

LESSONS LEARNED



Southwestern Region Aviation Safety

Understanding Cooperator's Capability

Summary of Incident — [SAFECOM 14-168](#)

Recently, confusion arose when ground forces on a fire expected a medical evacuation of an injured fire fighter to be implemented using short-haul. Our cooperator, in this case Arizona Department of Public Safety (AZ-DPS), chose to complete the mission using a hover exit/entrance method. This bulletin will present information on lessons learned from the event.

The event began with a fire fighter experiencing heat related illness. The IMT called for a medevac and it was determined that the AZ-DPS would be the best resource due to their short-haul capability. Once on scene, the DPS helicopter pilot asked for additional brush removal and determined a hover exit/entrance would provide a lower risk based on their protocols. The ground personnel did not expect a hover maneuver and were unfamiliar with the protocols of the cooperator; a SAFECOM was filed. This event presents a great opportunity to share lessons learned.

Lessons Learned

- ◆ Resources responsible for medevac should be provided with essential information, maps and aerial recon opportunities.
- ◆ Once a patient is loaded on board the medical helicopter, the in-flight care provider will determine the best care and location of higher medical services. IMT preplanning might not be the actual path taken once other entities are involved.
- ◆ Preplanning potential response scenarios is still key to a positive outcome and should occur at the local or incident level. Flexibility is needed when actually working with cooperators to accomplish the mission, as they have protocols and SOPs as well.
- ◆ Agency individuals with the potential to be involved in emergency response should familiarize themselves with **ALL** the capabilities of any aviation cooperator tasked with medical, extrication or rescue services. Hoist, short-haul, hover exit/entrance, toe-in or one skid landings could be potential methods used by cooperators.

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More Lessons Learned

- ◆ Incident within an incident protocols should address communication with aerial resources. Is Command the best frequency to reach the ATGS? Is helibase monitoring the command frequency?
- ◆ Helibase and ground personnel should take opportunities to interface with medevac, extrication and rescue personnel to familiarize themselves with cooperator protocols and procedures in addition to capabilities. Preplanning and mission execution can be enhanced with a solid understanding of cooperator operations.
- ◆ Identifying a patient transfer location prior to use, such as a dedicated helipad at helibase, could facilitate efficient transfer of the patient while reducing risk.

Summary

Understanding the capabilities of any aviation resource tasked with medical, extrication or rescue services can aid in preplanning emergency response, reducing confusion with ground personnel and ensuring a successful outcome. Each cooperator will have their own risk processes, training and SOPs to be followed when completing a mission for the Agency. We need to make the effort and understand what capabilities are available to an incident in determining how to best utilize our cooperators when responding to an emergency.



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