Snapshot Size-Up #112

Helicopter Landing Zone Procedure

When your department is called to set up an emergency helicopter landing zone, take the following actions:

1. At least one Engine should be dispatched to all helicopter landing operations.
2. The Designated site of the Landing Zone (LZ) should be a minimum of 110' X 110', level, firm, dry & free of debris.
3. If the pilot feels the LZ you selected is unsuitable, an alternate should be selected.
4. Clear the area and deny entry into the area of the LZ of all pedestrians and vehicles.
5. Apparatus should be positioned at least 100' beyond the perimeter of the LZ and shall be facing in a direction that allows for quick and easy response.
6. Apparatus lights must be turned off during landing. (Never shine lights at helicopters, they may blind the pilots).
7. All personnel should wear Full Protective (reflective) Gear.
8. During landings and takeoffs, all personnel shall stand behind their apparatus, placing the apparatus between them and the helicopter.
9. Personnel assisting in taking patients to the helicopter shall follow instructions from the crew of the helicopter.
10. At night, one flare should be anchored in each corner of the LZ.
11. Secure all loose objects and personal items, e.g. hats, stethoscopes.
12. Shield your eyes when helicopters land or take off.

TAKE NOTE: A helicopter usually starts its approach from approximately ½ mile out of the LZ. It is not unusual for accidents to occur just outside of the LZ.

Deputy Chief Frank Viscuso is a twenty-year veteran of the fire service. He is a regular contributor to Fire Engineering Magazine & FireOpsOnline.com. He is also co-author of the book Fireground Operational Guides (PennWell 2011). The book features universal tactical worksheets and operational guides for more than 70 incidents that range from water, gas and electrical emergencies to multiple-alarm structure fires.