

REGA

Question time
**"Quality is our
highest priority"**

Missions in Switzerland
When fate strikes twice

News
**Emergency numbers
1414 and
+41 333 333 333**



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0844 834 844

Service number for patrons

How to contact Rega: see page 32



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Cover:

Rega’s “heart”: the new Operations Centre. Emergency calls are received here from both within Switzerland and abroad

Dear patrons

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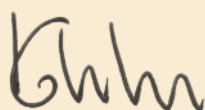
Providing medical emergency assistance by air to people in distress: for decades, your support has enabled us to fulfil this challenging yet rewarding task. We achieve this by using highly qualified rescue personnel and the best material and equipment currently available on the market.

However, this stance is increasingly being called into question. What equipment is necessary and to what extent should a round-the-clock standby service be available? Is a rescue hoist absolutely essential or is it too expensive? Is it really necessary to guarantee constant contact with the Operations Centre, or could this be dispensed with? In short, how high should the benchmark be set? Recently, criticism has been voiced about our costs and staff remuneration; perhaps you have followed the discussions in the media. The Swiss Conference of Cantonal Health Directors is also examining the field of air rescue. The Chairman of Rega's Foundation Board, Ulrich Graf, comments on these and other current topics on the following double page.

In this respect, Rega is like an iceberg. Only a small part – the helicopters and jets in operation – is visible. Most of it lies hidden under the surface. For example, its smoothly functioning Operations Centre – nobody sees it, but it plays a vital role for every mission. Or a stable radio network, which also bridges the dead zones in the Alps where there is no reception. Inconspicuous, unspectacular, yet essential – and absolutely indispensable for every mission.

We are all in agreement that air rescue should be swift, efficient and of top quality – but also affordable. And that is exactly what Rega offers. There is no conceivable reason to question our tried-and-tested principles. Rega offers the Swiss population not only minimal, but also optimal emergency medical care. And to come back to the question of the benchmark: we are talking about people in emergency situations, therefore the benchmark cannot be set high enough.

Yours sincerely



*Ernst Kohler,
CEO/Chairman of the Management Board*



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Chief Financial Officer

Interview with Ulrich Graf,
Chairman of the Rega Foundation Board

“Quality is our highest priority”

Mr Graf, Rega has faced a great deal of criticism from various quarters over the last few months.

Has Rega made mistakes?

In material terms, we've done everything right. The patronage contributions are consistently used to deliver high quality to our patients. That is the yardstick by which we are measured, and we can't be accused of any wrongdoing in that respect. In terms of communication, we may have held back too long and engaged in too little plain talking.

Rega is dispensing with ZEW certification as from 2014.

Will Rega's credibility not suffer as a result?

No. We have decided not to renew ZEW certification because it has never been right for Rega. Rega is not and never has been a traditional aid organisation. Over the past years, we have always walked a fine line between extending and not extending certification.

The Foundation Board Executive Committee made the decision unanimously after lengthy discussion. Rega will still be subject to strict accounting standards and publish a transparent Annual Report. We have always been a transparent organisation and will remain so in the future.

You say that Rega is not a traditional aid organisation.

What is it then?

Rega is not an aid organisation that is based on voluntary work. It is one of the most modern and efficient air-rescue organisations in the world. It costs Swiss taxpayers nothing at all, and every single franc of the patronage contributions we receive is reinvested in professional air-rescue services. Rega does not have a choice. As long as safety is not compromised, Rega's task is to serve the Swiss population, 365 days a year and 24 hours a day, by getting medical assistance to the scene of the accident in the shortest possible time.

Rega is supported by a large number of patrons.

How has this developed in recent years?

The trend shows that the Swiss people are very satisfied with Rega. For many years now, there has been a net increase in patron numbers of over 50,000 per annum, and we are set to reach the 2.5 million mark this year. The growth in patronage is an important indicator of our performance.

Following the various negative headlines during the summer news slump, are you worried that patronage figures will fall?

No. What counts is that we provide a high standard of service in the interests of our patrons and the Swiss population. This is how we are measured, and at no point in time has this been questioned. The quality of the service we provide is our highest priority. That will not change. Rega will continue to



Ulrich Graf

Ulrich Graf was born on 16 May 1945 in Winterthur. He is married and has two grown-up children.

After gaining his Matura diploma at grammar school, he studied electrical engineering at the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology (ETH) in Zurich. He subsequently became Technical Director at Procalor AG in Zurich, before moving to Bauer Kaba in 1976, where he held the position of CEO at several of the Group's companies. In 1984, Ulrich Graf was appointed member of the Executive Management and in 1989, member of the Board of Directors of Kaba Holding AG in Rümlang. From 1990 to 2006, he was CEO and Delegate to the Board of Directors, and became Chairman in 2006.

Other positions include: Chairman of the Board of Directors, Dätwyler Holding AG (CH); Griesser Holding AG (CH); Member of the Board of Directors, Georg Fischer AG, (CH); Sauter AG (CH), Feller AG (CH); Member of the Presidential Council, Dekra e.V. (DE).

In 1966, Ulrich Graf qualified as a military pilot and flew various types of aircraft and helicopters for the Swiss Air Force. Between 1988 and 1995, he commanded the 2nd Air Transport Squadron and subsequently served as Head of Air Transport Operations. He is still active as a pilot today and maintains close links with the aviation world.

Since 2001, Ulrich Graf has been a member of the Rega Foundation Board, which appointed him Chairman as of 1 January 2012.

prove to its patrons that they are absolutely right to put their trust in us.

Criticism has also been voiced about salary levels.

Does Rega pay its staff too much?

As a modern air rescue organisation with a team of highly qualified specialists, Rega must measure up to other, commercial employers. Our doctors, for example, are on a comparable level with hospital physicians, our pilots with their counterparts at Swiss or in the Swiss Army. We want the best staff for our patients, and they need to be compensated for their work, not excessively, but in line with the market. Hay Group Switzerland, which specialises in salary comparisons, has confirmed for many years that Rega's pay levels are fair and appropriate.

Why have you reduced your own remuneration?

The level of compensation for the Chairman of the Foundation Board was set long before my time and has been disclosed in the Annual Report for many years. When I discovered what a furore my remuneration had caused in the media, I decided to reduce it from CHF 90,000 to CHF 15,000.

And Ernst Kohler's salary? Is that not too high for a non-profit foundation?

As I said earlier, Rega is not a traditional aid organisation. And believe me, Ernst Kohler is the perfect man for the job and has already justified his salary many times over. I believe that, given my many years of managerial experience, I am in a position to judge this. The Executive Committee of the Foundation Board shares my view that the demands placed on the CEO and the complexity of his tasks fully justify the salary he receives. The Rega CEO has a long list of responsibilities. For example, he is responsible for the helicopter and jet operations, the flight aviation school, and the maintenance and development division – all areas that are subject to international standards.

To reiterate: Ernst Kohler is doing an excellent job and is more than worth what he is paid. The professionalism and passion that goes into Rega's work strengthens my view each day anew.

The TCS in Canton Aargau and Air-Glaciers in the Bernese Oberland are competing with Rega in the field of air rescue. Why is Rega so set against competition?

Rega has nothing against competition. However, it only works if the same rules apply to everyone. It is simply not acceptable that Rega has to bear the high infrastructure costs, while a handful of competitors can concentrate solely on the lucrative missions.

Let's take an iceberg as a metaphor. What you can generally see of air rescue is just a very small part of the whole. The largest part is not immediately visible from the outside, but it is indispensable for professional emergency assistance from the air. A modern Operations Centre, a full-coverage radio network, an independent maintenance division and sound crew training structures are just part of an almost endless list. Everything on that list has to be financed. If competitors then come along and pick out a few lucrative missions, it is ultimately at the expense of a well-balanced system that is 60 percent financed by patronage. These competitors can only function with their limited operational scope because

they know that in an emergency Rega will be there. This manner of thinking is simply not tenable in the long term, and it is detrimental to quality. Competition, yes. But only on a level playing field.

What do you mean by "a level playing field"?

The established and accepted standards in modern-day air rescue on the one hand, and providing a service for every kind of mission on the other. We have stressed over and over again that we welcome competitors who are prepared to work to the same standards as ourselves. The Rega partner base in Geneva is the perfect example of this kind of cooperation, and it shows that Rega always takes a positive view of developments that create added value for the patient. However, we cannot support developments that ultimately cause quality to deteriorate.

