August 3, 2020

Lydd Search and Rescue Helicopter Base Passes 1,000 Taskings Milestone

The HM Coastguard Search and Rescue helicopter crew at Lydd, Kent have marked a major milestone after completing their 1,000th tasking since beginning lifesaving operations in 2015.

Captain Andy Pilliner, co-pilot Stijn Roovers and winch paramedic Shawn Clark undertook the 1,000th tasking, when the Children's Acute Transport Service called for support just after midnight on Friday, July 24.

The Lydd crew flew to London to urgently airlift medical staff from Regent's Park Healthcare to Queen Elizabeth Hospital in Norfolk, where an infant required specialist care. The helicopter crew then transferred the medical team and child back to central London, where the infant was safely taken to Great Ormond Street Hospital for further treatment.

The milestone came as HM Coastguard's UK Search and Rescue helicopter service, operated by Bristow Helicopters, celebrated its fifth anniversary. Bristow was awarded the 10-year contract by the Department for Transport in March 2013.

Other noteworthy taskings include the rescue of four fishermen in near-gale force conditions in 2018. Their boat capsized in the English Channel and the Lydd crew responded by winching two of the fisherman stranded on the hull to safety.

In May this year, the crew winched a male kayaker who had suffered a suspected heart attack while in the sea off the coast near Hastings Pier. The man was transferred to Ashford Hospital in just 23 minutes, where he received urgent medical care.

Last week, the crew was called to Dymchurch beach when two children and an adult got into difficulty in the water. The team worked with South East Ambulance Service to safely transport the children to hospital for treatment.

Capt. Neil Robertson, Chief Pilot at Lydd, said: "Our crews are dedicated to delivering vital rescue and medical support, to the very highest standard. Their commitment has ensured the safety of people across Kent and south-east England for the last five years, and throughout the very challenging conditions brought about by the coronavirus pandemic.

"The location of our base means we respond to a variety of incidents around the coast, working in close partnership with other emergency services including police, fire and rescue, and ambulance teams.

"We are proud to celebrate five successful years working on behalf of HM Coastguard, and maintaining the very highest safety and efficiency standards, which the service is renowned for."

Director of HM Coastguard Claire Hughes said: “There are people right across the UK and even further afield who owe their lives to the HM Coastguard search and rescue helicopter crews. We are grateful for their continued support, particularly during these challenging times. Each milestone is a testament to the sustained hard work and commitment of our crews.”

In addition to responding to around 16 incidents per month, the Lydd crew also conducts regular training exercises, to ensure they are prepared for any eventuality.

The purpose-built facility at Lydd is one of 10 bases strategically located around the country near areas where search and rescue incident rates are high. The other bases around the UK are at Sumburgh, Stornoway, Inverness, Prestwick, Caernarfon, St Athan, Humberside, Lee-on-Solent and Newquay.

The HM Coastguard Search and Rescue helicopter service is operated by Bristow Helicopters on behalf of the Maritime and Coastguard Agency.

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About HM Coastguard

HM Coastguard is a frontline delivery and emergency response organisation which is part of the Maritime and Coastguard Agency.

HM Coastguard provides a UK-wide maritime emergency prevention and response capability which responds to calls for help by radio, satellite or the 999 service and coordinates maritime search and rescue (SAR) within the UK SAR region. The agency helps approximately 25,000 people each year with 21,000 incidents coordinated by its rescue centres.

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About Bristow Helicopters Ltd

Bristow Helicopters Ltd is the provider of helicopter search and rescue (SAR) services in the UK, on behalf of Her Majesty's Coastguard, having been awarded the UK SAR contract and the Gap SAR contract for Northern Scotland. Bristow Helicopters has a long history of providing world class SAR services, beginning in 1971 at RAF Manston, and has flown more than 60,000 SAR operational hours in the UK and conducted over 15,000 SAR missions, during which more than 7,000 people have been rescued by Bristow crews and helicopters. For more information on Bristow’s SAR operations, please visit www.bristowsar.com

Bristow Helicopters Ltd. has served the offshore oil transport industry in the UK for nearly 60 years. Bristow Helicopters Ltd. is an affiliated company of Bristow Group Inc.

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