



## Safety and the Tail Rotor Guard

By: Aimie Greulach, BSN, RN, CEN, CFRN, Parkview Samaritan

Safety is our priority during every medical mission. Maintaining a safe flight for the patient, EMS personnel, flight crew and bystanders is second nature for each Parkview Samaritan crewmember, and safety is practiced diligently before every flight mission.

Prior to each mission, the pilot and medical crewmembers perform a “walk around”. This safety ritual involves a complete 360 degree walk around the aircraft, inspecting it for any obvious damage or identifying anything out of place. After the walk around is completed, electrical shorelines and wheel chocks are pulled and door latches are checked and locked before any crewmember is seated inside the aircraft.

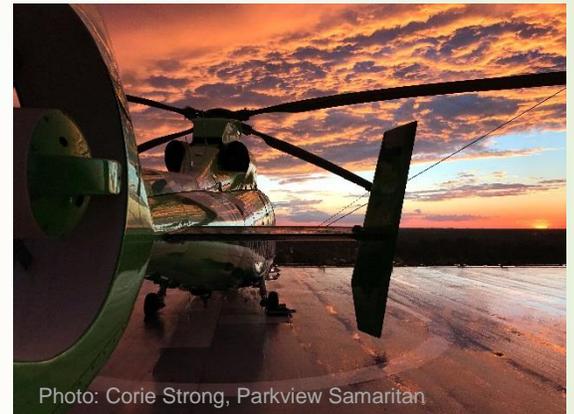


Photo: Corie Strong, Parkview Samaritan

Once crewmembers have entered the aircraft, safety checks continue. Seatbelts are confirmed to be fastened and secured, doors are confirmed as being secured and locked, and all equipment is confirmed to be secured. This practice of looking for something out of the ordinary is practiced the same way with every crewmember and helps to ensure our crewmembers depart with everything secured to complete a safe mission. It is only upon completion of these checks does the aircraft take off.

Landing at the scene of an accident often requires the flight nurse and paramedic to exit the aircraft with the rotor blades still spinning. We commonly refer to this as a “hot offload” by our crewmembers. Depending on the patient condition, the pilot will either continue to keep the rotor blades spinning or will shut down the aircraft. During a hot offload, the pilot remains inside the aircraft, and is at the controls at all times. Once radio contact is made with the ground EMS unit, the flight crew will request a designated tail rotor guard prior to landing. Once the aircraft has landed and crewmembers have exited, the flight crew will identify the designated tail rotor guard.

The tail rotor guard is an important aspect of maintaining a safe scene and assists in crew resource management to maintain a culture of safety for our program. The tail rotor guard assists the pilot by watching the tail rotor blades and alerting the pilot should any person attempt to approach the aircraft with the engines running and rotor blades spinning. Without a tail rotor guard, a hot load would not be possible.

The practice of hot loading allows precious minutes to be saved, which are extremely important to critically ill and injured patients. The next time you are requested as the tail rotor guard, you can do so knowing the vital role you play and know how this role impacts the teamwork necessary in providing both excellent and safe care to the patient.

Parkview Samaritan provides scene safety training for pre-hospital providers. This training provides safety education on securing landing zones, which allows fire and EMS to safely approach the aircraft once instructed and escorted by the flight crew. Practicing patient loading during scene safety training provides a simulated exercise in a safe, calm environment, thus increasing efficiency and smooth transitions during a real event. **To schedule a scene safety training, please call Parkview Samaritan at (260) 266-3541.**



### **Samaritan Spotlight** **Bob Pequignot, RN, Parkview Samaritan flight nurse**

In this issue's spotlight, we would like to reflect on the wonderful career of our recently retired flight nurse, Bob Pequignot.

Most likely, Bob Pequignot is a familiar and friendly face associated with the Samaritan program. In his 39 years of nursing, 27 of them were working as a flight nurse with Samaritan. Early years of his nursing career included working the Surgical ICU, Pediatric ER and Pediatric ICU in Chicago, Illinois. These experiences created the solid foundation Bob would later use while caring for those critically ill and injured patients during flights with Parkview Samaritan.

In fact, it was during his time working at University of Chicago Medicine's Wyler Children's Hospital where Bob transported his first patient. His first transport was a pediatric patient by ground ambulance, as helicopter transport had not yet started at UCAN. This unique aspect of nursing sparked an interest in patient transport, leading Bob to become a flight nurse with Parkview Samaritan in 1990.



Shortly after his arrival to Samaritan, Bob realized, "this was not a job but an adventure!" Bob loved the challenge of never knowing what he would encounter on any given day, whether kneeling in the middle of an interstate to care for a trauma patient or finding himself at the bedside of a critically ill patient at a referring hospital. The challenges of taking care of the unknown would carry Bob through his career with Samaritan.

For Bob, the best part of his job was getting to know the patient and their family, and getting to help them through a difficult season in their lives long after the flight was over.

In signing off, Bob says, ***"It has been a pleasure and privilege to be able to make a difference in so many lives. I will truly miss being a day to day flight nurse, but my heart will always be with the patients and my crewmembers."***