



Airborne ICU

Pegasus has been providing air medical transport services for the University of Virginia Health System since 1984.

- 1. Pegasus:** an Augusta 109E helicopter painted blue and orange, with an image of the mythological winged horse on its side. With cruising speeds of 175mph, the Pegasus provides emergency rescue as far as West Virginia.
- 2. Portable ultrasound machine:** used to scan the abdomen and chest for internal injuries. It provides real-time images of internal organs.
- 3. Cardiac monitor:** provides information about carbon dioxide and oxygen levels in the blood, heart rate, respiration and blood pressure. It includes a defibrillator that can restart a heartbeat by sending an electronic shock into the heart. Heart problems are among the most common treated by the medical staff of Pegasus.
- 4. Portable video laryngoscope:** allows medical staff to see into the throat. This makes endotracheal intubation—putting a ventilator tube into the lungs—easier and safer.
- 5. Central line kit:** equipment needed for a central venous catheter, which is used to administer medication or fluids to central veins.
- 6. Litter for the patient:** can be shifted diagonally to accommodate taller patients.
- 7. Infusion pump:** used to give patients fluids, medication or nutrients, usually intravenously. It can administer as little as 0.1 mL per hour injections (too small for an IV drip).
- 8. Bag of saline:** set up for an intravenous drip. “Almost every patient needs one of these,” says David Grimsley, a paramedic and supervisor of the Pegasus division. “That and ear protection because it’s very loud in the helicopter.”
- 9. Bag of pediatric medical equipment:** for example, smaller IV catheters are necessary when treating children.
- 10. Oxygen outlet:** connected to a tank of liquid oxygen in the tail of the helicopter that holds up to six liters of liquid oxygen. Liquid oxygen becomes gas when it isn’t under pressure.
- 11. Carter Box:** when hooked up to medical staff’s helmet allows them to communicate with each other and the pilot over the noise of the helicopter. Helmets (not pictured) are also outfitted with night vision goggles. Bright interior lights would make flying the helicopter difficult, so medical staff work in low-light situations at night.
- 12. Medications:** from insulin to paralytics to analgesics are packed into bags according to their type for easy access.
- 13. Biohazard disposal:** for used needles and other hazardous material.
- 14. Hands-free ventilator:** controls the volume and rate of respiration as well as the percentage of oxygen in the air.
- 15. Seat for the medical staff:** in addition to the pilot, there is a nurse and a paramedic on every flight.
- 16. The cockpit:** full of instruments that allow the pilot to orient himself and keep an eye on the weather. Using instruments alone, pilots can fly blind through dense cloud cover. The Pegasus is outfitted with nonstandard equipment such as radar, which makes it safer to land on highways and other dangerous places.