Launching rockets at a spaceport can be dangerous business requiring . . .

. . . people to perform activities around caustic propellants . . .

. . . and working at high levels on launch towers.

With NASA's workforce making safety their paramount priority, mishaps are a rare occurrence.

If an accident occurs, a quick response by Kennedy Space Center Fire Rescue personnel can significantly increase an injured person's chances of recovery.

To add to its already broad skill base, the spaceport's Fire Rescue department . . .

. . . recently collaborated with helicopter pilots in NASA Aircraft Operations. Together they developed procedures for taking injured patients to hospitals as quickly as possible.

Much of the recent training took place at Kennedy in a parking lot near the Vehicle Assembly Building.
The exercise was developed, in part, by Bill Martin, a veteran pilot who has flown more than 1,100 helicopter rescue missions.

"There is always a risk of an accident and there's always a possibility that you may have to utilize our helicopters and our firefighters here to bring patients to a higher level of care."

In the recent training activity, a volunteer served in the role of an "injured" person. Paramedics removed him from a vehicle and placed him on a stretcher.

At the same time, lieutenants with Kennedy Fire Rescue directed a NASA helicopter into the landing zone.

The medical staff quickly moved the stretcher to the waiting helicopter, secured the stretcher in place and closed the door in readiness for flight to the nearest hospital. Medical experts point out that after an accident, the first 60 minutes are crucial.
"In an emergency situation, the 'golden hour,' as it's referred to, is that hour that a critical care patient needs to be extricated and transported to a local trauma center to get the highest level of care and have the best result for recovery or survival."

NASA Fire Rescue assistant chief of training, Mark Huetter, says the recent activity was crucial for everyone involved.

"This training is very important for not only for the Fire personnel, but the Aircraft Operations personnel."

The Florida spaceport covers a vast expanse on Merritt Island, making the availability of helicopters a valuable asset.

"Kennedy Space Center is a very large area at 144,000 acres. It's relatively difficult to get to all the different areas of the center. So having resources available, using this helicopter, allows us to get to these areas and transport people who need to go to a higher level of care."
care facility quickly."

Ultimately, this enhanced capability means that while many areas of the space center are remote, a high level of medical care is still close by.

"It's important for Kennedy Space Center employees as well as visitors to know that we have the capability of providing transportation to a high level of care, utilizing our aircraft operations here at Kennedy Space Center."

"The training program that was created by NASA Aircraft Operations . . ." " . . . as well as NASA Fire Rescue was to create a higher safety culture . . ."

". . .in allowing the center workers for the government and contractors, including the visitors that come here throughout the day."

"And through this training we can ensure a higher level of safety and productivity as well as professionalism."