



## Official Release

# **Rescue Helicopter Completes 379 Lifesaving Missions in 2024**

**For immediate release: Monday 27th January, 2025**

The Lowe Corporation Rescue Helicopter Service has released their total mission numbers for 2024.

With the final figures now in, a total of 317 patients were airlifted last year with the majority of missions being inter-hospital transfers totalling 162 as at December 31. Accident related rescues remained comparatively high for the region, totalling 101 missions followed by 78 medical missions and 38 search and rescue operations.

Hawke's Bay Rescue Helicopter Trust Chief Executive, Andy Quayle points out that while missions were slightly reduced on 2023, it's not an emerging trend.

“At 379, mission numbers in 2024 were slightly down from 414 in 2023. The crew still averages over a mission a day providing lifesaving air medical and search and rescue services across our region. 2024 saw a 27 percent increase in search and rescue missions and a 16 percent increase in medical related missions, offset by an 18 percent drop in inter-hospital transfers compared to 2023.

“As a country renowned for its outdoor pursuits and remote terrain, the need for rescue helicopters as an essential service cannot be understated. If you, or someone you love, ever finds themselves in a time critical emergency, it's highly likely that the rescue helicopter will be deployed to assist.”<sup>a</sup>

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

"The Lowe Corporation team continues to demonstrate remarkable effectiveness in helicopter rescue operations, saving numerous lives by quickly delivering specialist clinical expertise to often remote locations.

"The recent stingray attack near Pongaroa that made national news stands out as a memorable mission, where patient Eli Carroll narrowly escaped losing his life due to a stingray barb near his femoral artery. Our crew and medical team on board provided specialist care en route to hospital, ensuring Eli's condition stabilised during the flight. The team's swift response and ability to remain calm under pressure were pivotal in saving his life.

"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.

HBRHT's Andy Quayle is thankful to work alongside such a dedicated team.

"Heading into Christmas and New Year we were so appreciative of the rostered crew who remained available 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 campaign calling for donors to support the crew's Mini Starlink connectivity, attracted an immediate response. Added to this, the benefit we receive from reciprocal charity events has also been incredibly heartening with a standout last year being the Winter Olympics who on their own raised over \$50,000 – an impressive feat.

"A highlight for 2024 was placing an order to upgrade to a new state-of-the-art Airbus H145 helicopter. Offering greater efficiency, higher capability, more capacity and speed and less maintenance cost, the H145 heralds a new era for Hawke's Bay's air rescue services.

“To be able to offer an aircraft of this calibre, with its impressive capabilities, to respond to emergency situations anywhere in our region or across New Zealand; it’s an important milestone for aviation services in Hawke’s Bay,” says Quayle.

“Looking at the year ahead, we have considerable work to do expanding our hanger to accommodate the new helicopter, and the cost of the associated new bespoke equipment it requires. Re-establishing our base, crew facilities and obtaining specialist equipment for the new helicopter is an exciting challenge that hinges on securing ongoing community support via our very generous sponsors, donors and grant providers.”

**ENDS.**

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