

# Helicopter Evacuations

**A. Justification.** Helicopter evacuations are available only for medical emergencies.

## **B. Request Procedures**

1. **Only the National Park Service makes arrangements for helicopter evacuations.**

2. Requests for evacuation can be made by contacting the National Park Service directly (river patrols, Lees Ferry, Phantom Ranch) or through emergency communications (satellite telephone, ground-to-air radio, or mirror flashes). Callers must contact Park Dispatch at (928) 638-7911 prior to contacting the Concessioner's headquarters.

3. When contacting aircraft by radio, be sure to provide accurate and concise information, since the message may be relayed several times before it reaches the Grand Canyon Dispatch. Provide information in the following order, using the emphasized phrases:

a. Give your location. State that you are a river trip requesting helicopter evacuation at RIVER MILE ### in the Grand Canyon National Park.

b. Specify a **CRITICAL** or **STABLE** patient. This allows EMS personnel to determine priorities in the event of simultaneous requests for medical responses or bad weather.

c. State whether the problem is a **TRAUMA** or a **MEDICAL**.

d. State whether it is a **COMMERCIAL** river trip, a **PRIVATE** river trip, or a **HIKER** who is in need of assistance.

4. Satellite telephones are the most reliable method of obtaining assistance. However, a mirror flash is often the most reliable method of contacting aircraft, so be sure you understand how to use the mirror as a signaling device. Remember that the mirror flash presents problems in that no patient assessment information is relayed and your location is not certain to be reported correctly.

## **C. Landing Zone Selection and Preparation**

1. Select a level area approximately 15 feet by 15 feet. Be sure it is clear of obstacles such as trees and large rocks for a diameter of 75 feet. Such areas are virtually non-existent in some stretches of river (i.e., below Crystal to Bass, Olo to Havasu, etc.). Unless such travel poses serious problems for the patient, transport by boat to a safe landing zone generally provides a faster and safer evacuation. However, discuss all options with Park Emergency personnel to ensure clear communication, planning and best patient care.

2. Set up an X with the orange signal panels on or near your proposed landing zone. This will assist the pilot in distinguishing your party from others in the vicinity. **It is critical to remove the panels once the pilot locates your position in the event he selects that site for landing.** 2019 CORs COMMERCIAL OPERATING REQUIREMENTS PAGE 38

3. Prepare your group and camp for the evacuation. It is extremely important that everyone be gathered together at least 100 feet away from the landing zone and in full view of the pilot. Be certain that no loose items are in the landing zone, since the down-wash will lift and toss articles, possibly into the rotor or into your group. Secure loose equipment in the camp (sleeping bags, ground cloths, tables, personal flotation devices, tents, etc.) in the event the pilot must pass over the area. Rig your boats and camp to flip.
4. Wet down as much of the landing area as possible just prior to the helicopter's arrival. This helps the pilot's visibility, decreases the amount of sand blown into eyes, boats, and food, and reduces damage to the helicopter's surface and engine.
5. The pilot's awareness of wind direction is critical for safe landings. The helicopter must fly directly into the wind when landing and taking off. Do not locate your group in the flight path. You can assist the pilot by indicating wind direction. The most reliable method is to stand with your back into wind and extend both arms forward pointing in the direction the wind is blowing.
6. Never approach the helicopter unless directed to do so by the pilot or crew. Never approach from the rear of the helicopter. Keep your group together and in one location. When directed to do so, approach the helicopter in full view of the pilot. Walk in a crouched position to avoid being struck in the head by the helicopter rotor blades.