(SAN JOSE and SAN FRANCISCO, California) – A helicopter may be seen flying at low altitudes over portions of the San Francisco Bay Area from January 29 through February 6, 2016. The purpose of the flyovers is to measure naturally occurring background radiation.

Officials from the National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA) announced that the radiation assessment will cover a collection of areas spanning approximately 22 square miles. A twin-engine Bell 412 helicopter, operated by the Remote Sensing Laboratory Aerial Measuring System from Nellis Air Force Base, will be equipped with radiation sensing technology. The helicopter will fly in a grid pattern over the areas at 150 feet (or higher) above the ground surface at a speed of approximately 80 miles per hour. Flyovers will occur only during daylight hours and are estimated to take about three hours to complete per area.

The measurement of naturally occurring radiation to establish baseline levels is a normal part of security and emergency preparedness. NNSA is making the public aware of the upcoming flights so that citizens who see the low-flying aircraft are not alarmed.

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Established by Congress in 2000, NNSA is a semi-autonomous agency within the U.S. Department of Energy responsible for enhancing national security through the military application of nuclear science. NNSA maintains and enhances the safety, security, and effectiveness of the U.S. nuclear weapons stockpile without nuclear explosive testing; works to reduce the global danger from weapons of mass destruction; provides the U.S. Navy with safe and effective nuclear propulsion; and responds to nuclear and radiological emergencies in the U.S. and abroad. Visit www.nnsa.energy.gov for more information.