

AGL Action Rescue Helicopter Service

Sunshine Coast Daily column

Thursday, 14 July 2011

The large hangar resembles a mechanic's garage: parts of an engine lie on a bench for inspection and cleaning inspection, while the instruments and electrical components are being serviced.

Instead of a car, a BK117-C1 helicopter is parked in the middle, undergoing standard preventative maintenance and 600-hour service.

Licensed aircraft maintenance engineers David Milosevic and Don Dummer are like the car mechanics, while avionics engineer Roger Keuning is the equivalent of an auto electrician.

After two months of carrying out maintenance work on the Bundaberg-based BK117-B2 helicopter, the team is now servicing the BK117-C1 which flies out of the Sunshine Coast Airport base. Maintenance on the second helicopter will take them about four weeks.

Working with the engineers on a casual basis has been trades assistant Pam Franklin, who is joining the Navy to complete her Air Technical Aviation training.

Chief engineer Rob Nieuwenhoven said Pam's role had supported the Service's two full-time maintenance engineers, one part-time mechanical engineer and a full-time avionics engineer.

"Having that extra person around has been valuable, and as a result we now have a vacancy for an apprentice aircraft maintenance engineer," he said.

It will be a hands-on role involving inspection, repair, troubleshooting, painting and assisting with avionics on the Service's three helicopters.

"The person needs to have done the theory component of the Certificate IV Aero Skills (Mechanical) course, while the three-year apprenticeship will provide the practical knowledge."

Mr Nieuwenhoven said there were only three training facilities providing the Certificate IV course in south-east Queensland: the Queensland Institute of Aviation Engineering in Caloundra, Aviation Australia in Brisbane and Aviation Training for Aircraft Engineers (ATAE) in Archerfield.

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Sunshine Coast Daily column

Thursday, 23 June 2011

A 58-year-old Mooloolaba woman is slowly returning to her walking and jogging routine following a double blood transfusion in November 2010.

Marilyn, volunteer teachers aid, was holidaying on Fraser Island with her husband and friends when she suffered a massive hemorrhage.

“We couldn’t stop the bleeding. My husband rang 000, wrapped me in the shower curtain and took me to the local airstrip,” she said.

The AGL Action Rescue Helicopter airlifted Marilyn to Hervey Bay Hospital where she spent 10 days.

“It took 4-5 days to stabilize me as my blood and iron levels had dropped.”

Marilyn said she had an operation a week earlier and had been taken off Warfrin, a medication which helped to thicken her blood.

“I’m back on the Warfrin, which stabilizes the blood so it doesn’t clot.”

Marilyn said the medication helped prevent pulmonary embolism, caused by blood clots which travelled to her lungs.

“I had bad pains in my chest in 2008 and thought it was my heart. When I walked up stairs or carried heavy shopping bags, I felt short of breath. I used to think I was just unfit, but I knew I wasn’t, as I used to jog, walk and ride a bike,” she said.

“The doctors found three clots in my lungs; one was 10cm and two other smaller ones. I was on Warfrin for six months and then stopped taking it as a trial, but a few weeks later I had another embolism.”

Marilyn encouraged people with chest pains or shortness of breath to get tested.

“Sometimes embolisms can be caused from flying (deep vein thrombosis), injuries or they can be hereditary. The clots can break off and travel into the lungs,” she said.

“The AGL Rescue Helicopter service was fantastic. I haven’t had any problems since then. I walk now and slowly will start a bit of jogging again.”

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Media release

15 June 2011

Former Wallabies head coach John Connolly believes his sporting enthusiasm overrides his golf handicap.

“I wouldn’t call what I do golf, but I like walking around the course for exercise,” he said. “My handicap is probably my lack of talent.”

Connolly will have an extra bucket of golf balls when he tees off with more committed players at the annual AGL Action Rescue Helicopter golf day on 15 July.

While registered teams will play 18 holes at the Peregian Springs Golf Course, Connolly will stay at one Par 3 hole during the day as part of the Beat John Connolly Challenge.

