Rescue helicopters go high-tech thanks to partnership

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Queensland families will be safer in emergencies and rescue helicopters will respond quicker, due to a partnership with Rio Tinto that includes a new operations centre with state-of-the-art interactive technology.

The Queensland Government Air (QGAir) Operations Centre and new ‘Cruiser Interactive’ technology were unveiled by Minister for Police, Fire and Emergency Services Jack Dempsey and Rio Tinto Coal Australia’s Managing Director Chris Salisbury.

“Every second counts in an emergency and any improvements to response times and the quality of information provided to crews is important,” Mr Dempsey said.

“It’s all about keeping Queensland families safe and this partnership means our rescue helicopters will now have nation-leading technology.

“Cruiser will see the hub in Kedron connected to our five Queensland Government Air bases across the state through interactive state-of-the-art screens.

“With the flick of their hand, users can move information from personal devices such as tablets and phones to surrounding walls, whiteboards and devices so that detailed tasking information is provided to helicopter crews more efficiently and the monitoring of crews is improved.

“There is also the capability to integrate the rescue helicopters into our much larger aviation fleet across Queensland, especially during disaster events.

“We have worked hard to give our emergency services the help they need to make Queenslanders safer.

“We know the job isn’t done, but we have a strong plan that will see it through.”

The $1.2 million Operations Centre and new technology has been funded through Rio Tinto’s $10 million, 10 year sponsorship of the Queensland Government Air rescue helicopter service.

Rio Tinto’s Chris Salisbury said the company was proud to provide support and fund new technology that would transform the way rescue helicopters operate during disaster situations.

“At Rio Tinto, we are always looking for ways to do things better, smarter and faster and believe continuous innovation and use of technology is key to success,” Mr Salisbury said.

“I can think of no better area to be implementing innovations than in technology for a service that is responsible for saving lives and keeping Queenslanders safe all year round.

“Safety is a core value for Rio Tinto and through this partnership we are providing an enduring safety commitment to Queensland, a place we have called home for more than 50 years.”

Queensland Government Air Executive Director Craig Phasey said apart from the technological leap that the Cruiser technology provides it was also an opportune time to improve processes.
“We are picking up the lessons that have been learnt from the disasters over the last three years where we have experienced command and coordination challenges in tasking helicopters, particular during disaster situations,” Mr Phasey said.

“This allows us to electronically record information and provides better and more tailored information from both what the aircraft have been tasked to do and from a risk management perspective it allows additional support to the operating crew.

“This all would not have been possible without the continuous and generous support of Rio Tinto with their $10 million commitment over 10 years to our QGAir rescue helicopters.”

ENDS

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