

PRESS RELEASE

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2021 half-year review:

More than 100 call-outs a day for DRF Luftrettung

- **18,356 alerts for helicopters and air ambulances in the first half of 2021**
- **Water rescue: tips on what to do when a rescue helicopter arrives**

The first six months of the year were a busy time for the crews of the DRF Luftrettung helicopters and air ambulances: they were called upon 18,356 times to provide rapid and highly professional medical assistance to severely ill or injured people. In the past few weeks, the crews have already noticed an increase in the number of call-outs related to swimming accidents. They rely on the cooperation of bathers and therefore appeal to them to exit the water as quickly as possible whenever a helicopter is approaching.

Whether it's a non-swimmer falling into deep water, a strong current that pulls bathers into the middle of a river or an otherwise strong swimmer suddenly becoming exhausted, the number of swimming-related accidents – some of which are fatal – is increasing, often in unsupervised lakes and rivers. The red-and-white helicopters of DRF Luftrettung are regularly used to search for missing swimmers from the air or to provide emergency medical assistance to accident victims. With the summer holidays about to begin, Andreas Helwig – an experienced DRF Luftrettung pilot and someone who is regularly called out to swimming accidents – has an urgent appeal for bathers: 'Exit the water as soon as a helicopter approaches, as this makes it much easier for us to pinpoint someone who is drowning. It also helps ensure your own safety.'

Bathers can also help if the helicopter needs to land: 'With these kind of call-outs, it is important to quickly evacuate sunbathing areas without leaving any items behind. By doing so, you will be enabling the aircraft to make a speedy landing in direct proximity to the scene and possibly helping to save lives in cases of drowning,' adds Helwig. According to figures from Deutsche Lebens-Rettungs-Gesellschaft (DLRG), a record rise of 117 fatalities was witnessed in August 2020 alone. The water rescue organisation fears that this year will see even more problems and incidents than in the 2020 season. Due to the coronavirus pandemic, many people are planning holidays in Germany, which often means excursions to unsupervised rivers and lakes.

Call-outs at an exceptionally high level in the first half of the year

In total, DRF Luftrettung crews were called out to 13,927 emergencies and 4,334 intensive care transfers in the first half of 2021. What's more, the ambulance aircraft carried out 95 deployments in 35 countries worldwide.

During the first half of the year, the most common call-outs for DRF Luftrettung involved patients with cardiac illness such as heart attacks (20 per cent) and neurological emergencies (17 per cent). These were followed by accident victims due to falls (11 per cent) and traffic accidents (10 per cent). The organisation's crews offer unparalleled speed, especially in emergencies; they can reach scenes within a 60-kilometre radius in a flight time of 15 minutes or less. The crews of the eleven 24-hour bases nationwide were also frequently needed during the night; here, some 20 per cent of the crews' call-outs in the first half of the year took place during night-time hours. Several years ago, the air ambulance

organisation put in place special procedures for approaching emergency scenes at night, including the deployment of two pilots with instrument rating (IR) and night-vision goggles (NVGs). The three winch bases– in Bautzen, Freiburg and Nuremberg (*Christoph 27*) – also had plenty to do, recording 51 winch call-outs in the first six months of 2021.

Progress in air rescue

The charitable organisation's ethos also includes the development and improvement of its work for the benefit of patients. In March, for instance, the country's first H145 rescue helicopter with five-blade rotor went into operation at the Stuttgart base. The aircraft arrived at the DRF Luftrettung maintenance facility back in December 2020, where it was equipped for routine operation. In May, the world's first-ever H145 retrofit was then put into operation. The aircraft underwent a conversion from four rotor blades to five – and is now flying from the Villingen-Schwenningen base under the name *Christoph 11*. Just a few days ago, the third five-blade helicopter – *Christoph Niedersachsen* – was commissioned in Hanover. The organisation also remains committed to progress in the field of emergency medicine: in March 2021, *Christoph Regensburg* became the third DRF Luftrettung helicopter to routinely carry blood and plasma reserves on its call-outs, thus making it possible to help critically ill patients more quickly and effectively.

Available image material:



DRF Luftrettung regularly assists with water rescue, searching for missing bathers from the air or providing emergency medical care to accident victims. (Source: DRF Luftrettung)



The DRF Luftrettung rescue crews set off on 18,356 call-outs nationwide in the first half of 2021. (Source: DRF Luftrettung)



A first in air rescue: the country's first H145 with five-blade rotor commenced operations at the Stuttgart base in March 2021. (Source: DRF Luftrettung)

About DRF Luftrettung

The DRF Group is based in Filderstadt, Germany, and is one of Europe's largest air ambulance organisations. The Group carried out 39,971 call-outs in 2020. Crews are on standby around the clock at 14 of the 35 bases in Germany, Austria and Liechtenstein, with helicopters with rescue winch deployed at eight sites.

The Austrian organisation ARA Flugrettung, with two bases, has been part of the DRF Group since 2001, with Northern Helicopter GmbH – which performs air and water rescue from three bases – joining in 2019. DRF Luftrettung is also involved at a base in Balzers, Liechtenstein, via the AP³ Luftrettung network. What's more, DRF Luftrettung repatriates patients from abroad using its own ambulance aircraft.

The charitable air ambulance organisation is reliant on financial support in order to continue taking its life-saving mission from strength to strength. DRF e.V. can already count on the generosity of well over 400,000 members.

For more information, please visit www.drf-luftrettung.de

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