“It won’t take much to beat me,” he admits. “I hope I’ve got less than 150m to hit the ball and I’d prefer the green to be bouncy all the way.”

Connolly’s 20-year coaching career has included stints with the Queensland Reds, Stade Francois, Swansea RFC, Bath Rugby and Australia’s Wallabies team.

Although the odds are stacked against the rugby union coach dubbed “Knuckles”, he promises he won’t take out his frustrations with his golf club.

Seventeen teams have already registered for the golf day to help raise funds for the Helicopter Service. Each player will have a shot on the Par 3 course against Connolly, with the ball closest to the pin declared the winner. Insiders predict Connolly will win one in 50 shots.

“The AGL Action Rescue Helicopter is an important service to the community and I encourage everyone to support it,” said Connolly. “You don’t realise its importance until you need it.”

Coolum Police, who hope to field a team again this year, will also have a speed gun focused on the fastest ball on the course. Other activities include a lost balls competition, Lob for Loot from the club house deck, raffles, auction and a Wooden Spoon booby prize.

Registration starts at 8.30am, with tee off at 10am. The cost is \$660 per team and includes a light breakfast, 18 holes of golf, a complimentary drink voucher and Build Your Own Burger lunch.

For more details contact Penny Crebbin on 5458 8700 or

penny.crebbin@actionrescue.com.au

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Crew makes rescue stop on way home

A SURFER caught in a rip at the mouth of the Maroochy River was winched out of the water on Sunday afternoon after being spotted by the Rescue Helicopter while returning to its Sunshine Coast Airport base.

Aircrew officer Scott Reeman said the helicopter crew was conducting a beach patrol on the way back from an inter-hospital transfer at the Prince Charles Hospital around 5pm.

"We saw a surfer in trouble about 100m offshore. He was being tumbled in the surf and dragged out by the rip," said Mr Reeman, one of two experienced life guards on board.

"There were no other people in the immediate area and those on the beach probably couldn't see him in the 1m swell."

The helicopter landed nearby to set up a winch before lowering a rescue strop to the fatigued surfer.

"The man was able to slip his arms through the sling and we winched him off the water, lowering him onto the beach at Cotton Tree where he gave us the thumbs up to indicate he was okay," Mr Reeman said.

"Although there were ideal surfing conditions at the time, we could easily see the rips from the helicopter."

Chief executive officer Rob Walford said when time allowed, the helicopter



AGL ACTION RESCUE HELICOPTER

crews conducted beach patrols when returning from Brisbane or Bundaberg to maintain their beach and water safety skills.

"They look out for rips or other hazards in the water, as well as people at risk. It's the first time in six years that we have rescued someone from the surf while conducting a beach patrol," he said.

"When not deployed on medical or other rescue missions, our helicopters are based at the Sunshine Coast Airport, where we are ideally positioned to assist with search and rescue missions."

Mr Walford reminded people to report to a life guard, the Surf Life Saving Association or ring 000 if they saw anyone in trouble on the beach.

Routine work on BK117s



AGL ACTION RESCUE HELICOPTER

FIVE engineers will spend six weeks carrying out maintenance work on a BK117 twin engine helicopter at the Sunshine Coast Airport Base as part of its regular 1200-hour service requirements.

They have pulled apart the tail rotor, main rotor, engines, transmission, hydraulic system, electronics and fuselage, and will inspect corrosion, worn components and deterioration in fittings.

Chief Executive Officer Rob Walford said the annual 1200-hour service was equivalent to a 100,000km service in a car.

Maintenance was also scheduled at 50 and 300-hour intervals.

"This type of maintenance can cost between \$60,000 and \$400,000," he said.

While the maintenance is carried out at the Sunshine Coast Airport base, the engines are sent to overhaul facilities in New Zealand, with locally-based firms carrying out repairs such as corrosion preventative maintenance or sheet metal work.

The Service operates two BK117 helicopters, and a Bell Longranger, which is used when one of the BK117s is unserviceable.

