

For immediate release
December 13, 2022

Provincial Health Services Authority
BC Emergency Health Services

BCEHS and Helijet give Santa a “lift” to bring Christmas cheer to kids in hospital

Vancouver, B.C. – Santa Claus is back in the air again today to bring smiles and the joy of Christmas to courageous children in hospital pediatric units at this time of year and to the dedicated front-line health care workers who look after them.

For the 18th year, children, parents and staff in B.C. hospitals will be treated to a pre-Christmas visit by Santa who is once again travelling in a BCEHS air ambulance courtesy of Helijet.

The BCEHS and Helijet annual “Santa Flights” deliver toys and Christmas cheer to six hospitals: Victoria General, Surrey Memorial, Royal Columbian, Nanaimo Regional General, Abbotsford Regional Hospital and Cancer Centre, BC Children’s Hospital, and BC Women’s Hospital + Health Centre.

“I’m delighted that BCEHS and Helijet are back helping Santa make his special hospital visits this year,” said Adrian Dix, Minister of Health. “Santa’s visits are magical as they lift the spirits of children receiving care in our hospitals. At the same time, the Santa visits also celebrate the dedication of our front-line workers, including specialized paramedics who provide such crucial medical care.”

Joining Santa for the air ambulance flights is Joanna Stefani, an Infant Transport Team (ITT) paramedic. Specially trained staff like Stefani help to care for and transport critically ill babies and young children to hospital.

“As ITT paramedics, we are dedicated to helping children in some of the most difficult and traumatic of circumstances,” said Stefani. “Often, we meet patients and their families in medical emergencies. Today’s Santa flight is incredibly special, as we get to bring smiles to young patients in less stressful conditions. I am honoured to represent all paramedics in this wonderful holiday tradition.”

Also flying with Santa is Danny Sitnam, President and CEO of Helijet, which operates the BCEHS air ambulance transporting Santa today.

“All of us at Helijet are happy to have this opportunity to help make the holiday season special for these courageous kids and their families who find themselves in hospital instead of at home as Christmas approaches,” said Helijet President and CEO Danny Sitnam. “This is the 18th year our dedicated staff at Helijet has helped fly Santa around and we’re very proud of our contribution as we continue to help BC Ambulance Service paramedics provide 24/7 helicopter service for hundreds of critically-ill patients across the province every year.”

Hashtag: #SantaFlights

About Helijet International

Helijet International is a privately held Canadian-owned company based at the Vancouver International Airport, British Columbia, Canada, and is recognized as North America’s largest helicopter airline, carrying well over 2.4 million guests in the past 36 years. In addition to its scheduled helicopter services, Helijet is the Province of British Columbia’s longest standing and largest air service provider of dedicated medically equipped helicopters.

Helijet provides exclusive-use helicopter and fixed-wing services to world-renowned sport fishing resorts, public service and energy companies throughout the west coast of British Columbia and North America. Helijet's wholly owned subsidiary, Pacific Heliport Services, Ltd., is Canada's largest privately managed Heliport operator, overseeing the downtown Vancouver, Victoria and Nanaimo's Transport Canada-certified heliports.

Helijet is committed to introducing and integrating zero-emission vertical lift technologies and related ground/building infrastructure into the communities that it serves; in conjunction with transforming its current Heliport infrastructure to meet future urban air mobility Vertiport standards. Additional Helijet details are available at Helijet.com. Twitter: [@Helijet](https://twitter.com/Helijet) Instagram: [@helijet](https://www.instagram.com/helijet)

About BCEHS

BC Emergency Health Services is responsible for the delivery and governance of pre-hospital emergency medical care and inter-facility patient transfer services through the BC Ambulance Service and BC Patient Transfer Services. BCEHS is supported by the Provincial Health Services Authority (PHSA). For more information, please visit www.bcehs.ca or follow us on Twitter: [@BC_EHS](https://twitter.com/BC_EHS) Instagram: [@bc_ehs](https://www.instagram.com/bc_ehs)

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QUICK FACTS

December 13, 2022

A closer look at air ambulance operations across B.C.

- The **BCEHS air ambulance program** responds to the needs of critical hospital transfer patients and emergency medical calls through the deployment of **six helicopters and 10 airplanes** and dedicated flight crews available 24/7. These air resources are based in Vancouver, Nanaimo, Kamloops, Kelowna, Prince George, Prince Rupert, and Fort St John.
- Annually, BCEHS responds to more than **8,300 patients** requiring transportation by air ambulance.
 - Helicopters respond to 31 per cent of all air ambulance calls in B.C.; airplanes respond to 69 per cent.
- A breakdown of air ambulance transports in B.C. (fiscal 2021/22):
 - Northern Health **40%**
 - Interior Health **26%**
 - Vancouver-Coastal **16.2%**
 - Vancouver Island **14.8%**
 - Fraser Health **2.7%**
 - Out-of-province **0.2%**
- A vast majority of air ambulances operate with **Critical Care Paramedics (CCPs)** who hold the highest level of specialized care credentials and are deployed by air to medical emergencies across the province.
 - **Infant Transport Team (ITT)** paramedics are CCPs based at BC Children's Hospital in Vancouver. They have completed advanced training and provide emergency medical care to pediatric, neo-natal and high-risk obstetric patients.
- Critical care and infant transport paramedics use specialized helicopters and airplanes (air ambulances) and ground ambulances outfitted with specific equipment to provide critical care.

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