



Soaring Through the Clouds, Weather or Not

The Safety of “Flying IFR”

Regrettably, there are certain weather conditions like thunderstorms, icing conditions and dense fog that are just unsafe to fly in. But West Michigan Air Care does fly through rain, snow and low, thick clouds. How? By flying under instrument flight rules (IFR).

Air Care’s IFR capability allows our pilots to fly safely in a wider range of weather conditions than with visual flight rules (VFR) alone. “Flying VFR” means the pilot uses the ground as a visual reference and flight acceptance is governed by specific regulations which include minimum cloud clearance, ceiling and visibility requirements. An IFR flight, on the other hand, means the pilot can fly in the clouds with no reference to the ground or horizon. This is commonly referred to as flying “on instruments”.

While IFR provides options regarding weather, perhaps the greatest benefit an IFR program provides is increased safety. Instrument flight is conducted under strict air traffic control (ATC) procedures from the time the helicopter departs until it is safely on the ground. ATC provides protected airspace from terrain, obstructions and other aircraft.

For a helicopter to be certified to conduct IFR operations, it must meet strict design and installation requirements beyond those required for VFR flight. Some of these requirements include advanced navigation and avionics systems, a stabilization and autopilot system

and redundant electrical systems. IFR pilots continually train to hone their skills both in the aircraft and in flight simulators. This increased pilot training combined with a more technically advanced aircraft and ATC system give IFR helicopter programs like West Michigan Air Care a more capable and, more importantly, a safer program.

West Michigan Air Care is proud to be one of the few Michigan EMS helicopter programs with the advantage of IFR capability. This important feature allows us to assist you even when the weather looks unfavorable, so don't hesitate to call when you need us!



By Mark Brynick
Chief Pilot
West Michigan Air Care

“Should I Call Air Care for This Patient?”

The NEW Guidelines

All providers should have a concrete reference for launching Air Care. A strong strategy based on physiologic criteria rather than the older mechanism of injury criteria has been adapted from recent recommendations from the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and the Michigan Trauma Coalition’s State Trauma Advisory Subcommittee. Air Care’s own flight nurse, Kevin Franklin, is spearheading this movement in cooperation with Borgess Medical Center and Bronson Methodist Hospital. The goal is to aid rapid decision-making for moving critical patients directly to trauma centers. Guidelines will be released soon for first responders, paramedics, dispatchers and regional facilities. Look for these to be posted on www.AirCare.org. Hard copies of our “Activation Criteria” guides will be released at our Fall Conference, Saturday, October 2, 2010.

Photo Submission

Thanks to Matt Schimmel, Firefighter/Paramedic, Covert Fire Department



Send us a photo we use in print and we'll send you an Air Care hat and t-shirt!
Email photos to photo@aircare.org

2010 Photo Journal

The moments captured on camera below are a sample of scenes and events from this year. As always, it is an honor to serve beside you. Our trauma system is truly something to be proud of. When a bad accident happens fire personnel arrive, extricate and immobilize the patient while providing basic life support. As paramedics arrive, IVs and advanced life support are started. When Air Care lands we're ready to offer advanced airway management, give blood and meds, and the patient is prepped for rapid transport. These steps may not always follow a straight line, but the teamwork assures it all gets done. Thank you for your willingness to get out of bed at 3 am for a bad scene call, for taking extra care with our landing zone, for making order from a chaotic street accident, and for your compassion with patients and their families.



Tractor rollover in Pennfield Township. Extrication in progress upon West Michigan Air Care arrival. Pennfield Township Fire and Lifecare Ambulance



Extensive intrusion and debris field in car vs. tree accident 2 miles west of Sturgis Fawn River, Sherman, Sturgis Township Fire and Lifecare Ambulance



Single vehicle rollover on I-96. Ten-minute extrication prior to West Michigan Air Care arrival. Alto Township Fire and Life EMS



All crews work together to evacuate time-dependent trauma patient from Lakeland Medical Center of St. Joseph. Medic One, SMCAS and Lakeland Medical Center staff



How's the view up there? Find out for yourself. Reserve the 3rd Rider seat by emailing Sara at sksturgeon@aircare.org. Minimum requirements: First Responder level and steady nerves.



