

5. The tail rotor poses a special threat to working around a running helicopter. The tail rotor turns many times faster than the main rotor, and is often invisible even at idle engine power. Avoid walking towards the tail of a helicopter beyond the end of the cabin, unless specifically directed by the crew.

**NOTE–**

*Helicopters typically have doors on the sides of the cabin, but many use aft mounted “clamshell” type doors for loading and unloading patients on litters or stretchers. When using these doors, it is important to avoid moving any further aft than necessary to operate the doors and load/unload the patient. Again, always comply with the crew’s instructions.*

**j. General Rules**

1. When working around helicopters, always approach and depart from the front, never from the rear. Approaching from the rear can increase your risk of being struck by the tail rotor, which, when at operating engine speed, is nearly invisible.

2. To prevent injury or damage from the main rotor, never raise anything over your head.

3. If the helicopter landed on a slope, approach and depart from the down slope side only.

4. When the helicopter is loaded and ready for take off, keep the departure path free of vehicles and spectators. In an emergency, this area is needed to execute a landing.

**k. Hazardous Chemicals and Gases**

1. Responding to accidents involving hazardous materials requires special handling by fire/rescue units on the ground. Equally important are the preparations and considerations for helicopter operations in these areas.

2. Hazardous materials of concern are those which are toxic, poisonous, flammable, explosive, irritating, or radioactive in nature. Helicopter ambulance crews normally don’t carry protective suits or breathing apparatuses to protect them from hazardous materials.

3. The helicopter ambulance crew must be told of hazardous materials on the scene in order to avoid

the contamination of the crew. Patients/victims contaminated by hazardous materials may require special precautions in packaging before loading on the aircraft for the medical crew’s protection, or may be transported by other means.

4. Hazardous chemicals and gases may be fatal to the unprotected person if inhaled or absorbed through the skin.

5. Upon initial radio contact, the helicopter crew must be made aware of any hazardous gases in the area. Never assume that the crew has already been informed. If the aircraft were to fly through the hazardous gases, the crew could be poisoned and/or the engines could develop mechanical problems.

6. Poisonous or irritating gases may cling to a victim’s clothing and go unnoticed until the patient is loaded and the doors of the helicopter are closed. To avoid possible compromise of the crew, all of these patients must be decontaminated prior to loading.

**l. Hand Signals**

1. If unable to make radio contact with the HEMS pilot, use the following signals:

FIG 10–2–8

**Recommended Landing Zone Ground Signals**

