

Lifeflight Puts New Helicopters Into Service

News

Posted by : Randy

Posted on : 2014/2/11 4:10:00

LifeFlight Eagle invests in technology, safety upgrades with new helicopters in Trenton and Harrisonville.



LifeFlight Eagle has placed into service two new state-of-the-art Bell 407GX helicopters at its Harrisonville and Trenton bases. The new aircraft were purchased as part of the non-profit organization's fleet replacement program, and reflect LifeFlight Eagle's ongoing commitment to the community to provide life-saving transport to critically ill and injured patients in Missouri and Kansas.

From the outside, the aircraft look very similar to the 10-year-old Bell 407 helicopters they replace, but inside the changes are remarkable. The most dramatic difference is in the pilot's cockpit. Gone are the array of analog dials, now replaced by two large, glass flat-panel displays and electronic controls for the aircrafts' systems.

The pilot has a primary flight display in front of him, with a secondary display that can hold information like a moving map, airport information and engine monitoring instruments.

"The Garmin G1000H avionics suite is a very dynamic tool," said Stu Buckingham, a pilot and business operations manager for LifeFlight Eagle's air operator, PHI Air Medical. "It enhances safety in a number of ways most importantly, it assists the pilot in maintaining situational awareness through the twin screens. It displays things like converging air traffic, obstacles and terrain, and it has a terrain avoidance warning system to alert the pilot if the aircraft is approaching the ground unknowingly."

"It also reduces pilot workload by presenting visual navigation and color-coded graphs of engine monitoring and aircraft performance. The pilot can take this information in at a glance. One of the new aircraft's most important safety upgrades is not very visible until it's needed. The helicopters feature a two-axis autopilot system, which allows the pilot to set the aircraft to automatically control altitude and heading. In addition to reducing pilot fatigue on long flights, the autopilot provides important aircraft capabilities if the pilot encounters unforecasted weather conditions. The helicopters have the ability to automatically level themselves with the autopilot system and climb to a safe altitude should the pilot lose visual reference to the ground.

Joe Coons, LifeFlight Eagle's Director of Safety, said it was important to note that the new aircraft's capabilities didn't mean LifeFlight Eagle would now fly in questionable weather or low visibility, but that they provide an additional margin of safety should the pilot inadvertently fly into those conditions.



LifeFlight Puts New Helicopters Into Service

<http://www.kttn.com/kgozfm/modules/news/article.php?storyid=111401>

"Safety for our patients and our crews is at the core of everything we do," Coons said. "We're not going to accept a patient flight unless we have 100 percent certainty that we can safely deliver that patient to the hospital and the care they need."

LifeFlight Eagle CEO Roxanne Shanks said the investment in new technology and safety enhancements was a reflection of the organization's commitment to the communities it serves.

"Going all the way back to LifeFlight Eagle's roots in 1978, we've had a close relationship with the community, and a great sense of responsibility to the community," Shanks said. "As a non-profit organization, it's more than patient flights for us. It's about enhancing the communities we serve through partnership with EMS agencies, fire departments and hospitals, through education and by enhancing the quality and availability of emergency medical services for the people in these communities."

"These new aircraft are simply an extension of these core values. They will help ensure that we are able to continue to provide safe, rapid transport and exceptional clinical care to critically ill and injured patients in these communities for years to come."

"We couldn't provide this service without the support of the community, though, and for that we are very grateful," Shanks said. "The donations we receive and the support provided through our membership program are invaluable."

LifeFlight Eagle is a 501c3 non-profit organization that provides life-saving helicopter transport to critically ill and injured patients from communities within a 150-mile radius of Kansas City. It provides two Bell 407GX and two Bell 407 helicopters from bases in Trenton, Harrisonville, Odessa and Clinton, Mo. It also owns a larger Eurocopter EC-145 helicopter, which is dedicated to the Children's Mercy Critical Care Transport Team.

That aircraft is also equipped with a glass cockpit and fully integrated autopilot, and is capable of flying under Instrument Flight Rules. All LifeFlight Eagle helicopters are operated and maintained by PHI Air Medical.