

If Disaster Strikes

Mercy Flights Prepares in Earthquake Drill

A massive earthquake has hit southern Oregon. It's a few hours after the initial shockwaves hit the area. Roads have closed, the sewage system is down, and there are widespread power outages. Mercy Flights has to move patients from the hospitals to other facilities because the buildings have suffered damage to their infrastructure.

At least that's what the scenario will be for the upcoming disaster preparedness drill. When a real disaster strikes, emergency workers have to act quickly - they do not have the luxury of time. So, mock disaster drills like this one helps Mercy Flights to prepare and train for a variety of widespread events should they

occur in our areas.

The earthquake drill will take place at the Smul-lin Center in three rooms with participants throughout Jackson County and some of Josephine County including Mercy Flights, hospitals, city officials, power company representatives, police, fire, and other emergency response teams. The scenario will be a "table-top" brainstorm, meaning that everyone gets together in a central location to work through the response to the disaster. These groups work together in an all-day intensive exercise to plan any situation



that could occur should a real earthquake hit the area.

And, even though it's a drill, the participants take it very seriously, says Mercy Flights General Manager Ken Parsons. It allows the groups to identify any gaps in communication and dispatch coordination. He says this drill is a little different because the drill begins three hours after the earthquake has hit. We want to ensure that we are all



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MERCY FLIGHTS

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**Answers About
Mercy Flights**

Q What do I do during an earthquake?

A DROP, COVER, and HOLD. Move only a few steps to a nearby safe place. Stay indoors until the shaking stops and you're sure it's safe to exit. Stay away from windows. If you are in bed, hold on and stay there, protecting your head with a pillow. If you are outdoors, find a clear spot away from buildings, trees, and power lines. Drop to the ground. (source: American Red Cross)

Q How does Mercy Flights stay prepared for disasters and emergencies?

A The entire Mercy Flights team - paramedics, nurses, pilots, and administration - are involved in ongoing training, continuing education programs, clinical mentoring programs, and emergency scenario simulations. Our organization has an ongoing commitment to planning and training to prepare for emergency situations.

well prepared to do the very best we can do in the event of a real disaster,” Parsons says. “If there is a real event, we’ve already worked through all of the details and understand how various agencies will respond.”

Participants will look at what happens when the power is down indefinitely and generators have kicked in. “We have to have a plan in this case,” Parsons says, “Because fuel may not be available and it takes at least 72 hours for state and federal

resources to show up to assist. Recent events with Hurricanes Katrina and Rita and the troubles that emergency response teams have faced have really shown us that it is essential to plan for the longer term – the hours and days after the event occurs.”

In the fall, Mercy Flights will participate in another earthquake disaster drill that takes place right as the quake hits. Past drills have focused on bird flu, large airliner crashes, hazardous spills, floods, and school shootings. Mercy Flights participates in at least two disaster drills each year. ■



enhancing communication

Each Mercy Flights paramedic now carries a Blackberry unit. The Blackberry handheld device is an all-in-one device that provides e-mail, mobile phone service, calendar, organizer, and instant messaging. These units work in conjunction with the Mobile Data Terminals (MDTs—see back cover of this issue for story). The information from the 911 dispatch comes straight through to the Blackberry units, helping to increase efficiency and decrease response time.

These units also operate as a back-up communication device, with their instant messaging and mobile phone capabilities. In addition, Mercy Flights will also be implementing the units with “push-to-talk” capabilities, which can reach our Dispatch Center even when cellular signals aren’t working. ■

PREPARE for Disaster

There are six basics you should stock for your home in case of an emergency: water, food, first aid supplies, clothing and bedding, tools and emergency supplies, and special items. (source: American Red Cross). Keep items in an easy-to-access container that includes:

- First aid kit with essential medications, non-prescription drugs, bandages, scissors, tweezers, and anti-bacterial ointments.
- Ready-to-eat canned food and can opener.
- At least one gallon of water per person for at least three days (two quarts for drinking, two quarts for food preparation and hygiene).
- Protective clothing, rainwear, and bedding or sleeping bags.
- Battery-powered radio and flashlight, as well as extra batteries.
- Special items for infant, elderly, or disabled family members.
- Tools and supplies such as paper plates, plastic utensils, utility knife, pliers, screwdriver, paper and pencil, disinfectant, plastic bags, and toilet paper.



