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MERCY FLIGHTS

For the purpose of this Aeronautical Information Circular, mercy flights are aircraft operations in which needed medical attention is made available to the person who needs it either through the air lifting of that person to a location where that medical aid is available or bringing medical assistance and/or equipment to that person. It should be noted that “needed medical attention” refers to cases where serious injury or death could result if the aid is not readily available to the patient; and not special flights for the convenience of medically disabled persons.

Notwithstanding other air navigation regulatory requirements, the pilot in command of an aircraft may deviate from standard procedures and practices to the extent necessary to provide mercy assistance whenever and wherever it can be provided with a reasonable degree of safety. Nothing in this Aeronautical Information Circular relieves the pilot in command of his final responsibility to assure the operations are conducted in a manner as safe as possible under the situation and circumstances involved.

Normal operations – during normal operations from the airports of departure and/or destination, the pilot-in-command is expected to follow normal procedures for the flight management portion of the operations.

He/She may expedite operational aspects by proper coordination with Airport Management and ATC. However, any special handling and/or priority service requirements will need coordination and cooperation between all involved.

Abnormal operations - during other than normal operations, the pilot in command must use his discretion considering the situation and circumstances. He/She must not let the impact of mercy flight over-ride his judgement in determining how the flight can be operated in a reasonable safe manner.

Some areas that must be considered include:

1. The pilots qualifications, competency and currency on the aircraft to be used;
2. The weather at departure, enroute, and destination;
3. If a portion, or all, of the flight will be conducted during the hours of darkness; how the airport and/or the runway will be identified. If the runway will have unusual lighting (goose-neck/flarepot lights, etc) the pilot in command must have adequate knowledge of what and when to expect it;
4. Coordination with Airport Management/ATC where available;
5. Communications from departure, enroute, and arrival at destination.
6. Medical assistance (preferably a medical doctor) at departure, enroute and destination;
7. Airport conditions at departure and destination (runway condition, obstructions etc); and
8. Any other pertinent factors the pilot in command is aware of;

Any mercy flight conducted under this sub paragraph should be treated as an emergency and reported to CAAB as such.

In some cases, an operator may want to develop its own procedures and policies for flight operations concerning mercy flights under unusual/abnormal situations/conditions. Such procedures/policies should be coordinated with CAAB.

Finally, following a mercy flight, the pilot in command should contact CAAB and inform them of the particulars of the mercy flight (normal within 72 hours).

This circular supersedes AIC no. 3/1989.