

Winter Helipad and Scene Safety

With the warm weather out there, winter preparation might not be on your mind yet, but the bitter cold and snow will be here soon enough. We want to remind those who call for our service of some important steps associated with winter operations of your helipad and landing zone.

- Snow should be completely removed from the helipad and walkways as soon as it stops falling. This will prevent significant melting and ice build up under the layer of snow. For ground level helipads, snow should be pushed back at least 20 feet from the perimeter of the pad. This will ensure that piles of snow do not pose a strike risk for the helicopter's tail boom or tail rotor.
- Ice of any kind should be prevented and/or removed. Ice is one of the most dangerous substances on a helipad due to the potential of "lateral load skidding" or the helicopter sliding sideways in rotation with the turning rotors due to lack of traction under the landing gear. Even small patches of ice on the helipad can cause this phenomenon. Ice is also a fall risk for medical crew and hospital staff. It is NOT recommended to use salt-based ice melt due to the corrosion danger to the helicopter. There are aircraft specific ice melts, but the salt-based melts can wreak havoc on the aircraft's engines and metal components. Please contact an Air Link pilot at 1.800.252.2215 if you need additional information/tips regarding ice removal.
- Lights around the perimeter of the helipad should be cleared of snow to improve visibility. Use care not to damage the lenses of the lights and replace as needed.
- On scene calls, please note snowdrifts and make an effort to locate the landing zone in a relatively flat area free of snow accumulation or drifting. Due to the snow's light color, it's difficult from the air to determine if it is drifted.
- Powdery snow can also cause "white out" conditions during landing due to the rotor wash.

In addition, don't forget some general, year-round safety points

- A 100 x 100 foot level zone is ideal for landing the helicopter.
- Never approach the helicopter unless the rotor blades are stopped or you are directed by the pilot. Approach from the front and maintain eye contact with the pilot.
- Never walk behind the helicopter or under the tail section.
- The flight crew will direct all loading and unloading of patients and equipment.
- Never carry or lift any object higher than your head around the helicopter.
- Hearing and eye protection is encouraged.
- Remove all hats.
- Point out any hazards to the pilot, such as wires, poles, trees, animals, buildings, and wind direction.

We hope this information is helpful and will act as a reminder of the importance of the work you do for our helicopter service. We appreciate your efforts to keep us safe and to promote the safe transport of our patients.

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