Let's speak in clear terms. What sets Rega apart from the competition?

Rega is on standby around the clock, 365 days a year, to provide medical assistance wherever it is required – unconditionally and to anyone who needs us. During daylight hours, we are in the air within five minutes and at night within 30 minutes, and can be anywhere in Switzerland within 15 minutes' flying time. That also makes us the backup for the "cherry pickers" whenever, for whatever reason, they are unable or unwilling to turn out. What would happen, I wonder, if we came up with some spurious reason for not responding or did not have the capability to do so: we would be sure to hit the headlines then.

Being available around the clock costs a lot of money, around CHF 200 a minute at the current utilisation rate of our helicopters and jets. It is well known that the insurance providers do not pay us even half that amount. Around 40 percent of the costs of our services can be passed on to insurance companies; 60 percent is covered by patronage contributions.

Not one of our competitors is in a position to produce a balanced income statement on the strength of invoiced services. Not even if they only "pick the cherries".

Where does Rega see itself in ten years?

Rega is already a very dedicated and highly professional service provider at every level. Nevertheless, it is an inherent part of our work that we go on getting better and better. We must not allow ourselves to sit back and take it easy. Ten years from now, we still want to be among the best in the world and even more professional across the board. But we want to achieve this – and this something that is close to all of our hearts – without losing sight of our roots. That means constantly putting the patient's wellbeing at the centre of everything we do and always erring on the side of the patient in cases of doubt.

Rega is not a traditional aid organisation, but it will always be a non-profit foundation that provides a public service at absolutely no cost to the taxpayer and is committed to unreservedly serving its patients and the Swiss population.

Interview: Karin Hörhager

A weekend full of fear

Disaster just around the corner

For Domenico Ancarola, a short trip to the enchanting Sardinian countryside quickly turned into a nightmare. Ancarola, who hails from Canton Ticino, was seriously injured in a car accident and, after several days in hospital in Cagliari, was flown home in a Rega ambulance jet.





Domenico Ancarola

Saturday, 26 January 2013 – It was a beautiful, sunny winter's day, the temperature an unseasonably warm 20 degrees. Domenico Ancarola had arrived in Sardinia the day before to take care of some administrative matters connected with a holiday home he was buying on the island. He then made his way to Pula in Cagliari province, where some friends were waiting for him.

After lunch, his friend Salvatore invited him to test-drive his new off-road vehicle with him in the sand dunes. "I wasn't that keen at first. I was planning to drive to Cagliari to do some sightseeing, but I let myself be persuaded after all," Ancarola recalls. He sat behind the wheel of the four-by-four and his friend climbed into the passenger seat. He drove about 30 metres, then turned round. On the way back down the dune, the vehicle suddenly got stuck in the sand on the last bend, and both driver and passenger were catapulted out with tremendous force. As they lay on the ground, the vehicle overturned several times, hitting Domenico and finally coming to a standstill a few metres away.

"I hope this is just a bad dream"

Domenico remembers those moments as if they were yesterday. "For a split second everything went black, and all I could feel was a stabbing pain. I opened my eyes and found myself lying on the ground." It took him all his strength just to sit up. His left collarbone was protruding from his skin, and he had a sharp pain around his ribs that made it difficult to breathe. "I hope this is just a bad dream. Please turn back the clock and rewind this horrific film," was the first thing that crossed Domenico's mind.

Slowly his head cleared. He looked at his friend, who had also been thrown from the vehicle but fortunately had only suffered a few bruises. "Salvatore was in shock. He kept slapping me and telling me to keep calm," he recalls. In the meantime, the pain was getting more unbearable, and Domenico tried to push his collarbone back into place.

By this time, some people who had witnessed the accident had come rushing onto the beach, and they immediately notified the emergency services. The ambulance arrived at the scene less than 15 minutes later but could not reach the injured man because the beach was on private property and fenced in. After around half an hour, the rescue services fortunately managed to find a resident to give them the access codes so that the ambulance could get to Domenico.

For Domenico, lying in the sand in a lot of pain, this wait seemed like an eternity. He decided to make an emergency call using the Rega app on his iPhone. "I was scared, and I was thinking about my family and my children in Ticino, but the gentle, friendly voice of the Rega employee at the other end of the line in Zurich calmed me down straight away," Domenico recalls. The flight coordinator checked the situation, and told the patient not to worry and to let the Rega Operations Centre know as soon as he arrived in hospital.



The test-drive comes to an abrupt end



The picturesque yet demanding approach flight to Lugano



Now Domenico can smile again

From beach to hospital bed

The patient was examined immediately on arrival at the hospital accident and emergency unit in Cagliari. His injuries were serious: four ribs with multiple fractures had damaged the lining of his lungs, which threatened to collapse at any time. The consultant therefore ordered him to be moved immediately to the surgical ward at Cagliari University Hospital, where he underwent various examinations and was well cared for.

A team at the Rega Centre in Zurich had already begun working on his case. They analysed the patient dossier from Cagliari and, after a full assessment of the situation, started organising his return to Switzerland. At 6.48 am on 30 January, the Rega ambulance jet took off from Zurich Airport for Cagliari. The patient's condition was stable, and there was no reason for him not to be flown home. The plane landed at 8.05 am in Cagliari. On board were two pilots, a doctor and a nurse. The patient was taken from the hospital to the airport by ambulance. With the customs formalities quickly taken care of, the air ambulance took off at 9.04 am for Lugano, where it landed just over an hour later. "I received outstanding care in the hospital in Cagliari, but the bed on the Rega jet felt like the most comfortable I had ever laid on. As soon as I got on board, I felt really at home," is how Domenico describes his repatriation flight to Ticino.

A new take on life

After his arrival at Lugano Regional Hospital, it was seven more days before his condition was stable enough for an operation. "Once the attending physician had read the report and spoken to the consultant, he told me that I'd been very lucky and I could stop worrying. Apart from all the other injuries, I had also suffered a heavy blow close to my spine, so things could have turned out much worse," Domenico relates.

After his experience, he now sees many things differently. "Since then, I've told all my work colleagues about what happened and urged them to become Rega patrons," he adds.

Federica Mauri

Bis er fliegen gelernt hat,
braucht's die Rega.



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Rega's double mission for a family
in Hoch-Ybrig

When fate strikes twice

If statistics are anything to go by, one in twelve people will require Rega's assistance at some time in their lives. At those odds, it is relatively unlikely that two children from the same family would have to be rescued by Rega in the space of a year and a half. Yet the story of the Huber family shows precisely what fate thinks of odds and statistics.



Nina in one of her first ski races

As I pull up at the smart-looking house, a thousand thoughts flash through my mind. What kind of family needs to be rescued by Rega twice? How are the two children today? Have the accidents had any lasting effects? Will they want to talk about what happened, or will it be unpleasant for them?

Their mother opens the door and I am immediately welcomed into their home. Eric, an athletic looking 15-year-old, grins at me from the living room. His 12-year-old sister Nina also says hello, friendly but a little distant at first. Together they take me out into the garden, where their father is busy with the barbecue. It smells delicious.

While their parents are preparing dinner, Eric tells me about his life and his encounter with Rega – and fires questions at me. They are the questions of a bright, inquisitive, junior volunteer fireman, who wants to know everything about how Rega operates. And that is in spite of the fact that, unlike most children of his age, he has already had direct experience of more than one Rega mission himself.

“I was doing 110 km/h”

Brother and sister are both enthusiastic ski racers. Both are active members of the Hausen am Albis Ski Club. Despite his young age, Eric is already a proficient and experienced skier and regularly takes part in races, which is precisely what he was doing on 26 February 2011. On this day, an open downhill ski race was held on the Spirstock, in the Hoch-Ybrig ski area. For Eric, this was a home game; he knows the run like the back of his hand. “I caught an edge with my ski just as the speed

was being clocked,” he says. He remembers nothing of the fall itself, only that he had been going very fast and – the young sportsman adds with a glint in his eye – as his family had later told him: “I was doing 110 kilometres per hour!”

