What should you do when you see a helicopter trying to land?

Thursday 24 May, 2018

The Great Western Air Ambulance Charity (GWAAC) provides emergency care via helicopter and car to medical emergencies and traumatic injuries across Bristol, Bath and North East Somerset, Gloucestershire, South Gloucestershire, North Somerset and surrounding areas. We have now been flying our helicopters across these areas, saving lives, for 10 years!

The GWAAC Critical Care team consists of a highly trained and experienced Pilot, Critical Care Paramedic and Critical Care Doctor. From emergency blood transfusions to roadside amputations or treating cardiac arrests, our crew specialise in Pre-Hospital Emergency Medicine and Trauma Medicine, quite literally bringing the hospital to the patient.

It can be exciting when you witness a helicopter trying to land near you. The fact is that our doctors and paramedics attend to emergencies in all kinds of locations - meaning that the pilot could have the very difficult job of landing in a park or a street. Understandably the pilot, doctors and paramedics on board the helicopter are concerned for your safety when they have to land in these public places, and they also understand the excitement and interest in the helicopter and of the scene unfolding.

Whilst GWAAC welcomes your interest, we are asking for your help to ensure that the helicopter can do its job by landing and getting to the patient in need as quickly as possible. Some of the emergencies attended by the GWAAC team can, quite seriously, mean life or death in a matter of minutes, so every second really does count. With your help, working with the GWAAC team, you can ensure you are doing your bit to help make the process of landing the helicopter and getting to the patient goes as smoothly as possible.

GWAAC has a few simple steps to follow if you spot the helicopter overhead:

- Move to the edges of the field so that the pilot has a clear space to land.
- The helicopter creates a strong down wash, and so hold on to your children, dogs, and any loose items you have with you.
- When the helicopter is coming in to land cover your eyes, to protect them from any debris.
- Make sure not to approach the helicopter until the blades have stopped turning and the pilot has left the aircraft.
- Finally, when you see the helicopter taking off, make sure not to approach the area that has been vacated until you see the helicopter in forward flight and is well clear of the landing site in case the helicopter needs to abort the take off.

These short and simple tips can help keep you safe and can give confidence to the paramedics and doctors that they are ready and able to do their job of getting to that patient as quickly as possible and attending to their immediate care.

When you see a helicopter preparing for take-off, please follow the same tips as for landing. When the patient is boarded on to the helicopter, a smooth and fast departure is essential to ensuring the patient is taken to hospital as quickly as possible.

To learn more about GWAAC, including events and how you can help, visit our website www.gwaac.com. GWAAC is not funded by the Government or the National Lottery, and therefore depends on the kindness and generosity of the public to be able to save lives every day. We are incredibly grateful for your support.

ENDS

Notes for editors

- GWAAC provide the critical care and air ambulance service for 2.1 million people across the counties of Bath and North East Somerset, Bristol, South Gloucestershire, Gloucestershire, North Somerset and surrounding areas.
- In 2018 the charity celebrates ten years since its first flight
- The GWAAC critical care team consists of a highly trained and experienced Critical Care

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Paramedic and Doctor, who bring the skill and expertise of an Accident and Emergency Department to the patient.
- In 2017 the Critical Care Team attended 1,824 jobs: by helicopter and by one of our critical care cars.
- We need to raise over £3 million each year to stay operational, but receive no day to day funding from the Government or National Lottery.

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