

Priority 1 Air Rescue & State of Delaware SAR Interoperability Success

Priority 1 Air Rescue recently completed Class D Rescue Hoist Training for State of Delaware inter-agency personnel rising from the Delaware State Police Aviation Unit, DNREC and the Delaware Fire Service. Training was concluded with a first-of-its-kind major SAR interoperability exercise in the State of Delaware by testing these interagency assets all working together while responding to a major incident aboard a Supertanker in anchorage in the Delaware Bay.

With the Delaware State Police's mission of providing Law Enforcement, Search and Rescue, and EMS service to the state and its people, in January 2008, the Delaware State Police received "Trooper-6 Heavy", a Bell 412-EP helicopter fully equipped for overwater SAR and Medevac response, and placed it into service to augment the DSP's fleet of three Bell 407's. With the State of Delaware's jurisdiction extending out to significant bodies of open water, DSP found themselves involved with more and more water search and rescue operations. This increased over-the-water operation was one of the justifications for adding the twin engine 412 helicopter equipped with flotation and a 600 pound capacity rescue hoist. Needing to find a sound rescue hoist training program, DSP then partnered with Priority 1 Air Rescue, a leading expert in the field of Part 133 Class D HEC Rescue Hoist Training as well as SAR Interoperability programs, to provide all of the training necessary to qualify personnel to conduct overland, overwater and vessel rescue hoisting.



DSP Bell 412 "Trooper-6 Heavy"

Every member of the DSP Aviation Section received initial Class D Rescue Hoist training at both the Hoist System Operator and Rescue Specialist level from Priority-1 Air Rescue (P1AR). To increase the State's SAR Interoperability capabilities, DSP Aviation Section partnered with the Delaware Fire Service who provided Rescue Specialists which were further trained by Priority 1 Air Rescue. These firefighters, specifically, the Helicopter Emergency Action Team HEAT, are part of the state police team, and augment the crews for rescue responses. During a recent recertification of DSP Aviation Section personnel, Priority 1 Air Rescue provided initial rescue hoist training to the State of Delaware Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control (DNREC) who has jurisdiction on all ships and supertankers at anchorage or transiting within the State's waters.



Hoisting from the WFD "Firefighter"



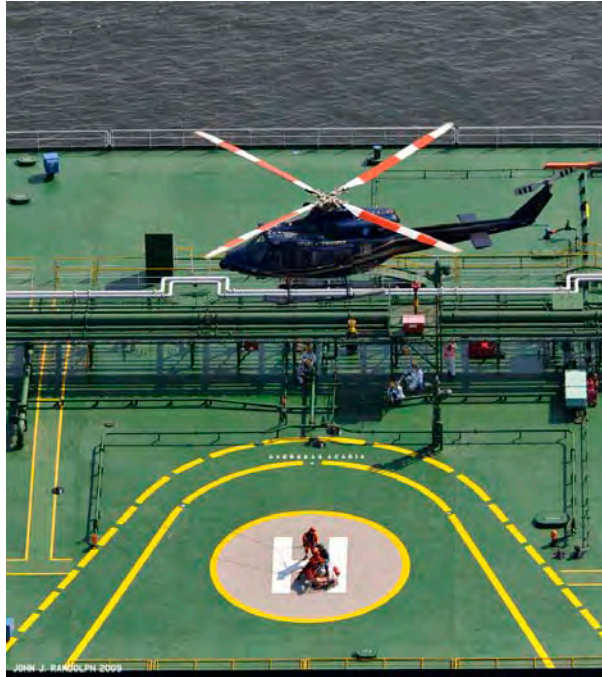
DSP Cpl. Brown and P1AR Bob Watson

The Operations Manager of DNREC's Hazardous Materials Emergency Response Team, Jamie Bethard, approached the Section's Commander, Captain Jeff Evans regarding the possibility of getting some of his responders trained by Priority 1 Air Rescue. The need for this training was based on the possibility that the DNREC response personnel may be called upon to board ships that were staged in the anchorage of the Delaware Bay, waiting to go up the river to ports. If there was a need for response, the quickest and most effective method would be hoisting the personnel to the ship. Captain Evans agreed and training with Priority 1 Air Rescue was obtained.

To conclude training and more importantly exercise the Delaware State's SAR Interoperability capabilities using the DSP Aviation Section, DNREC and Delaware Fire Service, a supertanker at anchorage in the Delaware Bay was used to exercise the combined response of these agencies. Bob McMahon, a civilian DSP pilot, assists the DSP Section's training officer by handling much of the Class D rescue hoist training within the Section. Mr. McMahon recommended that as the DNREC responders would be using the services of the DSP to board ships and supertankers in the anchorage, perhaps that is how we should train. The captain agreed and tasked Mr. McMahon with coordinating efforts with Bob Watson from Priority 1 Air Rescue and the US Coast Guard to create the exercise scenario and obtain authorizations from the awaiting supertanker. David Brown of Delaware Bay Launch Service and Eric Clarke, Marine Technical Advisor for Sunoco, were very willing to help with this SAR Interoperability Exercise – they secured the vessel "Overseas Acadia" from OSG America who was highly supportive in the efforts of the DSP, DNREC, P1AR, Sunoco and the USCG in addressing potential issues in the Delaware Bay.



DSP Helicopter Trooper-6 Heavy approaches the Overseas Acadia



DNREC members being lowered to the deck of the Overseas Acadia

The USCG was instrumental in the success of this training mission. They are very interested in forging partnerships with area responders who have specialized resources. This training was also an opportunity to exercise the unified command concept which the USCG would be designated as the unified commander in any event on the open water. The several agencies involved in the training benefited not only from the operational component of the exercise, but from the ICS and communications component as well.



A highly successful SAR Interoperability Exercise took place on August 16, 2009. Four response personnel from DNREC each performed three hoisting operations to the deck of the supertanker. Also, DNREC equipment was lowered to the deck as part of the exercise. Probably just as important as the experience gained from the training, was the partnerships and resource sharing that took place that day. The participants of the day included the State Police Aviation Section, Priority 1 Air Rescue, the Delaware Fire Service, the Wilmington Police Department, the Wilmington Fire Department, the Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control, the United States Coast Guard, Summit Aviation, Sunoco, the Delaware Bay Launch Service, OSG America, Tow Boat US, State Police and Fire Service Scuba Teams, and members of the United Open Water Rescue Program. The state police look forward to continuing its efforts with regard to partnering with federal, state and local agencies to provide effective service.