The horrific fall left Eric lying dazed on the ski slope. The rescue team from the Hoch-Ybrig mountain railway rushed to the scene of the accident. Eric was complaining of severe back pain and had difficulty moving. The piste rescue team called out Rega. The crew of Rega 1 set out immediately and landed at the scene less than 15 minutes after the alarm was raised. Eric was flown to the Children's Hospital in Zurich with a suspected fracture of the lumbar vertebrae. Several anxious hours later, the doctors were able to assure the young skier that the accident had caused no permanent damage and that he would be able to resume his favourite hobby the following winter.

Eric talks to me quite openly about his accident. “I was always the unlucky one in the family. Broken bones, sprains, and then the bad fall during the race. All things that happen when you do a lot of sport.” And then he suddenly becomes serious. “I never thought that my sister would have an even worse accident.” By now Nina has also joined us, showing no signs of her original shyness as she bravely tells me about her accident in July 2012.

“Luckily I was wearing my helmet”

Together with their father Ralph, the siblings were spending a few days in Hoch-Ybrig, where both the youngsters ski in winter and like to spend time in the sum-



The Rega crew from the Zurich base flies Eric to hospital in its EC 145

mer, too. The three set off on their bikes to a farmyard to buy fresh yoghurt. Unusually, their dad cycled on ahead, with Eric and Nina following behind. They were riding on a good forest road with an asphalt and gravel surface. On the downhill stretch, they freewheeled all the way. A car approached them from the front, and the children slowed to let it pass. "I have no idea what happened next. I just lost control of my bike, and the next minute I was lying on the ground."

Nina looks at her father. "Luckily I was wearing my helmet, like you always told me." Eric, who was riding behind Nina, saw his sister fall and was in a state of shock. He shouted for his father, who immediately attended to his daughter. In the heat of the moment, nobody remembered the mobile phone in Ralph's pocket. Instead, he sent Eric back to the village to get help. And while Eric – still in shock – was racing back and organising assistance, his father remembered his mobile phone and called the Rega emergency number 1414.

The minutes until the rescue team arrived seemed never-ending to the father. The situation was almost unbearable: "It felt like hours. My daughter was bleeding heavily and in a lot of pain, and she was terrified. As a father, you just stand there and feel completely helpless." Nina also remembers the moment well: "Everything hurt. My head, my stomach. I was really scared that I was going to die."

When Nina's brother returned to the scene of the accident with the police and the head of the local piste rescue service (who knew the family well from the ski club), they could hear the whirr of a helicopter's rotor blades. The Rega crew from the Mollis base knew immediately that they needed to act fast. By this time the ambulance had also arrived, so they used it to move Nina to the small clearing in the forest where the helicopter had landed. "The Rega doctor was very nice and kept talking to me. I knew from Eric's accident that everyone was really kind, and that made me feel better." Nina gives me a sly grin. "The doctor did get on my nerves a



Eric in his element

Als ich im Heli lag hatte ich Angst! Ich wusste nicht, ob ich je wieder laufen kann. Doch bald erfuhr ich, nach intensiven Untersuchungen, dass ich nach dem Spitalaufenthalt wieder auf den Ski stehen werde. Die Rega ersparte mir viele schmerzvolle Minuten. Danke für eure rasche Rettung!

Eric Huber



Aviatiktalente gesucht



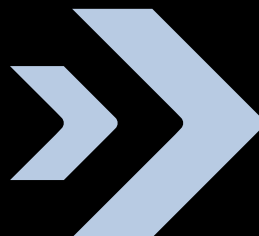
Vom Fliegen träumen – das kann jede(r). Du willst mehr. Du willst Deinen Traum wahr machen, ja mehr noch, Du willst Deinen Traum zum Beruf machen.

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bit. She said I wasn't allowed to go to sleep, but I was so tired. All I wanted to do was sleep, and she just kept waking me up."

"As parents, it's a relief to know that Rega is there"

Just like her brother a good year earlier, Nina was flown to the Children's Hospital in Zurich. There the Rega physician's suspicions were confirmed: a ruptured liver with internal bleeding and a minor head injury. "The surgeon had to work all through the night because of me. They had ten litres of blood ready," Nina tells me. She is relieved to have made a full recovery. What she regrets most of all is that she was unable to go on holiday to the seaside in Italy last year, and that she was not allowed to do sport for such a long time.

As we sit together for coffee – the children have gone off to pack for their upcoming and eagerly awaited Italian holiday – their parents tell me that it had not been easy for their children to come to terms with their accidents. "We've had to call Rega out twice, yet we never take unnecessary risks. Our children are always properly equipped: helmets, back protectors and whatever else they need. And yet the accidents still happened. Our children do not talk about their gratitude towards Rega – but they feel it all the same."

It is late when I say goodbye to Eric, Nina and their parents. On the way to my car, I ask the young volunteer fireman what he wants to do when he leaves school. "If it doesn't work out with the ski racing ... then a Rega paramedic!"

Karin Hörhager

Zum Glück gibt es die Rega!
Danke an das gesamte Rega-Team.
Nina Huber



The Da Vinci from the Mollis helicopter base comes to Nina's aid



One year after her accident, Nina is out and about again on her bicycle

The Rega Operations Centre takes emergency calls from near and far

Emergency numbers 1414 and +41 333 333 333

The Operations Centre can be described as the “heart” of Rega. This is where emergency calls come in around the clock from both within Switzerland and all over the world. The modern dispatch system in the new Operations Centre helps the flight coordinators organise assistance from the air more efficiently than ever.

Jet flight coordinator, Kathrin Zuberbühler, is listening carefully to the patient on the other end of the telephone line in Spain, while helicopter flight coordinator, Peter Salzgeber, is following the storm front over the Alps. Another working day on the third floor of the Rega Centre at Zurich Airport begins.

6.30 am, shift change

The night shift reports the night’s events to the day team and passes on any special information they need to know. This might be that a radio station is out of service for maintenance work, or that bad weather is hampering helicopter rescue in certain regions. Strikes abroad or volcanic eruptions are important pieces of information for the jet flight coordinators. This is followed by the individual briefings. Peter Salzgeber is briefed on the night’s missions, searches for missing persons, metrological conditions, crews at the helicopter bases, and organisation of livestock transport flights on behalf of mountain farmers, while Kathrin Zuberbühler is updated on the current status of the patients abroad, upcoming repatriations, authorisations and hotel reservations.

7.00 am, breakfast

All is quiet so far, but that can change from one minute to the next. The flight coordinators take the opportunity to have breakfast together whenever they

can, since breaks may be few and far between during shifts, especially in the high season.

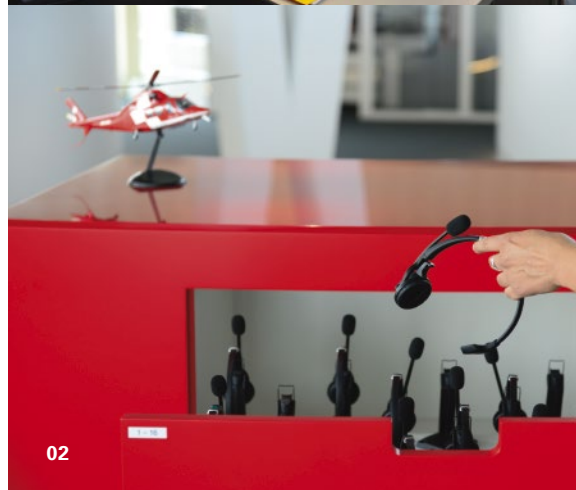
Refreshed, Kathrin Zuberbühler begins working on a planned mission in China. Her job is to organise visas for the Rega crew and obtain authorisation to fly over and land in the country. Then Swiss calls. A passenger has collapsed and there is no doctor on board the plane. Kathrin Zuberbühler puts the airline employee through to the Rega medical consultant, who will be able to give clear instructions and support to the Swiss crew by phone.

9.27 am, emergency call

Peter Salzgeber responds to the alarm from the Emergency Call Centre 144, which is reporting a serious traffic accident. The ambulance staff at the scene have requested a rescue helicopter. The situation is urgent. Within just a few seconds, the decision is made. The flight coordinator radios the appropriate Rega base and briefs the helicopter crew on the most important details of the accident, particularly the coordinates. During the flight, he provides them with other information. He often takes calls from the Emergency Call Centre 144; 80 to 90 percent of emergency calls come from Rega’s mission partners – the majority via emergency number 144. Other partners include the police, hospitals, the Swiss Alpine Club (SAC) rescue teams and ski piste patrol staff.