Group Membership

Mercy Flights offers group membership options to a wide range of participants. Schedule a presentation for your group to find out more about Mercy Flights and our membership program.

You probably know that Mercy Flights offers group memberships. What you may not know is the diverse array of types of groups that qualify for a membership. Our money-saving group membership requires at least five households to participate, as well as a group coordinator who can collect membership dues and remind members when renewals are due.

“Group membership rates break down to less than \$1 a week for an entire household, said Ann Baracker, Mercy Flights Membership Coordinator. “This is money well spent for peace of mind and financial protection during a difficult time.”

Mercy Flights groups are diverse and include churches, large families, retirement communities, city and county employees, Kiwanis, and service organizations. It also includes businesses.

“A Mercy Flights membership is an inexpensive way to enhance employee benefits,” Ann said. “With insurance rates continuing to go up and coverage decreasing, this is an

affordable way to take care of gaps in health benefits.”

A Mercy Flights membership has reciprocal agreements with neighboring transport agencies in Ashland, Talent, Rogue River, and Grants Pass. This means members are covered for ground and

air transportation for all of Jackson County and most of Josephine County.

Ann gives free presentations to groups about Mercy Flights and group member-

ships. She is available days and evenings. If you would like to have her come to speak to your group, please call Ann Baracker at 541-858-2600. ■

Group Membership Rates (Combined Air and Ground)	
1-49 Households	\$50 Each
50-199 Households	\$45 Each
200+ Households	\$40 Each

Ambulance Data Terminals

Mercy Flights Ambulances Equipped With New Communication Devices

Someone needs help. Information from the person's call to the 911 Dispatch Center is relayed to Mercy Flights. And, when it comes to saving lives, every second counts.

That's why Mercy Flights implements the best technology available to provide the most advanced emergency care. As part of this ongoing effort, we have added new technology to our ground and air ambulances.

The RescueNet Nomad is an onboard mobile data terminal (MDT) that allows the Mercy Flights Dispatch Center and the EMTs to communicate immediately and precisely. These units all feature a Global Positioning System that allows the Dispatch Center to be able to know the exact location of each ambulance. The dispatcher can send the closest possible unit, saving time.

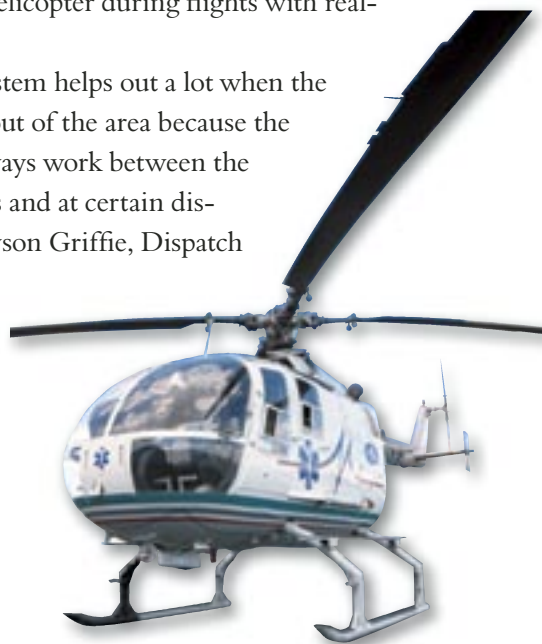
"Each unit now has a computer screen that shows a detailed, interactive street map," says Doug Stewart, Mercy Flights Operations Manager. "The units show the type of call, the exact location of the emergency, the best route to take, and how the unit should respond (example: sirens on). This is quicker, more efficient communication and it cuts down on radio traffic."

Since the MDTs in the ambulances receive clear, secure dispatch information immediately, there is a reduction in response time. The digital information from the 911 calls are also displayed on the EMTs' Blackberry Units (see story on page 2).

The Mercy Flights helicopter is also equipped with an Air Medical Transport Management System. It allows the Dispatch Center to monitor the status and position of the helicopter during flights with real-time GPS data.

"The new system helps out a lot when the helicopter goes out of the area because the radio doesn't always work between the mountain ranges and at certain distances," said Allyson Griffie, Dispatch Supervisor.

"We can call ahead and confirm the landings at waypoints." ■



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