Two-vehicle collision on side road in Branch County. Coldwater Fire Department and Lifecare Ambulance

Safety Corner

Scene Landing Zone Selection

The landing zone (LZ) coordinator plays a vital role when Air Care is transporting critically injured patients.

Besides selecting the landing zone and locating hazards, the LZ coordinator must relay all this information to the aircrew and secure the LZ until the aircraft departs the scene. Once the landing zone is established the LZ Coordinator radios a description to aircrew:

Size – 100 feet by 100 feet (minimum)

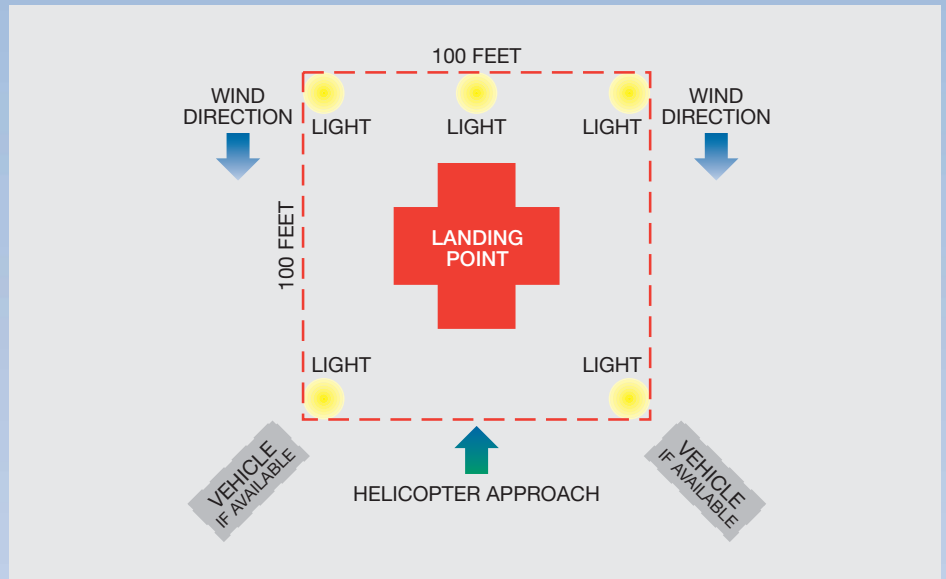
Slope – Relatively flat
(less than 10 degrees)

Surface – Free of debris (report if hard, soft, wet, height of vegetation)

Surroundings – Identify power lines, antennas, trees, fences, poles, etc.

