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USE OF HELICOPTERS IN THE FRENCH FIRE SERVICE, IMPROVING RESCUE, MEDICAL EMERGENCY AND CRISIS MANAGEMENT

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ABSTRACT:

After a short presentation of French Fire Departments missions (Rescue and Emergency management, Fires, including Forest Fires, Prevention and special task forces) the paper will present lessons learned from a thirty years-long use of helicopter for these operational domains.

At first, Rescue and Emergency management, which constitute 80 % of French Fire department missions. The very special concept of French emergency medicine is to involve Doctors on scene allowing them to give first medical support and to optimise the medevac regarding to pathology. Numerous victims' evacuation principles will be also described, in catastrophic situation

Incident command and coordination will be addressed too. Large incident command and aerial survey employs helicopters in order to allow the incident commander to have a better view of the operational zone and an efficient reporting to policy makers.

Natural disasters are of course in the focus: Forest Fires, Storms, and typhoons, Floods, Earthquakes, Snow or blizzards.

Aerial coordination will be evocated in case of use of numerous aircrafts, especially if different agencies and task forces are involved.

Finally, special task forces, such as Cbrne squads, Boats fire squads, High-rise buildings rescue, Bush fire commandos, and heli-water bombers are used in Europe for the different tactical task involving public bodies in the seek of safety.

The aim of the paper will show how these operational tactics progressively change these simple tools into strategical means dedicated to policy makers and public authorities, and how can it improve crisis management.

KEYWORDS :

Helicopters, Emergency, Medical, rescue, task forces.