01



02

- 01 Missions are organised around the clock
- 02 When they start work, each flight coordinator first picks up their headset
- 03 Change of shift in the helicopter section – briefing
- 04 Change of shift in the jet section – briefing



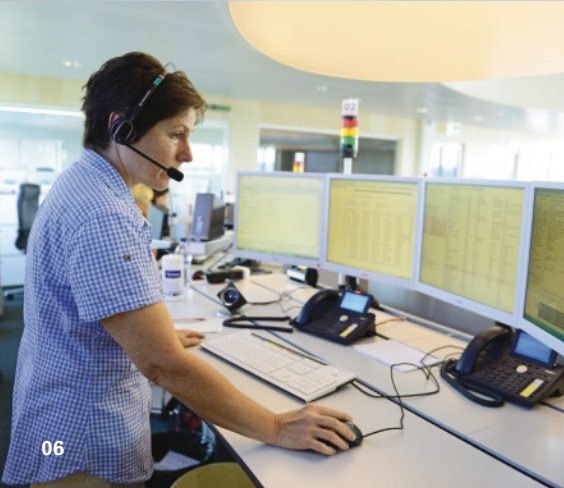
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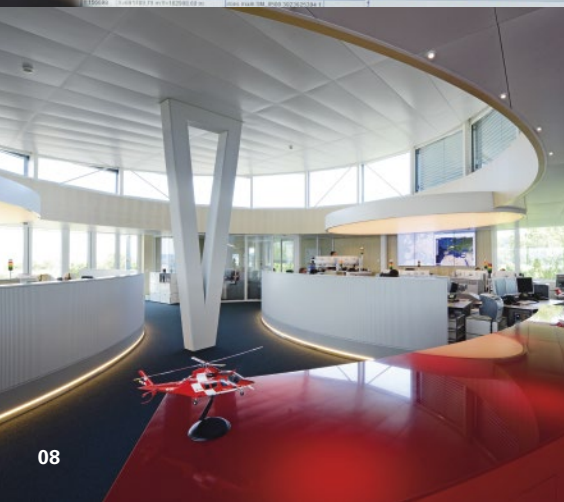


06

- 05 Breaks are not always possible, so they are appreciated all the more
- 06 Kathrin Zuberbühler – concentrated work
- 07 Peter Salzgeber pinpoints the accident site on the map
- 08 The “heart” of Rega – where emergency calls are received from all over the world



07



08

Meanwhile, Kathrin Zuberbühler is filling out a form with a patient’s medical details for an airline; depending on the patient’s symptoms or injuries, it may be possible to fly them home on a scheduled flight. The airline’s medical consultant decides about the available options. If the decision is positive, the flight coordinators organise oxygen and obtain the necessary authorisations for the medical equipment needed by the Rega team who will accompany the patient on the flight.

11.05 am, organisation

Kathrin Zuberbühler has spent a lot of time on the phone since breakfast. It rings again. An accident insurance company is calling about the coverage of costs for a patient in Spain. It is important that the insurance providers are involved right from the start. She now takes a look at various offer requests and issues some quotations.

Next Kathrin turns her attention to organising the handling at Mombasa Airport in Kenya for a Rega jet that will be landing there that evening. She has already arranged for an ambulance to take the patient to the airport the next day. She then reserves a hotel for the Rega crew so that the flight physician, nurse and pilots can rest before the return flight, as the law stipulates.

2.19 pm, languages

Right now, Peter Salzgeber is speaking Italian. He answers the next call in French. It would be impossible to work here without being fluent in the local languages. Kathrin Zuberbühler is back in contact with Spain; it goes without saying that she is conversing in Spanish. Apart from the official Swiss languages, English is indispensable, and knowledge of other languages such as Portuguese, Chinese, Russian and Czech also proves very useful.

The patient from Mombasa calls. Kathrin Zuberbühler explains the procedure for the repatriation flight to her and her relatives, and then informs the hospital.

At 2.30 pm, it is time for the afternoon briefing and the end of our two flight coordinators’ shift. Like the 6.30 am changeover before it, the early shift hands over smoothly to the late shift and briefs the new team on the day’s missions and other news.

Depending on the season, Rega schedules mid-shift and reserve services, and the jet and helicopter flight coordinators also help each other out.

5.48 pm, flight tracking

Irrelevant of whether a rescue mission is carried out by jet or helicopter, all flights are tracked and monitored from start to finish. This way, the flight coordinators know the exact position of the aircraft and their crews at all times thanks to satellite transmission.

It is the flight coordinator’s job to keep everybody updated with information, such as whether a flight will land on schedule and not. The cost of foreign hospital treatment must also be taken care of in advance, otherwise problems could arise when it comes to discharging the patient. Rega’s medical consultants inform the appropriate hospitals in Switzerland of the impending admission of the repatriated patients.

Depending on the length of a mission, the crew’s schedule has to be adjusted so that they can comply with the prescribed rest periods.

7.51 pm, dinner

If the volume of operations permits, one of the team cooks dinner for the entire crew in the kitchen next to the Operations Centre, for they rarely have the opportunity to leave their workplace during their shift.

10.10 pm, handover

Things have quietened down, and the night shift is about to begin. At 10.30 pm, the late shift hands over the on-going missions and outstanding jobs, some of which can be taken care of during the night. In distant countries, in particular, patients and hospitals are often easier to reach at night as it is daytime in their part of the world.

Ariane Güngerich



Take a look at our video, and see how the new dispatch system supports our flight coordinators in an optimal way:
www.operations.rega.ch

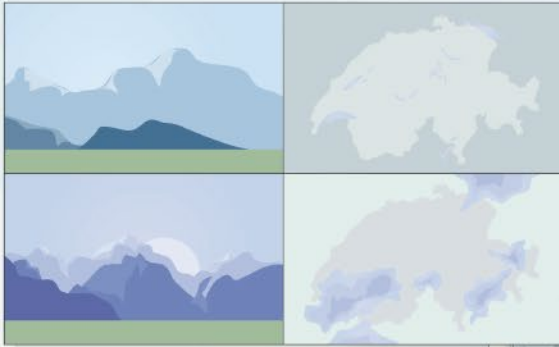
The place where everything comes together

Rega's brand new

Emergency calls from seriously injured and ill people day and night, 365 days a year. It is from here that Rega monitors all the missions both within Switzerland and all over the world.

Multi-functional monitor wall, missions in Switzerland

- webcams for providing live weather data
- precipitation radar
- current locations of the Rega helicopters



Rega radio network, missions in Switzerland

- Rega's own radio system
- 42 radio stations
- provides coverage virtually everywhere in Switzerland, including in high-Alpine regions
- receives emergency calls via the public emergency channel
- is also used by the Swiss Air Force

Helicopter Operations Centre

- dispatches all the resources operated by Rega and its partner organisations (e.g. Alpine Rescue Switzerland)
- is permanently in charge of all rescue teams
- ensures full and continuous communication with the rescue services

Office software

- processes mission data for administrative purposes
- Internet/e-mails

Geographical Information System (GIS)

- digital maps
- search functions using CH coordinates
- field and meadow names
- visual display of winter sports regions, Swiss Alpine Club huts, hospitals, etc.
- display of emergency calls via Rega app

Input screen for mission data

- overview of current missions
- overview of planned missions
- checklists for various mission types (avalanches, mountain accidents)

Communication system

- telephone
- address lists
- Polycom (police and rescue services radio system)
- pager alarm for Alpine Rescue Switzerland

