

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Essex engineering firm receives Award of Excellence for LIFESTAR facelift

HARTFORD — LIFESTAR Heliport at Hartford Hospital is now safer, after a \$3 million restoration that was long overdue.

In an emergency medical situation moments can often be the difference between life and death. Recent improvements and renovations to the LIFESTAR Heliport now provides those precious extra moments and is safer for pilots and aircraft. Improvements included an upgraded hangar with new automatic door, repair of safety net outriggers with new nets and lighting, and replacement of concrete deck. All of these were previously posing serious threats to the safety of the emergency responder's service.

For more than 20 years, the 75- by 120-foot platform atop 13 stories of Hartford Hospital was exposed to the harsh New England climate. George Torello Engineers, P.C. of Essex was recruited to inspect the dilapidated conditions and assess what would need to be done to make the area safer.

"The safety netting [around the perimeter to help in the event of an accidental fall] would never have held up in an emergency," George Torello, owner of the firm said. But the safety netting was only the beginning.

Torello said his firm investigated problems such as severe deterioration of the concrete landing surface which produced loose debris and posed a risk to the safe operation of the aircraft, and very serious corrosion of steel outriggers caused by elemental exposure and de-icing chemicals.

Among the challenges for the engineering and construction teams was the necessity to maintain LIFESTAR operations during reconstruction. Torello said this was accomplished by creating a temporary enclosure for construction workers around the perimeter safety net outriggers for the 1st phase, and a temporary landing pad on the ground level for the 2nd phase of construction. Additionally, construction crews used non-odorous materials and compounds to avoid disruption or discomfort to the hospitals more-than-800 patients.

Kerry Kerr, engineering director for Hartford Hospital came into his position as the project was finishing up and said everyone worked together to see that LIFESTAR's heliport was completed. "Having come to Hartford Hospital near the completion of this project, I was delighted to see the teamwork on this project between hospital engineering staff, including flight crews, contractors and engineers.

It was evident there was a cohesiveness that extended from beginning to end, providing the best possible outcome for the safety of our patients and pilots."

The newly refurbished LIFESTAR Heliport is now safer for the crew that transports as many as 1,400 critical care patients every year. Additionally, LIFESTAR's Heliport can now accommodate Marine One in the event of a presidential emergency, making it one of the only such heliports in New England. Upgrades to the lighting, hangar door and other details provide improvements that the pilots say improve their ability to respond quickly and return safely, even in inclement weather.

Torello said the work his firm did for Hartford Hospital's LIFESTAR heliport was a rewarding experience.

"It was exciting to be a part of a project that saves so many lives on a daily basis."

Because of the work they performed on the LIFESTAR heliport, George Torello Engineers received an excellence award from the American Council of Engineering Companies, CT and will be going on to participate in the national competition which recognizes excellence in engineering across the country. The winners will be honored at a Gala to be held April 28 at the Grand Hyatt Washington Hotel in Washington D.C.

PHOTOS AVAILABLE