



40th Helicopter Squadron records save 364

by 2nd Lt. Justin Brockhoff
341st Space Wing Public Affairs Office

6/23/2006 - **MALMSTROM AIR FORCE BASE, Mont.** -- A UH-1N "Huey" crew from the 40th Helicopter Squadron recorded the unit's first night-save of 2006 when they rescued an injured woman near Canary Peak northwest of Gardner, Mont., Sunday.

The woman, a 25-year-old U.S. Forest Services employee, broke her leg and back while doing a survey of Aspen trees in the area.

A mercy-flight helicopter was called into the area to extract the victim but was unable to land because of the rough terrain. Unlike the 40th HS "Huey" helicopters, the mercy-flight aircraft does not have hoist capability.

"We got the call from the Air Force Joint Rescue Coordination Center Saturday night," said Maj. Lee Newton, 40th HS commander. "We called the crew into the unit and received the go-ahead to launch the night mission. It was up to us to get the injured woman out quickly or she risked the possibly of losing her leg or life."

When the crew arrived at the squadron, they went through a flight brief and then departed directly for the Beartooth Mountains at 11 p.m. The crew consisted of Major Newton, aircraft commander; Capt. Shane Werley, co-pilot; Tech. Sgt. Jay Orr, flight engineer; Dr. (Capt.) Ki Lee Milligan, flight surgeon; and Capt. Holli Bellusci, flight medic.

"This was probably one of the most intense situations I've experienced in my career," said Captain Werley, an instructor-pilot with the 40th HS. "We were at a very high altitude and were operating on night-vision goggles which reduce your field of vision by about 30 to 40 percent. It required everyone to be at their best."

The crew arrived into the Beartooth Mountains area at 1:30 a.m. Sunday and inserted Dr. Milligan to stabilize the patient. Once the injured woman was stabilized, Sergeant Orr used the hoist to raise the victim and Dr. Milligan 150 feet to the helicopter.

"The key person on this rescue was Sergeant Orr," said Major Newton. "The pressure was on him to accomplish aircraft and hoist preflight checks quickly but thoroughly as the doc's and survivor's lives would depend on a healthy system. His skill, situational awareness and poise were critical in getting us as close to the mountain wall edges as we needed and safely accomplishing 150 foot hoists."

Once the crew had the patient secured in the helicopter they flew to the Gallatin County Regional Airport, where they were met by an ambulance that took the injured woman to a local hospital.

"Shortly after arrival at the hospital the patient received the surgery she required," said Dr. Milligan. "She was listed in stable condition Sunday."

This was the unit's 364th save and its fourth since being redesignated from a flight to a squadron in October 2005.