



CHALLENGE: Improving first aid training for search and rescue (SAR) crewmen.

SOLUTION: An extensive joint training program between Bristow and a client enable crewmen to acquire first aid skills on a level with emergency medical technicians.

BENEFIT: Crews are able to provide potentially life-saving assistance when they are first on the scene of an accident.

Bristow's search and rescue (SAR) capabilities at its Den Helder base in the Netherlands have reached new heights, thanks to an extensive medical training program that gives crewmen first aid skills on a par with an emergency medical technician (EMT).

Four crewmen have received the training, which was designed in conjunction with client Netherlands Oil and Gas Exploration and Production Association (NOGEP) and takes two years to complete. "It's a tailor-made course that's breaking new ground here," says crewman Thomas Kleijs. "We pushed the envelope on medical training, and it's a big win-win for us and NOGEP."

PUT TO THE TEST

The crew's new capabilities potentially made the difference between life and death recently when the Netherlands Coastguard called for Bristow's assistance to locate a missing plane. It was believed to have gone down near the coast, and visibility was poor due to fog.

"We made a first set of search tracks in the fog without locating the aircraft and went back to refuel," says Captain Patrick van der Voort, adding that another SAR provider was asked to assist but declined due to the conditions. "Our aircraft have autopilot modes and other navigational features that enable us to operate in this type of weather."

On the second search, the team followed a report from people on the beach about hearing an airplane with possible engine trouble. A Coastguard fixed-wing aircraft started a search six nautical miles further south, where the fog was slowly lifting, and located the crash site on land.

"We responded immediately, and when we landed next to the wreck, none of us thought anyone would be alive," Kleijs says. To their surprise, all four passengers, two adult males and two teenage boys, were alive but seriously injured.

BETTER DECISIONS

Joined by a fellow medical trainee, crewman Michael Bes, Kleijs began applying his newly learned skills in triage – deciding whom to help first based on the extent of their injuries. They were assisted at the crash site by co-pilot Thijs Kleijsen. They provided first aid for 25 minutes until medical and fire crews arrived to further assist the injured.

"We can provide a lot more medical assistance than we could before, and it may be a first for Bristow to have crewmen this highly qualified in emergency response," Kleijs says. "The training we've had was clearly beneficial in this scenario."

This search and rescue team at Bristow's base in Den Helder, the Netherlands provided first aid to plane crash victims until medical and fire crews arrived. From left are crewmen Michael Bes and Thomas Kleijs, co-pilot Thijs Kleijsen and pilot Patrick van der Voort.