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New Dauphin due within 2 weeks

By DANA CARN-BOWSER
Staff Writer

CENTREVILLE — The new Dauphin helicopter will land in Centreville within two weeks.

The helicopter is scheduled to arrive on Friday, Nov. 4 and operations will begin Nov. 9, just as renovations are being completed at the Maryland State Police hangar according to Phil Hurlock, director of the county's

Emergency Operations.

"It feels great. It feels like after all the hard work and dedication ... it's finally becoming a reality," he said.

The new helicopter will give "better service" to the Mid-Shore than what is offered now, Hurlock said.

Helicopter operations will be extended to 20 hours a day from 7 a.m. to 3 a.m. seven days a week, he said. The Bell Jet

Ranger, which the Centreville Maryland State Police barrack currently uses, only operates during daylight hours and is not allowed to operate during inclement weather.

The Dauphin also is faster and can reach the surrounding counties in a manner of minutes, according to police officials.

The Mid-Shore counties, Caroline, Cecil, Kent, Queen Anne's, and Talbot, each paid \$15,000 to

renovate the hangar. The state issued a grant that paid for the remaining \$75,000 needed for the project.

Hurlock said the county is trying to schedule a dedication ceremony to honor the officials who helped bring the Dauphin to the Eastern Shore.

"We feel obligated to honor these people," he said.

Better MedEvac Service To Shore Sought

ANNAPOLIS (JMK) — Gov. William Donald Schaefer is pushing for state lawmakers to approve the purchase of two new emergency helicopters, which will improve MedEvac services on the Eastern Shore and Southern Maryland.

If the plan to buy two Dauphin helicopters is approved, the helicopters currently stationed in Centreville and the Patuxent River Naval Air Station, will be replaced with more modern and effective equipment. The helicopters stationed at those sites are not able to fly at night or during poor weather conditions. The new Dauphin models can fly in those conditions with some standards and regulations.

According to Sgt. Marty Shorey, of the Maryland State Police Aviation Division, headquartered at Martins Airport in Chase, the additional helicopters would provide better service to the Eastern Shore, but only if the Dauphin stationed in Salisbury was another call.

With Centreville and Pax River about 72 flight miles from Ocean City, the proposed new choppers would both get to the resort in the same amount of time. However, as west of the beach can be reached quicker from Pax River. Either way, the lower shore will be better served with the replacement choppers.

The Maryland State Police Aviation Division in Salisbury currently handles most calls for the lower shore, but if they were transporting a patient or involved in another call further north, the new choppers would cover the area faster and better than the other Dauphins stationed around Maryland, Shorey said.

Shorey said there are nine Dauphin units in Maryland, but there are only six Dauphin sections. The rea-



Resort vacationers may be even better covered for emergencies with the proposed addition of two modern MedEvac helicopters to the state's repertoire — both about 72 miles from the beach.

son there isn't nine sections is due to high maintenance on the aircraft.

With two additional Dauphins in the state's repertoire, however, two new sections would probably be added, providing better coverage.

The governor's plan is to purchase a new Dauphin helicopter for the Centreville site and a used one for the Pax River site. The new chopper will cost about \$5.7 million, which would be taken from the state's \$2 billion

transportation budget. The used Dauphin could be purchased from Florida for about \$4 million with funds from the \$18 million remaining in the emergency medical services budget.

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New MedEvac chopper is slated to arrive soon

Kent and other counties on the Upper Shore could get swifter round-the-clock emergency MedEvac service starting next month.

At present, the region is served out of a Queen Anne's County base by an aging helicopter whose limitations do not permit its use at night or in bad weather. When emergency evacuation is needed during those times, a larger, more modern helicopter must be sent from a base on the western shore.

The expanded service in this area will become possible when a new hangar is completed in Queen Anne's County and a Dauphin helicopter is delivered.

A spokesman for the Maryland State Police says the hangar should be finished by early November.

"The only major thing left undone is the heating system," he said, "and we can operate for a while without that if we must."

The absence of a Dauphin on the Upper Shore led to a public clamor for better service during the last session of the Maryland General Assembly. The Eastern Shore delegation responded by demanding that the state make the money available, pointing out that the area was the only part of Maryland not served by the Dauphin.

The state handed over the money in the spring, along with a \$75,000 grant for a new \$150,000 hangar. The rest of the hangar money was provided by Kent, Caroline, Cecil, Queen Anne's and Talbot counties, which will be served by the new helicopter.

