

Metro Life Flight & ProMedica Air – Landing Zone Guidelines

Metro Life Flight and ProMedica Air's rotor wing aircraft are operated by Metro Aviation Inc.



Metro Life Flight Emergency Dispatch
800-233-5433



ProMedica Air Emergency Dispatch
800-589-4994

Recommended Scene Communications
MARCS Talk Groups
8TAC92D
8TAC94D
XMETROLZ

When selecting an emergency landing site at an accident scene, we recommend that you follow the steps listed below:

First, determine if the area is suitable to safely land a helicopter.

The landing zone should be flat, firm and free of debris that would blow up into the rotor system or out towards first responders.

The touchdown minimum size is 100'x100'. A larger zone is better. The landing zone should be clear of people, vehicles and obstructions such as trees, poles, antennas, buildings and wires. (Keep in mind that wires are very difficult to see from the air, particularly at night.) The landing site must be free of stumps, large holes, brush, posts, large rocks, deep snow and debris. If there are obstructions (especially wires), tell the helicopter crew via the radio during the landing zone brief.

Consider the wind direction. Helicopters prefer to approach and depart the landing zone into the wind.

Mark the four corners of the landing zone with large orange cones or lights if at night. An optional fifth cone may be placed to indicate the direction from which the wind is blowing (see diagram).

When necessary, a landing zone may be illuminated by motor vehicle lights. Emergency vehicle beacons (flashers) are helpful in identifying the zone day or night and in the winter with snow on the ground. But, because most helicopter air ambulance providers, including Metro Life Flight, use night vision devices, the pilots may be blinded by red revolving lights, white headlights or spot lights on emergency vehicles. Therefore, once the landing zone is identified, the flight crew may request those lights be turned off. Never direct white lights upwards toward the helicopter or into the cockpit. Note: LED red strobes can sometimes be invisible to night vision goggles.

Keep spectators at least 200 feet from the landing zone.

Keep emergency service personnel at least 100 feet away. If available, have fire equipment standing by. Everyone who will be working near the helicopter should shield their eyes and wear eye protection if available. If helmets are worn, chin straps must be securely fastened.

The landing zone commander must be available on the assigned tactical radio frequency during the approach, landing and take off.

Radio communication with the pilots is of the utmost importance. For night landings, it is required that the pilots establish communications with the first responders. The LZ commander should be prepared to give the pilots a landing zone brief while the helicopter is en route. The LZ brief should include, at a minimum, the LZ description (parking lot, open field, etc.), obstacles and obstructions (trees, buildings, wires, cell towers, poles, etc.), and wind direction. He or she should also be ready to immediately tell the pilots to abort the landing or take off if a dangerous situation develops.

Once the helicopter has landed, do not approach the helicopter and do not allow any spectators to approach the helicopter. The crew will indicate to you when it is safe for first responders to do so. Please be prepared to assist the crew by providing security for the helicopter. If asked to provide security, do not allow anyone but the crew to approach the helicopter.

Once the patient is prepared and ready to load, allow the crew to select two or three personnel to assist in loading, if needed. When approaching the helicopter, always be aware of the tail rotor and always follow the crew's directions for your safety.

When working around helicopters, NEVER approach from the rear or directly from the front. Always approach and depart from a 90-degree angle (the 3 o'clock and 9 o'clock position) to the helicopter, making sure the pilot can see you and you can see the pilot. When approaching the helicopter, wait for the pilot to signal and remember to keep low to avoid the main rotor, because the wind can cause the blades to flex down. If the helicopter has landed on a slope, approach and depart from the down-slope side only.

When the helicopter is loaded and ready for takeoff, keep the departure path free from vehicles and spectators, and monitor your radio to be able to communicate with the crew. If an emergency were to occur, the pilot would need this area to execute the landing, or to return to land in the same spot.

