough to act as a proper lubricant.



About 15 minutes later, the preheat is done, we've moved the helicopter out of the hangar (and into the wind!) and Bruce is finishing up the preflight. Notice that Bruce is properly dressed for a New England winter preflight: a heavy coat with a high collar to keep out the wind, and heavy gloves.



This is Gary, another student preflighting outside of the main Four Star building. This is a little warmer day, and Gary isn't dressed as warmly as Bruce was.



In this next picture, Gary is checking the fuel for proper octane grade and possible contamination. He has filled the little glass tube he is holding with fuel from the helicopter. If there is water or solids in the fuel, he will be able to see it. Also, because aviation fuel is color coded by octane, he can check that we have been fueled with 100LL (100 octane, low lead), which is blue. If the fuel was green, we'd know we'd been fueled with 100/130 octane (which is also okay in this helicopter). If it was red, the fuel would be 80/87 octane (which is *not* okay, because the octane is too low for this engine), and amber would indicate Jet-A, which would be *really* bad.



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Norwood Memorial Airport, Norwood, Massachusetts

Boston Helicopter Company Bell 206BIII



I've been flying out of Norwood for a while, and finally got around to taking some pictures of some of the aircraft I fly here.

We use this JetRanger for traffic reporting for WBZ radio here in Boston, and for tours around Boston, aerial photography, and just about everything else you can imagine. You can see it sitting on the dolly, which we use to pull it in and out of the hangar. We either use a golf cart or a lawn tractor to move the dolly when the helicopter is on it.



Sunday morning I was in the hangar when a friend showed up to go flying with Ivan. Geoff took his family on a [Tour of Boston](#).



Here they're returning from their flight. You can just see the dolly on the ground below the airplane wing.



Landing on the dolly...



After the flight, Ivan put the helicopter back away until the next flight. Ramp space is very tight at the FBO here in Norwood, so we're often moving the helicopters around to make room for all the bizjets.

Starting R22s on a Cold Morning



It was cold Sunday, and I noticed one of the Northern Lights instructors getting a battery cart start on the R22. This is more normal for a turbine helicopter, but on a cold morning with a weak battery, it's sometimes necessary for a piston aircraft as well.



The FBO uses a golf cart to pull the battery cart, and you can sort of see in the picture that they also have a preheater on the golf cart. That can be used when the weather is really cold to get the crankcase oil warmed up a bit before starting the aircraft. We hangar all the helicopters, so unless they've been sitting out all day, the engine isn't usually *that* cold.

Instrument Certified Bell LongRanger L3



I'm lucky enough to get to fly this aircraft on a regular basis. It's an IFR certified LongRanger. A LongRanger is like a JetRanger that has been stretched to fit two more seats in the back, club seating style. IFR means we can fly it in the clouds (which is very unusual for single engine helicopters).



You can see the back seat here. The two seats on the left side of the photograph face backward, while the three on the right are the standard forward facing JetRanger seats.



In this photograph you can see both the rear cabin and the cockpit. The aircraft is incredibly comfortable, and flies much smoother than you would expect, compared to a JetRanger. On a gusty day, it's just like riding in a stretch limo.



If you are not used to turbine helicopter engines, you can see in this picture just how small they are.



Here is a closeup of the engine compartment.



You can see in this picture that this aircraft has a much bigger instrument panel than a VFR JetRanger. This aircraft is equipped about as well as they come: dual attitude indicators, HSI, RMI, 3 axis autopilot, radar altimeter, DME, and a Northstar M3 Approach Certified GPS.



This is absolutely a fantastic helicopter, and of all the helicopters I've ever flown, it's my favorite. It's even nicer than the S76 I got to fly in Hawaii. I'll tell you about that soon...

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