

Memorial

Hospital of South Bend

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Memorial adds new dimension to MedFlight with night vision technology

Memorial MedFlight, Memorial Hospital's helicopter ambulance service, has added night vision technology to augment visibility for the pilot and medical crew during night air medical transports. The use of night vision goggles provides a greater perspective of the flight path and the terrain, and results in nearly 20/20 vision in the dark.

MedFlight, the only Indiana-based air medical provider north of Evansville to fully implement this state-of-the-art technology, worked with aviation partner, OmniFlight, Inc., for equipment acquisition and training. Omniflight is one of the nation's oldest and largest air ambulance services, with 100 aircraft nationwide at 73 airport and hospital bases.

MedFlight now uses night vision goggles (NVG) as a safety enhancement during flights made in darkness, said Rodney Logan, program manager for MedFlight "Our goal first and foremost is to save lives," he said, "but we want to do that as safely and effectively as possible for our patients and crew members." In addition to the pilot, crews consist of a flight nurse and flight paramedic skilled in working with critical care patients. Logan cautioned that air transport missions will not occur during weather conditions that are unsafe for helicopter flights.

NVG technology, relatively new to civilian helicopter use, has been used extensively by the military. The Federal Aviation Administration grants special use of

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NVG for each helicopter. The NVGs mount to the crew members' helmets and amplify the existing light to help identify the natural terrain as well as things like power poles, wires, towers and trees that are very difficult to see from the air during missions at night.

Memorial MedFlight's crew includes 13 clinicians and four pilots, all of whom prepared through specialized classroom training as well as flight training under the direction of OmniFlight instructors to ensure proper use and safety of the night vision equipment.

MedFlight is based at the South Bend Regional Airport and operates 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year providing rapid air medical transport services for any hospital, EMS and emergency service agency within northern Indiana and southwestern Michigan.

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[Note to media: Attached is a photo of Memorial Medflight Flight Medic Mark Berger with his helmet and night vision goggles. Also, for a great visual of the night vision technology, Google "Night Vision Goggles Search and Rescue." If you'd like more information or a demonstration, please contact Rodney Logan at 274-8069 or Ken Nemes at 647-3473.]