Mr Walford said the Service was leasing an aircraft from Child Flight in Sydney for one month to ensure it continued to provide night missions while the two BK117s underwent back-to-back servicing.

The leased helicopter will be refitted to include special seating, an oxygen system and medical floor which allows a stretcher and humidicrib to be secured to it during flight.

Mr Walford said 40% of the Service's operational missions were conducted at night.

May 26, 2011

Grandmother's plight after island tick bite

THREE days into a family camping holiday on Lady Musgrave Island, Kay Cabale noticed a thin red line from her itchy toe to her ankle.

"There are lots of low-nesting birds on the island as well as ticks," said the 68-year-old grandmother. "I showed it to the camp host as he had the only telephone on the island. He called Bundaberg Hospital and the doctor there said to keep an eye on it."

On the morning of December 30, 2010, Mrs Cabale was walking along the beach when she felt dizzy and nauseous.

"As a family we have spent camping holidays on National Park islands in the Capricorn group and Bunker group for many years, so you can imagine my disappointment when I developed an infection and had to be evacuated to Bundaberg Hospital," she said.

"It was a normal tick bite and I had an itchy toe, which I treated with Stingose and Betadene. But it was the red line from my toe to the ankle which was a worry. The doctor said I needed



AGL ACTION RESCUE HELICOPTER

antibiotics and put me on a drip all night. It took several days for the swelling to go down but I was OK."

Mrs Cabale spent five nights in Bundaberg until her family could leave the island and meet up with her.

"The professionalism and dedication of the helicopter crew and hospital staff, especially under the circumstances of the floods, turned this into a memorable experience for me," she said. "Instead of a disappointing end to my holiday, I will always remember this experience with gratitude and humility."

2/6/2011

Sunshine Coast Daily

Sunshine Coast Daily column

Thursday, 12 May 2011

Helicopter pilots can safely practice instrument flying procedures to ensure they meet the industry regulatory compliance requirements.

This training is done in a purpose-built simulator which allows them to experience different situations which they may not be able to perform while flying in the aircraft.

Chief engineer Rob Nieuwenhoven said the simulator at the Sunshine Coast airport base complied with Civil Aviation Safety Authority (CASA) regulations.

“It replicates the same environment the pilots have when flying the helicopter.”

A \$17,000 upgrade will provide new computer software and enhanced visuals in the simulator room, as well as improvements to instruments in line with CASA’s requirements.

“Some of the instrument upgrades include a (helicopter) rotor RPM gauge, which costs \$7000,” said Mr Nieuwenhoven.

Operations Manager Brent Chamberlain said pilots relied on the aircraft’s instruments when flying through reduced visibility conditions.

“Training in the simulator helps pilots to trust the instruments when there’s limited visibility outside the cockpit window.”

Mr Chamberlain said pilots were required to fly specified amount of hours in different types of conditions to maintain their CASA competencies.

“The regulations state we must complete three hours every 90 days flying in poor or limited visibility conditions which require reliance of flight instruments. If we’re not able to complete this when we’re out flying a mission, we can use the simulator for this training,” he said.

Statistics:

Total missions flown in 2010: 1060

Missions to date for 2011: 393

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Sunshine Coast Daily column

Thursday, 5 May 2011

When the AGL Action Rescue Helicopter takes off from the Sunshine Coast Airport base, it is already set up to handle most missions.

Its standard medical configuration includes a stretcher, medical kit and equipment, vacuum mattresses, stiff neck collars, splints, monitor and defibrillator.

Crew chief Tony Preston says the helicopter team can be airborne within 10 minutes during the day, while night missions take 20 minutes, as the crew factors in weather conditions and alternate fuel requirements.

“We can fly straight out to most medical jobs, such as motor vehicle accidents, or injuries from tractor rollovers or falls from horses,” he said.

Between Easter and the May long weekend, the helicopter service completed 14 missions on the Sunshine Coast. They included two patients injured from horse falls, two with burns, one with suspected spinal injuries, five cardiac patients, a motor vehicle accident, one search and rescue for a missing tinny and two hospital transfers.