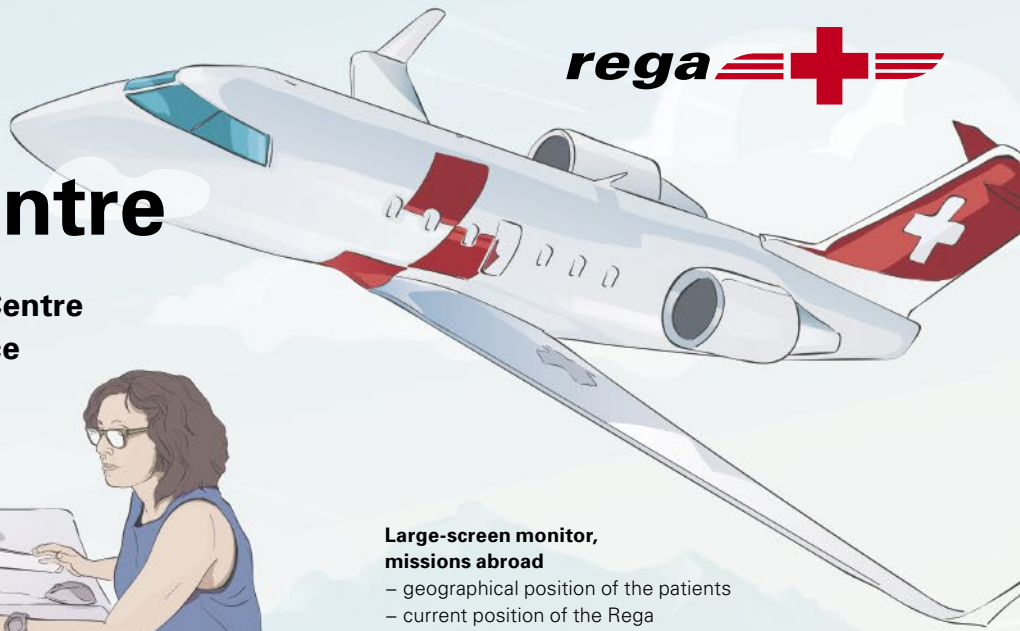
Radio workplace

- overview of the current location of all Rega helicopters
- Rega radio system
- second, redundant radio system
- overview of the 42 Rega radio stations in Switzerland



Operations Centre

People are received by the Operations Centre
 at Rega where emergency assistance
 is being carried out



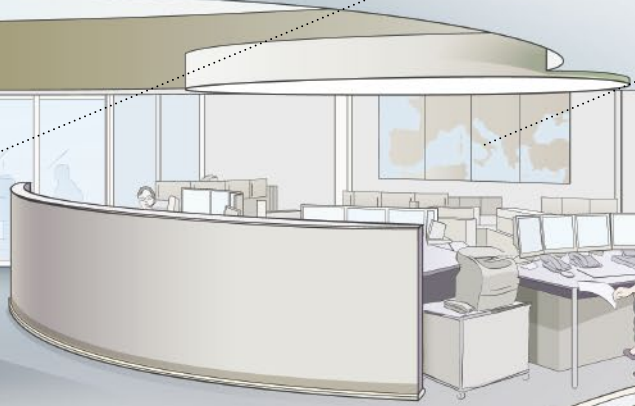
Large-screen monitor, missions abroad

- geographical position of the patients
- current position of the Rega ambulance jets



Medical Advisory Service

- advises patients abroad
- is in regular contact with the attending doctor on location
- informs the patient's next-of-kin
- advises the crews of commercial airlines when medical problems occur on board



Dispatch

- organises the flight aspects of repatriations
- calculates the wind conditions
- obtains landing permits
- acts as alarm centre for SAR, the search and rescue service for aircraft in Switzerland, on behalf of the Swiss government

Jet Operations Centre

- advises and takes care of patients abroad
- organises and coordinates missions abroad
- arranges for patients to be repatriated by means of air ambulances, scheduled airlines and ground ambulances



ELS map

- digital world map
- locations of hospitals worldwide
- detailed information about foreign
 - hospitals
 - airports
 - ground ambulances
 - air ambulances
 - crew hotels

Operation coordination system EKOS

- input of data about patients, hospitals
- contacts on location
- medical clarifications
- conversation protocols
- operation planning

Communication system

- telephone/radio/SMS
- alarm calls via Rega app
- contact addresses worldwide

Office software

- current situation regarding safety and threat in crisis areas
- "Easy Help" manual
- Internet/e-mails



Rega crews make history

Nature sets our limits

Rega crews are always standing by, ready to help people in an emergency, around the clock and every day of the year. Yet sometimes even they have their limitations, such as when the weather conditions are too harsh or poor visibility makes it impossible to fly. Last year, 560 missions had to be cancelled or aborted. Even though other help is available for those in distress, these moments are frustrating for the air rescue teams.



Lead pilot of the mountain helicopter fleet, Mario Agustoni, in front of his new training apparatus, the flight simulator

Dense cloud, poor visibility. Rega pilot Mario Agustoni is flying the AgustaWestland Da Vinci towards the Inselspital University Hospital. A patient is being transferred from Ticino to Berne. Strong winds are also hampering the flight. Seated next to Agustoni is paramedic Giovanni Beldi. Their conversation is brief and businesslike. Both are fully focused. Agustoni requests permission from the tower of Bern-Belp Airport to make an IFR (instrument flight) approach towards the hospital helipad. Permission is promptly granted, and the helicopter cuts through the thick cloud down towards its destination.

Less than five minutes later, the Da Vinci sets down on the roof of the hospital. The rotor blades slowly come to a standstill. “Good job. Debriefing in five minutes,” says a voice from the rear. Thomas Gnägi, rescue pilot and Rega flight instructor, presses a few buttons and the light comes on. What looked every bit like a real-life situation and was enough to make Agustoni and Beldi break out in a sweat, turns out to be a simulation, a training exercise. We are at the Swiss Aviation Training facility, where Rega has been operating a flight simulator for its mountain helicopter fleet since the beginning of the year.

Pioneering spirit, then and now

Investment in the flight simulator is indicative of the same pioneering spirit that made the founding of Swiss Air-Rescue possible around 60 years ago and continues to shape Rega to this day. The search continually goes on for better, faster and more efficient ways of providing emergency assistance.

Rega is currently focusing on extending the operational possibilities of its rescue flights. Or as Mario Agustoni, lead pilot of the mountain helicopter fleet, puts it: “Minimising the limitations on flying, beating the weather, cutting the number of cancelled or aborted missions to a minimum, and in this way being able to help even more people in distress.” There is con-

siderable scope for such developments where helicopter operations are concerned, as they are generally still conducted under visual flight rules. Rega is therefore breaking new ground with its endeavours in this area. It is currently working with partners such as the Swiss Air Force, the Federal Office of Civil Aviation and Skyguide on ways of establishing IFR (see right column) for helicopter operations and thereby significantly extending the deployment options of its aircraft.

The helicopter simulator is an important milestone for Rega within the scope of this project. For the pilots, the introduction of IFR flights means above all one thing: tough training. The IFR project extends beyond the pilots, however. Rega’s maintenance division is also affected, since all eleven Da Vinci helicopters need to be fitted with IFR-compatible cockpits and certified accordingly. This means a lot of work, considering it takes around four weeks to complete a single upgrade.

You might ask if it is worth all the effort. Rega certainly thinks it is. When it comes to saving lives, only the best is good enough. All the effort put into the IFR project is to the benefit of the patient. In future, Rega will be able to help even more people than ever before. At the same time, the IFR pilot training will increase flight safety on the many night missions. Rega is keen to play this pioneering role. With strong and supportive patrons behind it, Rega is able to sustain the pioneering spirit of yesteryear.

Update: 1 March 2013

The north of Switzerland is shrouded in a persistent high fog. The Rega base in Ticino receives a request to move a patient from the hospital in Lugano to Aarau. Rega pilot Mario Agustoni checks the weather conditions and decides – for the first time in Rega’s history – to fly an entire mission under instrument flight conditions. The transfer goes off without a hitch. A subsequent mission takes the crew into Germany to fly a patient back to the University Hospital in Zurich. Late at night, Rega 6 touches down at its home base in Locarno. Two people have received assistance – all thanks to flights that just two weeks earlier would have not been possible. The Rega crew from Ticino has made history!

Karin Hörhager

Visual Flight Rules, VFR

A visual flight describes a flight in which the pilot operates the aircraft by sight. Visual flights are used in general aviation, mainly at low altitudes, by light and sport aircraft, and also in low-altitude military operations. The pilot controls the spatial position of the aircraft visually and relative to other aircraft. The spatial position is judged in relation to points of reference outside the aircraft, generally the horizon. Visual flights therefore depend on factors such as weather conditions, which must permit a certain minimum visibility range, and on the pilot not flying through cloud and losing sight of the essential points of reference outside the aircraft. The pilot must also maintain certain horizontal and vertical minimum distances from clouds in order to prevent collisions. If these conditions cannot be met, visual flights are not permitted.