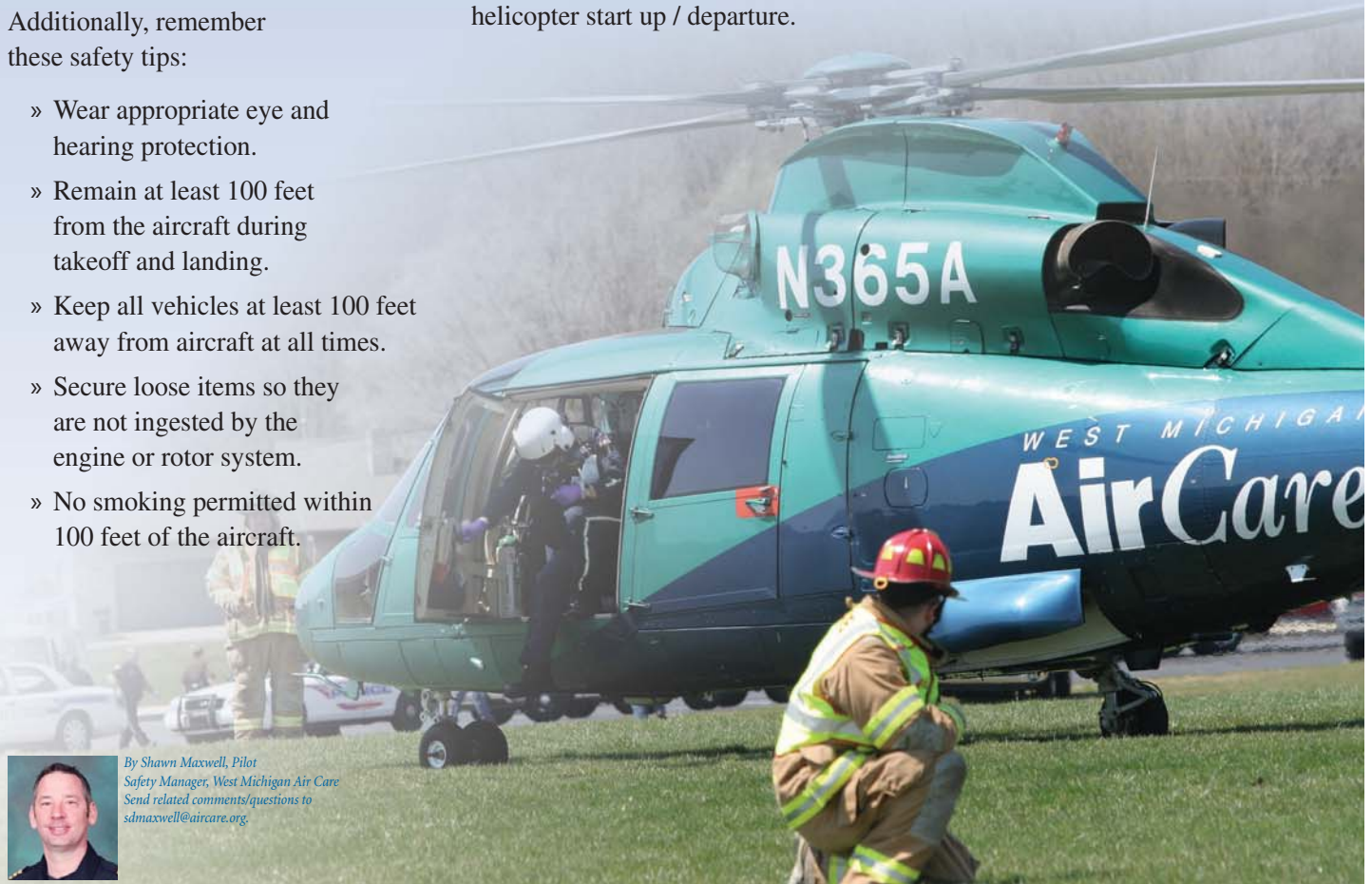
Additionally, remember these safety tips:

- » Wear appropriate eye and hearing protection.
- » Remain at least 100 feet from the aircraft during takeoff and landing.
- » Keep all vehicles at least 100 feet away from aircraft at all times.
- » Secure loose items so they are not ingested by the engine or rotor system.
- » No smoking permitted within 100 feet of the aircraft.



The LZ is usually a place people want to see, however with the exception of the LZ coordinator, no one, civilian or emergency personnel, should be in or near the LZ. The LZ Coordinator must secure the LZ prior to the helicopter landing or shut down, during patient loading and during helicopter start up / departure.

To safely operate as a LZ Coordinator, an individual must be properly trained through an Air Care LZ class. To schedule an LZ class, sign up at www.AirCare.org. Thanks to all of our landing zone coordinators for helping West Michigan Air Care maintain a high level of safety.



By Shawn Maxwell, Pilot
Safety Manager, West Michigan Air Care
Send related comments/questions to
sdmaxwell@aircare.org

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Fall Conference Saturday, October 2, 2010

Our Fall Conference gets high marks every year for excellent speakers, great food, and lots of free gifts. Don't miss our new Air Care limited edition T-shirts and a \$10 Coupon toward Air Care merchandise! Look for our brochures in the mail or sign up on line today at www.AirCare.org



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