



## Official Release

# Light Up The Sky For Our Rescue Helicopter Crew

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Hawke's Bay's Rescue Helicopter Trust is busily preparing for the arrival of the region's new state-of-the-art aircraft – prioritising the upgrade of the crew's critical Night Vision Goggles (NVGs).

Ahead of the arrival of the Airbus H145 D3 in a few months' time, the air medical team needs to upgrade all specialist equipment to ensure compatibility with the new machine. But the transition comes at a cost.

Chief Executive Andy Quayle says fundraising for specialist equipment is no mean feat.

“Unfortunately, the NVGs we currently use are towards their end of life so we need to transition to new gear. Aviation technology has advanced significantly, and with the arrival of our new helicopter it is essential that our night vision equipment is upgraded to ensure optimal capability alongside this machine. At present, we are prioritising the upgrade of the pilots' NVGs, with plans to replace the remaining gear for the rest of our crew in the near future. One pair of the EV3 Night Vision Goggles costs \$32,700 – we will look to initially purchase one set for our skilled pilots. Quite simply, they can mean the difference between being able to save a life and having to decline a mission altogether.”

Chief Pilot Charlie Beetham says that for a rescue service that needs to be ready to launch at a moment's notice, reliable equipment isn't a luxury — it's essential.

“The EV3 Night Vision Goggles are a real step forward for aviation safety. They use advanced white phosphor technology, which gives our crews clearer, sharper, higher-contrast images at night — exactly when we need it most. They’re also designed to be lighter, more robust, and easier to maintain, which means better long-term reliability. Just as importantly, the reduced weight helps lessen neck and eye strain, cutting down fatigue on long or demanding missions.

“All of this helps our crews stay focused and effective for longer — and when we’re responding to emergencies, every second really does count.”

Many of the missions Hawke’s Bay’s Rescue Helicopter undertakes occur at night or in low-light conditions, when hazards are harder to detect and the margin for error is at its smallest.

Pilot Matt Wilson adds “in these moments, night vision technology is not a luxury; it is a life-saving necessity. One mission I will never forget occurred several years ago when we were called out around 9:00 pm to search the coastline off Napier after two kayakers failed to return from an afternoon trip. Using our NVGs, we began a systematic search of the area where they had last been fishing. After approximately 15 minutes scouring the water, we located one of the kayakers. Being completely dark that far offshore, there is no doubt in my mind that without night vision technology, that kayaker would not have been seen.”

Charlie Beetham emphasises it’s not only for search and rescues that pilots and crew revert to using NVGs.

“These goggles aren’t just used for search and rescue missions — they’re also critical for inter-hospital transfers, flown under both visual (VFR) and instrument (IFR) flight rules. NVGs have significantly increased our ability to respond at night, helping us get patients where they need to be, when they need it.

Beetham adds “being able to look outside the helicopter and clearly identify terrain, obstacles, lights, and cloud — instead of facing a complete ‘black hole’ and relying solely on instruments — makes a huge difference. It reduces pilot workload and greatly improves situational awareness, which in turn boosts the safety and efficiency of the entire operation.”

“We are asking individuals and local businesses to please donate today to help us secure this critical piece of equipment. Enabling this purchase helps our crew to continue saving lives, like Matt’s kayakers and countless others.”

**If you or your business would like to make a donation towards the service’s new NVGs, please call our office on (06) 878 1630 or email [beth@hbhrt.org.nz](mailto:beth@hbhrt.org.nz) today.**

***Hawke’s Bay’s Rescue Helicopter conducts around 400 lifesaving missions every year – made possible through essential Government funding combined with the***

*generous support of local communities who provide grants, sponsorship and donations to sustain operations and assist in purchasing key equipment.*

**ENDS.**

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