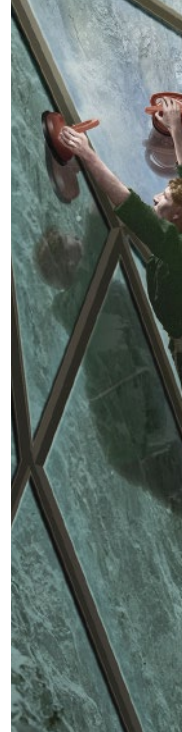
Instrument Flight Rules, IFR

Instrument flight refers to a flight in which the position of the aircraft is controlled without any outside visual reference and purely with the assistance of the on-board instruments and air traffic controllers on the ground. This makes it possible to fly in cloud and with restricted visibility. Instrument flights make flying largely independent of the weather conditions.

(Source: Wikipedia)

Alpine Museum: "Helvetia Club" exhibition to mark the 150th anniversary of the Swiss Alpine Club

Switzerland without the Swiss Alpine Club (SAC) is as inconceivable as Switzerland without mountains. One hundred and fifty years after the SAC was founded, the exhibition "Helvetia Club" at the Swiss Alpine Museum looks back over the club's eventful past, as well as forwards to the future. The building at Helvetiaplatz is being transformed into a history-steeped mountain chalet, right in the centre of Berne. In the recreation room, kitchen and sleeping quarters of the chalet, the exhibition tells tales of sensations on the summit and descents into the valley, of camaraderie and conflicts, of women's issues and environmental concerns. The climb up to this mountain hut is, for once, not steep, but the panorama is all the more surprising. The exhibition runs until 30 March 2014. Further information can be found at: www.alpinesmuseum.ch



Rega in the classroom

Would you like to take Rega as a theme in your school or kindergarten lessons? Whether you want to approach the subject in a fun and playful way, or examine more demanding areas of air rescue, on our website you can find a wide variety of information suitable for kindergarten, primary and secondary school classes. You can download the information free of charge at: www.multimedia.rega.ch

"Schweizer Geist" documentary now available on DVD

What are the clichés, myths and true values relating to our country? The documentary, "Schweizer Geist" (Swiss spirit), which was screened in cinemas this spring, examines these issues in closer detail. Based on portraits of all kinds of different people, the film takes viewers on a tour of discovery through their home country. One of the many protagonists is Rega helicopter pilot Corsin Sialm. He talks about the dream of being able to fly and about his own personal relationship with Switzerland. The 89-minute film has now also been released as a DVD (in German only), and can be ordered at: www.schweizergeist.ch/dvd



In an exclusive offer for you, our patrons, we are giving away 10 DVDs in a prize draw.

You can take part in the draw online via www.wettbewerb.rega.ch

The closing date for entries is 20 December 2013.





© Swiss Alpine Museum/Maja Gehrig



Illustrated book for helicopter enthusiasts

This book of photographs by Martin Dällenbach about the Alouette III SA319B helicopter is a lovingly compiled witness of the times. Published in both an impressive A3 and a more handy A4 size, it illustrates, in a series of spectacular pictures spread over 256 pages, the life and operational activities of this helicopter type, which was used by Rega on a daily basis for many years. There are also plenty of detailed pictures of the various components and equipment. The illustrated book is only printed on request or in small print runs, which explains its high price (A3: CHF 400.– /A4: CHF 280.–). It can be ordered through the shop of the Swiss Air-Rescue Association: www.srfw.org

App tips



Rega – our emergency app for you

When you use Rega's free app to raise the alarm, your location coordinates are automatically transmitted to the Operations Centre.



Uepaa! – safety in the mountains even where there is no mobile network

Raises the alarm, directly from phone to phone, completely independent of mobile network coverage.



Itineris – for safe travel abroad

Allows direct access via your smartphone to the travel advice published by the Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs (FDFA).



Travel and goods – the app from the Swiss Customs Administration

Simplifies your entry into Switzerland and helps you decide which souvenirs, electronic articles, etc. to buy when you are abroad.



myViavac – the Swiss electronic vaccination record

With this app, you always have your vaccination records with you – compact and convenient.

Rega receives HAI safety award

The international umbrella organisation, Helicopter Association International (HAI), has awarded Rega its Operator Safety Award for 2012 in recognition of over 6,000 accident-free flight hours, as well as its outstanding contribution towards the promotion of safety and safety awareness.

In his letter to Rega, HAI President Matthew S. Zuccaro writes: "You can be proud that you meet the requirements for this distinction."

LORIS & NICOLAS FALQUET

Mammut Team
Profi-Freerider und Extremski-
Filmemacher Huck & Chuck

Foto: Stefan Schlumpf



PULSE Barryvox

- Digital-analoges 3-Antennen-Gerät mit akustischer Benutzerführung
- 360°-Kompassanzeige in Echtzeit für einfache Ortung
- Schnelles und präzises Markieren bei Mehrfachverschüttung

Removable Airbag System

- Ein Lawenairbag-System für mehrere Rucksäcke
- Bewährte Snowpulse Airbag Technology
- Gesamtgewicht ab 2300 g inkl. Kartusche (je nach Rucksackmodell)

www.mammut.ch/safety



MAMMUT
Absolute alpine.



Rega Memory game with new pictures

Designer Mo Richner is skilled at presenting Rega in a creative manner. She has already designed a series of art cards, as well as the lovingly illustrated Rega Memory sets. Now this popular game for aviation enthusiasts of all ages has been further enhanced by 20 new picture pairs. The new Rega Memory game can be purchased from our online shop at www.shop.rega.ch or using the order card on the Shop insert in the centre of this Magazine. We wish you much fun with this colourful brain workout!



MAMMUT
Absolute alpine.

By professionals for professionals

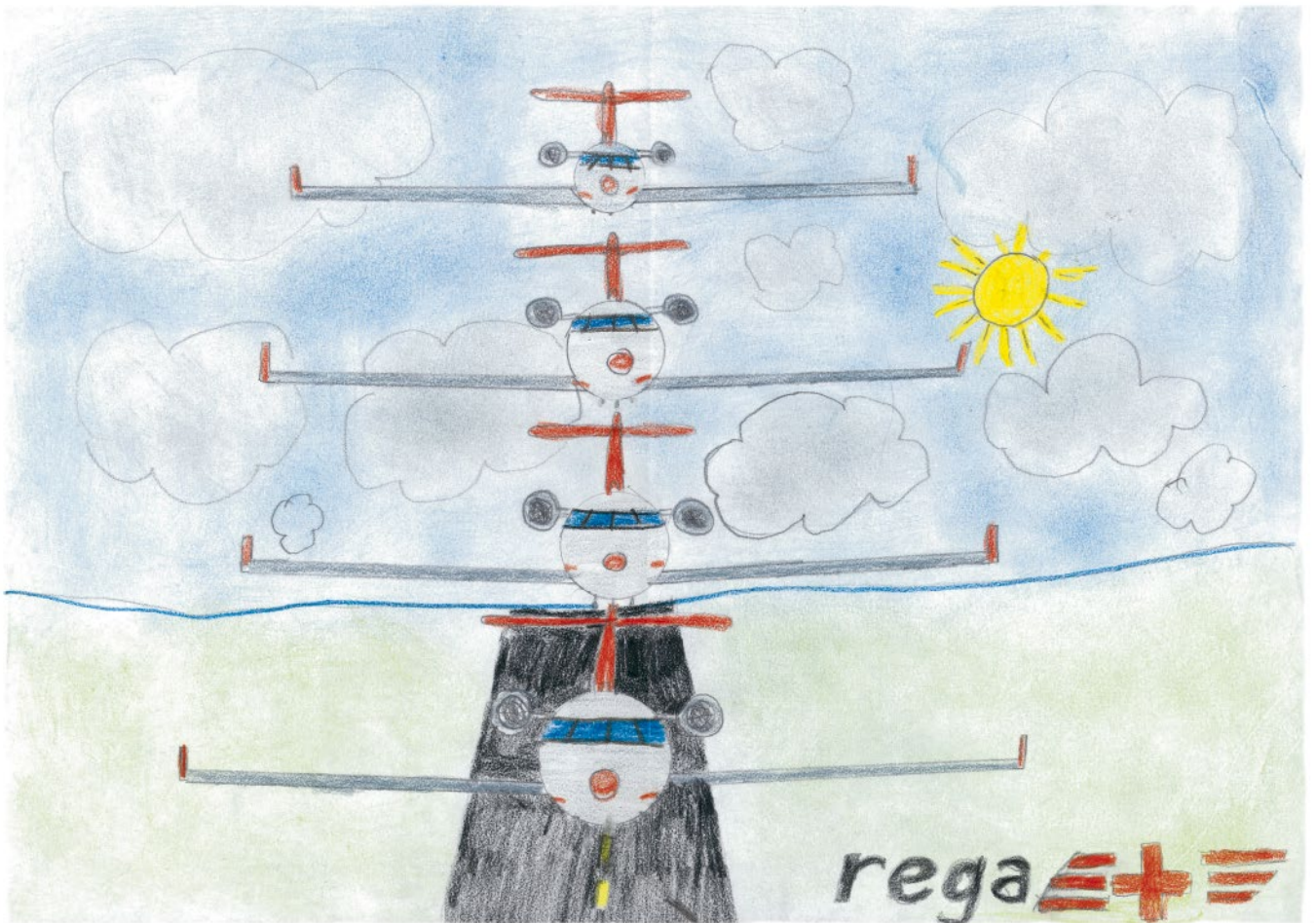
Rega's rescue teams are being kitted out with new gear for the winter. The Swiss mountain sports equipment supplier, Mammut, has designed and produced the new clothing in close collaboration with the crew members. The new outfits will be delivered towards the end of 2013.