“We are already configured with the necessary equipment to transfer patients from regional hospitals to Brisbane hospitals,” said Tony.

The helicopter cabin is reconfigured for specialist missions such as neo natal transfers, search and rescue or multi-casual accidents.

“We take out any equipment that is not required, to make room for a humidicrib, or life rafts when we are involved in search and rescue missions.”

Most missions take between three and seven hours, depending on the nature of the medical situation.

“When we return from these jobs, we refuel the aircraft, check the computer, oxygen and medical stores and make sure everything is clean, so we’re ready for the next mission,” said Tony.

“Every day is different, as we could be out on any type of mission, but we’re trained and ready for each one.”

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Media release

3 May 2011

Golfers bank on secret tactics

Craig Nielsen and David Wippell won't reveal their secret tactics, but they have a stretch goal to be number one at this year's AGL Action Rescue Helicopter Golf Day on 15 July.

Craig and David, who represent Westpac Maroochydore Commercial Banking, also have a more realistic goal of not being the wooden spooners.

"Last year's Westpac team members are humbled about finishing last," said Craig. "That's why we won't be relying on their strategies."

As Westpac's Senior Relationship Manager, Craig describes his golf game as "scratchy" and has a handicap of 20. That still puts him in a reasonable position against competitive golfers whose handicaps range between 0-27.

His team partner David, a Credit Manager, is a "golf tragic" who boasts a handicap of 15.

"David is our secret weapon. He plays competitively every weekend without fail," said Craig.

"We still haven't decided on the other two members yet, but we'll need to fine-tune our team."

Craig and David are putting in extra training in preparation for this year's Golf Day at the Peregrin Springs Golf Club.

"We're trying to talk the boss into giving us every Friday off for practice, as this might affect our game plan," said Craig.

The Westpac representatives are among a field of 15 corporate teams who have already registered their interest for the fourth annual golf day, to raise funds for the AGL Action Rescue Helicopter Service. Their competitors include Seven Network, Energex, Coolum Police, Moby Vics, DCM Plastering and The Electrical Safety Team.

"It makes sense for local businesses to get behind those organisations that provide a vital service to our community," said Craig.

Team spots are still available for the Golf Day. The cost is \$660 per team of four. Registration is from 8.30am, with tee off at 10am. The day includes a light breakfast, 18 holes of golf, raffles, an auction and Build Your Own Burger lunch.

To register contact Penny Crebbin on 5458 8700 or email penny.crebbin@actionrescue.com.au

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Sunshine Coast Daily column

Thursday, 17 February 2011

Jeff Bradfield loves his job as a flight intensive paramedic.

It's a job that can take him out on the road or up in the air, treating people in car accidents or falls, hospital transfers or searching for lost bushwalkers or boats at sea.

"Each day is different," he said. "There's a lot of variety in what we do and it gives us the options and opportunities to do other things."

The father of three from Kawana is one of five permanent and five part-time paramedics based at Maroochydore, providing a 24/7 service to south-east Queensland.

With an area spanning from Gladstone in the north to Grafton, NSW in the south and Miles in western Queensland, Jeff says the Action Rescue Helicopter can make a significant difference in the outcomes of patients.

"We're able to access and transport patients a lot quicker than road-based ambulances, especially in rural and remote areas," he said. "A remote area can also mean something as close as Noosa National Park."

As the paramedic, Jeff is often the first to go "down the wire" and be winched to the patient on the ground. He has been trained in rescue operations, something he says is unique for a flight intensive paramedic.

Jeff works closely with the pilot and crewman to provide the highest level of care for the patients they treat or rescue.

"I admire what my colleagues do, both those on the road and in an aircraft."

In his 20 years as a paramedic, Jeff says there have been major improvements in aero medicine in Queensland. As a flying emergency room, the rescue helicopters now carry defibrillators, advanced monitoring equipment, syringe infusers and ventilators.

"We've got more medical equipment and drugs available when treating critically ill patients," he said.

"This means we can provide a very high standard of pre-hospital and inter-hospital patient care."

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