



# TAKE FIVE...

**for safety**  
Five minutes reading  
could save your life!

## *Me The Hero?*

There are very few eye-catching sights like the Rocky Mountains, and most will enjoy their beauty from a safe distance. However, a small number of daring explorers enjoys climbing them, whether it be for personal challenge or simply for the thrill of it. The motivation behind mountain climbing, or any other extreme-risk outdoor activity such as cave diving, is not in question here; however, we can examine the role of pilots that end-up, possibly more often than they may want to, having to rescue those adventurous folks when they get hurt or lost. More specifically, we should take a look at the untrained or unprepared pilot who is suddenly facing a potential rescue or medical evacuation (MEDEVAC) mission.

We've all heard at one time or another about "heroic" helicopter rescue missions at famous locations in Asia, Europe and North America. What pilot has not dreamt, even for a fleeting moment, to be Indiana Jones at the control of a burning helicopter, but still having the grit to pull up to 17 000 ft, with no oxygen, and snatch the distressed heroine from the jaws of the inevitable deadly plunge...? While specialized pilots, police divers and military Search and Rescue Technicians (SAR Techs) do receive training for high-risk rescue and MEDEVAC missions, odds are that the extent of training you have received in such operations is limited, at best.

If you are suddenly facing an unplanned rescue or MEDEVAC mission, or asked to participate in one, pause for a moment and consider the situation. You may suddenly realize that you do not have:

- the proper qualification and training;
- the proper equipment (aircraft and personnel);
- sufficient fuel;

- sufficient daylight;
- authorization from your company; and the list could go on...

Even worse, you could be facing a pile of legal troubles should your heroic attempt go to the dogs—which it may.

While ad-hoc mountain rescue requests are rare, a more common example you could be facing is an impromptu MEDEVAC request, which can put a pilot on the spot quickly. A real-life example of an impromptu MEDEVAC gone wrong can be found in TSB Final Report A94Q0182. On September 24, 1994, a helicopter pilot took off on a night VFR flight to Kuujjuaq, Quebec, 94 mi. away. The MEDEVAC was in response to a medical emergency, to transport a seriously injured woman. The aircraft never arrived, and it struck the ground in a steep dive, killing the four occupants. The TSB determined that the pilot likely lost his spatial orientation when he continued the flight in adverse flight conditions which he was not able to recognize in time because of the low light level. Contributing factors were that the pilot was not qualified for night flight or for instrument flight, and that the patient's condition likely influenced the pilot's decision to undertake the return night flight to Kuujjuaq for humanitarian reasons.

It is really hard for a pilot to make the right call when a formal MEDEVAC process is not available. Make sure you go through the same decision-making steps for any such situation. Discuss such a scenario with your peers and chief pilot, just in case... It may just be the best decision to leave the hero dream to the professional RESCUE pilot, or the professional MEDEVAC pilot.