Exclusive photos of the brand new apparel will be published in the next issue of 1414. We can't wait!

New patient trolley for Rega

Once the Rega helicopter has landed on or next to the hospital, the crew wheel the patient inside on a transport trolley. However, until now, there has been no one apparatus that fulfils all the various demands made of it. For this reason, Rega asked the college of technology, HSR Hochschule für Technik, in Rapperswil to develop a suitable product that is lighter, more functional and more robust than the current models. The students from the faculty of Mechanical Engineering | Innovation planned and constructed 14 prototypes, and the ideal patient trolley for the future will be built from the best ideas. In the long-term, it is planned that all 150 hospital helipads in Switzerland will be equipped with these trolleys.





Fadri, aged 10

REGA FOR KIDS

Spot the ten differences

365 days a year, 24 hours a day, in summer and in winter, the Rega ambulance jets are standing by, ready to fly patients from countries all over the world back home to Switzerland. When our illustrator copied this picture, he made ten mistakes. Can you find them?



Solution:
You can find the ten mistakes on our website at: www.1414.rega.ch



© Illustration: Joggi/Peter Jost

Competition

Join the dots and answer the following question:

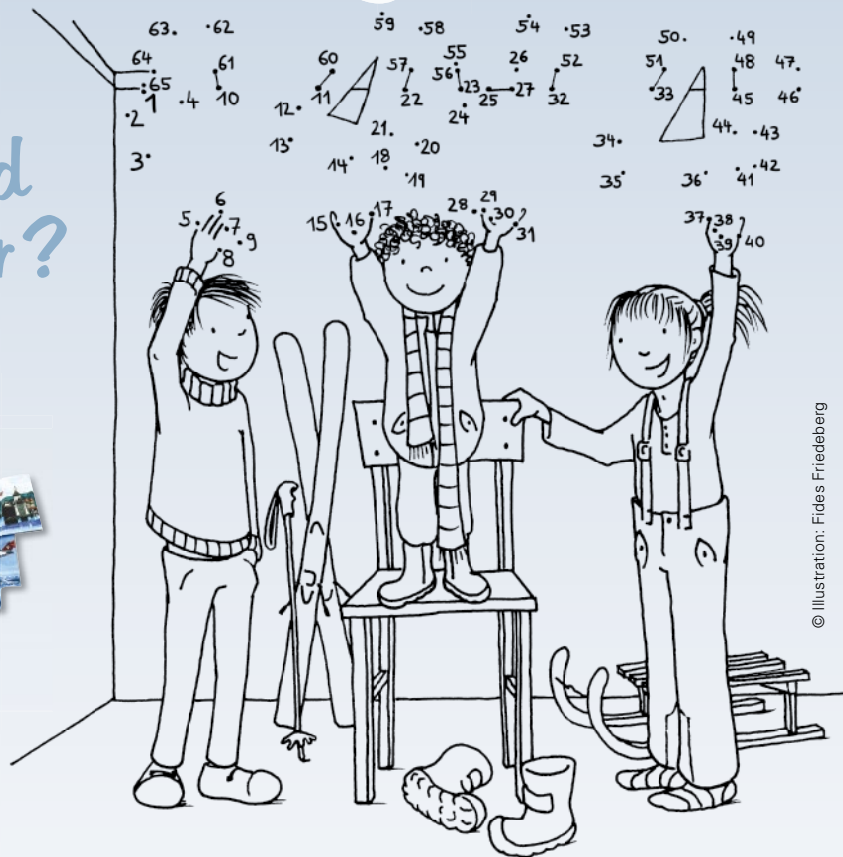
What can you see and what does it stand for?

Write the answers on a postcard and send by **20 December 2013** at the very latest to:

Swiss Air-Rescue Rega
"Quiz" Patrons' Magazine 1414
PO Box 1414
8058 Zurich Airport

Ten winners drawn from the correct answers will each receive a **Rega Memory game with 40 picture pairs** worth CHF 39.

Good luck!



© Illustration: Fides Friedenberg

Solution from issue no. 80: The correct answer is **rescue hoist**.

Each of the following have won a rock-grey Rega shoulder bag: Dario Bissig, Bürglen (UR); Niclas Bösch, Rieden (SG); Colombe Daninthe, Delémont; Olivier Fasching, Ennenda; Marc Grillon, Cornol; Julian Hintermann, Basel; Evelyn Holenstein, Lengnau (AG); Marc Skouvaklis, Chêne-Bougeries; Manuela Renica, Cadro; Wanda Rosa, S. Vittore

Congratulations!

Rega physician accompanies an injured passenger on a Swiss flight

Safari – attack – Rega

Myrtha and Dominik Mannhart love nature holidays. They meticulously planned their African trip and were looking forward to two weeks on safari in different national parks. But after five glorious days of their holiday in November 2011, everything changed dramatically. An attack on their safari bus left Myrtha Mannhart with a perforated lung.

Three people suddenly jump out from behind a rock and shots are fired. The bus driver and Myrtha Mannhart let out a scream. The driver is seriously injured and can only keep the bus under control for another 300 metres or so before he collapses dead from his shot wounds. The bus swerves off the road and careers over rocks and bushes.

Dominik Mannhart is uninjured and attempts to take the wheel of the bus, but he cannot reach from the back. He jumps out of the moving vehicle, intending to clamber back into the driver's seat, but he is too late. He can only stand and watch as the driverless bus heads directly for a ravine, drives over the edge, overturns on the ground below and finally comes to a halt around ten metres away in a dried-out riverbed. There is absolute silence. At this moment, a motorbike with two local men on it pulls up. Mannhart shouts for help. Together they anxiously climb down to the bus. The young men phone for help. Myrtha Mannhart has an injured lung and is finding it difficult to breathe and speak. One of the men carries her on his back and together they climb back up the slope. A military jeep is already waiting and takes the Mannharts to a nearby village, where the patient is placed on a stretcher in a doctor's surgery. Half the village is there, and everyone wants to help.

+41 333 333 333, first contact with Rega

Dominik Mannhart calls Rega. The flight coordinator advises him to go to the hospital in the capital city as quickly as possible. A little later, the lodge management arrives at the patient's bedside with their own doctor. A lot of discussion ensues, and the decision is made to drive to a small airfield. The patient is in a great deal of pain, and her lung gurgles with every breath. The journey is made more difficult by the potholes in the road and the elephants blocking the way. Dominik Mannhart is terrified for his wife. Finally, after what feels like an eternity, they arrive at the airfield, where a small Flying Doctors air ambulance lands. The medical crew tend



One and a half years later at the Rega Operations Centre, from where the repatriation mission was organised

to the patient very professionally and insert a chest drainage tube. The sky is growing darker, and the pilot urges them to hurry. They quickly take off and, after around three quarters of an hour in the air, they land in the capital. An ambulance drives the couple to the hospital. Some six hours after the accident, the diagnosis is confirmed: a projectile has penetrated the lung and lodged in a muscle in the patient's back. Broken ribs and bruising are causing additional pain.