At present, the area is covered by a relatively small Bell Jet Ranger. These 'copters lack the foul-weather and nighttime navigation equipment of the Dauphin.

At least six MedEvac officers have been killed in Jet Ranger crashes across the state since 1972, raising safety concerns about the helicopter. But when the state took delivery of nine Dauphins in 1990, none was sent to the Eastern Shore. Six were put into immediate use on the western shore and three were kept there in reserve.

The Jet Ranger continued to fly on the Eastern Shore under tight restrictions that recognized its limits. Dauphin's much larger size gives it stability in the kind of severe weather common to the Eastern Shore during winter.

Volunteer fire departments and other groups concerned with public safety have warned that lives in this part of the state were put at risk when emergency cases could not receive speedy MedEvac service at night or during storms — periods during which accidents are common.

Dauphin hangar almost finished

By JOHN GRIEF
Staff Writer

CENTREVILLE - Work is nearly complete on a hangar that will house the Mid-Shore's first Dauphin helicopter.

The hangar, located near the Maryland State Police Centreville Barrack, should be completed in time for the helicopter's arrival sometime in November.

Lt. Gary Shields, of the state police aviation division, said the hangar is "getting very near completion."

Shields said construction of the hangar was essentially finished, except for cleanup and finishing touches.

"The only major part (of construction left) is the installation of heat in the hangar," Shields said. The hangar's office was heated during the renovations.

Shields also said the hangar is "back in operation," housing the Bell Jet Ranger helicopter which currently serves the Mid-Shore.

The Centreville base will be the last MedEvac base in the state to receive the Dauphin helicopter. A MedEvac base in St. Mary's County was scheduled to receive their new helicopter last month.

The Maryland Board of Public Works approved the purchase of the faster, more sophisticated Dauphin helicopters for the two bases in late March.

The state had purchased nine Dauphin helicopters in 1990, six helicopters for MedEvac bases throughout the state and three helicopters for maintenance and training.

Concern over three accidents which claimed the lives of six state troopers since 1972 caused the state to purchase modern helicopters for the MedEvac system.

The Dauphin helicopter includes an automated flying system that can take over controls when visibility is low.

The twin-engine Dauphin helicopters are also faster than the Bell Jet Ranger, cruising at about 145 mph.

The Bell Jet Ranger helicopter, which lacks an automated flying system and has only a single engine, currently only operates during daylight hours and is not allowed to fly in inclement weather.

A state grant funded \$75,000 of the estimated \$150,000 in construction costs for the new hangar. Caroline, Cecil, Kent, Queen Anne's and Talbot counties contributed \$15,000 each for the hangar construction.

Shields said a dedication of the

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Kent County News
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Dauphin bows in early for du

It flies through the dark of night. It flies through the worst of Chesapeake weather — through sleet, wind and fog.

And it has arrived two days before it was expected.

We are talking about the Mid-Shore's newest lifesaver: a \$5.5 million, French-made Dauphin MedEvac helicopter, which arrived at its Centreville hangar last week.

The helicopter replaces an obsolete Bell Jet Ranger copter, whose limitations did not permit the MedEvac crews to fly it during the night or when the weather turned especially nasty.

That meant that during times when accidents were most likely to happen the Upper Shore counties of Cecil, Kent, Queen Anne's, Talbot and Caroline were served by a helicopter from

a more distant point, assuming one was available. Critical time was lost during the so-called "golden hour" during which aid must be given to those seriously hurt.

The new Dauphin will fill that gap in emergency services, say state and county officials. The helicopter arrived at the Centreville State Police barracks last Wednesday morning.

The old copter hangar has been enlarged to accommodate it, with each of the five counties in the service area contributing \$15,000 toward the cost. The state contributed \$75,000.

The rest of Maryland has had the Dauphin service for several years. The state finally agreed to buy one for the Eastern Shore earlier this year after protests from the Eastern Shore delegation to the General Assembly and complaints from rescue and vol-

unteer fire departments in the

The twin-engine Dauphin is bigger and much faster than the Bell Jet Ranger. Its power permits it to carry a 1,000-pound patient load and remain in the air for up to 45 minutes each day.

"We did a pretty good job with the Bell Jet but this aircraft is more sophisticated," said Lee, a paramedic who will fly the Dauphin.

"I have the training, know the capabilities but I was limited by the physical aspects of the Bell Jet. I'm not limited by an aircraft now," the trooper said.

He said that the paramedics will be able to treat a wider variety of emergencies than was possible with the smaller aircraft.