



Official Release

Hawke's Bay's Rescue Helicopter Clocks **350 Lifesaving Missions**

For release: Thursday 12th December, 2024

The Lowe Corporation Rescue Helicopter Service has clocked up over 350 lifesaving missions so far this year, and with the holiday season approaching that number is set to rise further.

A total of 295 patients have been airlifted with the majority of missions being inter-hospital transfers totalling 153 as at November 30. Accident related rescues remain comparatively high for the region, totalling 90 missions followed by 72 medical missions and 36 search and rescue operations.

Chief Pilot for the Lowe Corporation Rescue Helicopter, Charlie Beetham is incredibly proud of his team's performance.

"This year, the Lowe Corporation team has continued to demonstrate remarkable effectiveness in helicopter rescue operations, saving numerous lives by quickly delivering specialist clinical expertise to often remote locations.

"The recent cruise ship passenger rescue off the East Cape stands out as a memorable mission, alongside a particularly difficult remote mountain rescue where conditions were harsh and visibility was limited. Despite the challenges, the crew coordinated with ground teams and used advanced navigation technology to pinpoint the exact location and recover the patient via the winch to the aircraft. The medical team on board provided life-saving care en route, ensuring the hunter's condition stabilised during the flight. The team's swift response, expert handling of the complex terrain, and ability to remain calm

under pressure were pivotal in saving the hunter's life. The dedication and teamwork involved were truly remarkable.

“As always, it’s a privilege to be in a position to assist those in need, and while such operations can be challenging, the satisfaction of making a life-saving difference is unparalleled,” adds Charlie.

This time of year is always especially demanding, with more people venturing outdoors as they start to enjoy their summer holidays. Hawke’s Bay’s rescue helicopter crew are hoping for a quiet Christmas day, but the reality is that emergencies don’t take a break.

January and February are historically busy months for the region’s crew, with more accident related callouts over a two month period than any other time of the year. According to crew data, 20 patients were assisted across 19 missions during January and February this year.

Hawke’s Bay Rescue Helicopter Trust Chief Executive Andy Quayle says for crew on call, saving lives takes priority.

“Heading into Christmas we are once again so appreciative of the rostered crew who will remain available 24/7 over the break to help our community in their time of need. Each crew member brings an amazing skillset to ensure our patients being transported stand the best chance of a fast recovery.”

The lifesaving free service you hope never to use, flies an average of 400 essential lifeline missions each year, providing critical medical assistance and rescue services for those in need, no matter how remote or rugged the terrain.

To meet its annual operating costs HBRHT needs to raise around \$1.4 million each year.

Tasked with ensuring the delivery of that funding, Andy Quayle says the Trust remains incredibly grateful for the continued community support in what has been challenging economic times.

“We have seen renewed interest in sponsoring the service and donations from individuals has grown during the year. A recent social media micro-campaign calling for donors to support the crew’s Mini Starlink connectivity, attracted an overwhelming response. The benefit we receive from reciprocal charity events has also been incredibly heartening with a standout this year being the Winter Olympics who on their own raised over \$50,000 – an impressive feat.

Adds Andy, “as 2024 draws to a close and on behalf of our dedicated staff and crew, I’d like to extend a heartfelt thank you to all our wonderful supporters. We wish everyone a safe and happy festive period and a well-earned break.”

ENDS.

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