ENSTROM TH180 RESUMES FLIGHT TESTING

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Enstrom Helicopter resumed flight testing of its new TH180 last Thursday, a two-seat model aimed at the training market. A second flight-test vehicle joined the program to restart testing, the company told AIN yesterday. On its first flight, test pilot William Taylor performed hover, forward flight and rigging checks on the new helicopter.

The flight-test program had been halted after a hard off-airport landing destroyed the program's first test vehicle on February 12. The pilot walked away with only minor injuries. While an official cause of that accident is pending, preliminary indications are that a piece of flight-test instrumentation in the main drive system failed and disconnected the engine from the drive train.

Enstrom plans to add a thirdflight-test vehicle to the program later this summer as part of an accelerated program aimed at gaining certification for the helicopter next year. The company announced the TH180 in 2014 and plans to use the type certificate basis and rotor system of the larger three-seat 280FX to speed development.

The TH180 will be powered by a 210-hp Lycoming HIO-390 piston engine and features an engine governor and electric clutch switch, robust landing gear and a useful load of 700 pounds, including a standard 40-gallon fuel capacity. Target price is less than $400,000.

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