Good care on every side

The hospital staff, tour operator, Swiss Embassy, police and local tourism representatives



all show their support and concern for the patient and her husband. The local people in particular are keen to offer their help, and profusely apologise for the incident. Although the couple are well looked after, they find it difficult to cope with all the commotion.

Dominik Mannhart is in regular contact with Rega. “Rega kept me very well informed,” he later reports. The Operations Centre organises seats on a scheduled Swiss flight and despatches a Rega physician to collect the patient. Five days later, Dr. Michael Lehmann arrives at the hospital in the evening. Myrtha Mannhart says: “He immediately gave us a sense of security. For me it was a very emotional moment, and I couldn’t stop myself crying.”

Dr. Lehmann checks the chest drain and examines the x-rays. Just one more night to go. On the day of their departure, the tube suddenly becomes dislodged. The Rega physician rushes straight to the hospital and makes sure that a new drain is inserted. After an x-ray to check that everything is in order, they are taken to the airport by ambulance. Here, too, Dr. Lehmann takes care of all the formalities. Once on the Swiss aircraft, Myrtha Mannhart feels safe and protected, and she even manages to sleep during the flight. The attention they receive and the collaboration between Dr. Lehmann and the Swiss crew is excellent, the couple later recall.

Back home again

An ambulance is waiting to collect Myrtha Mannhart straight from the plane at Zurich Airport. The journey to Chur and back into her familiar surroundings is a very emotional one for the patient. The Rega physician accompanies her to the hospital. The chest drain is removed three days after her arrival, and two days later she undergoes an operation to remove the projectile from her back muscle. Complications arise five days after she is discharged, forcing her to return to the hospital. She is finally allowed home at the end of November 2011, this time for good.

A fit 34-year old at the time of the attack, Myrtha Mannhart makes a very fast physical recovery. The follow-up examinations are satisfactory. Rega has done an outstanding job and made them feel safe again.

Why the driver of the safari bus was attacked remains a mystery to this day, but their experience has helped the Mannharts to put everyday problems into perspective. They now live and enjoy their lives more consciously. And they are planning more nature holidays in future.

Ariane Güngerich

Completely unaware of what is about to befall them, Myrtha and Dominik Mannhart enjoy their safari



Rescue mission in 1958 on the Theodul Pass (Canton Valais): the patient is carried to the aircraft on a sledge



Hermann Geiger waxes the skis of his Piper Super Cub before embarking on each mission



In 1957, Hermann Geiger is Swiss Air-Rescue's first helicopter pilot



Bell 47J: The Association of Swiss Consumers' Cooperative Societies (now Coop) presents Swiss Air-Rescue with its first helicopter of its own

Born to fly, destined to help

Hermann Geiger – aviation pioneer with a heart

In his day, Hermann Geiger was a well-known name, a hero renowned far beyond the Swiss borders, a national celebrity. Nowadays, his pioneering aviation achievements and untiring efforts for the benefit of air rescue in the mountains have largely become forgotten. Therefore, this is a tribute to Hermann Geiger in commemoration of the 100th anniversary of his birth in 2014.

Hermann Geiger is among the main names – alongside Oskar Bider, Walter Mittelholzer and Claude Nicollier – who have shaped Swiss aviation. In the 1950s and 1960s, Geiger provided the impulse that led to flight operations being performed in mountainous regions and subsequently to the introduction of air rescue. By constantly developing and improving material and equipment, and demonstrating first-class piloting skills, he repeatedly revealed new possibilities and avenues, and opened up hitherto unknown spheres of activity.

Ambition to become a pilot

From a young age, the career milestones of the young man from Valais were focused on a single goal: to become a pilot. Already during his apprenticeship as a car mechanic, he devoted every minute of his free time to flying. Together with a friend, he built the Valais' first glider in a garage, and even managed to get it airborne.

During his subsequent training as a police officer in Winterthur, Geiger worked as a flying instructor at the local gliding club, a task that he performed with great enthusiasm. In 1947, a newly created job as airfield groundsman in Sion finally gave him the opportunity to return to his beloved Valais.

Technical innovations and flying skills

However, Geiger did not see himself simply as a groundsman. Now a qualified flight instructor for motorised planes, too, he became, so to speak, the heart and soul of the airfield. He quickly realised how great the need for air transport was in this mountainous canton, and constantly sought new procedures for and ways of transporting material and of conducting sightseeing and rescue flights.

One such idea was to make huge double bags out of sailcloth and fasten them to the wings of his Cessna 170, enabling him to drop supplies in inaccessible places in the mountains. These transport flights soon became routine. SAC mountain hut wardens, mountain farmers, and in particular the large dam projects all took full advantage of his services. He was in the air from the crack of dawn until deep into the night. His wife Hilda planned the flights and took care of the administrative matters.

Geiger also equipped his aircraft with fold-down skis and perfected the technique of landing on snowfields and glaciers. This enabled him to bring emergency aid to casualties quickly and reliably. The aeroplane firmly established itself as a means of rescue in Valais.

The helicopter opens up new possibilities

When in 1956 Swiss Air-Rescue, in collaboration with the Association of Swiss Consumers' Cooperative Societies, launched a nationwide fundraising campaign to purchase a helicopter of its own, Hermann Geiger was busy on the front line. He supported the effort by giving talks all over the country.

In 1957, he trained as a helicopter pilot in Paris and was the first person to use Swiss Air-Rescue's brand new Bell 47J for transport and rescue flights in Valais.

Geiger did not keep a detailed record of the rescues he performed. Documents refer to 574 people rescued and 135 bodies recovered, but in all, he must have flown around 2,000 rescue flights during his 13 years of active service as a rescue pilot.

In 1964, in response to increasing demand, he and his friends, Fernand Martignoni and Bruno Bagnoud, founded the charter company, Air-Glaciers, which today forms an important pillar of air rescue in the Valais.

The accident – and the entire country goes into mourning

On 26 August 1966, a Piper Super Cub and a glider collided while preparing to land at Sion Airport. Hermann Geiger was seated in the Piper as a flying instructor and was killed in the crash. The tragic news spread through the country like wildfire: the aviation pioneer, the "Eagle of Sion", was dead.

Today, almost 50 years later, air rescue is a matter of course, providing swift emergency medical assistance in all corners of the country. And 50 years later, too, the present-day air rescue organisations are the best possible memorial to this pioneer, to whom they all owe so much.

Walter Stünzi

Bertrand Piccard and all his family have been Rega patrons for over 40 years. Here, he provides food for thought on the subject of pioneering spirit, a guiding principle of every explorer. This topic is also very close to Rega's heart, as for over 60 years we have been constantly seeking ways of improving the missions that we perform in the service of our patients.

Exploration in the 21st century



Dr. Bertrand Piccard

Psychiatrist, balloonist and explorer

In 1999, Bertrand Piccard, accompanied by the Englishman Brian Jones, made the first non-stop round-the-world flight in a hot-air balloon.

Together with André Borschberg, he is founder and pilot of Solar Impulse, the first solar aircraft capable of flying day and night without fuel. Having this year successfully flown across the United States from west to east, in 2015 he is planning to attempt to circumnavigate the world without using a single drop of fuel.

Most children grow up with their parents reading them fairy tales. In my case, however, it was stories about adventurers. Spellbound, I listened to accounts of my grandfather Auguste's ascents into the stratosphere and of the dives carried out by my father. Together with Don Walsh, he dived to the bottom of the Marianas Trench, the deepest point on the ocean floor.

At home, I heard names like Edmund Hillary, Charles Lindbergh, Alan Shepard and Wernher von Braun spoken about on a daily basis. They were my childhood heroes. However, what really changed my life was meeting them personally, as well as having the opportunity to watch six Apollo launches live in Cape Canaveral.

In July 1969, at the age of 11, I decided I wanted to be an explorer. My father had just set off with his self-constructed Mesoscaph to explore the Gulf Stream. A few days later, I watched in fascination as Apollo 11 took off on its flight to the moon. I felt that I was witnessing the most important event in the history of mankind!

I am often asked how you become an explorer. But actually you don't just opt to follow a particular field of exploration. You simply decide to depart from the well-trodden paths and take every opportunity that arises to do things that other people consider impossible. I started with hang gliding and flying ultra-light aircraft. In 1992, I served as copilot (with Wim Verstraeten) of the balloon, which won the first transatlantic balloon race, the Chrysler Challenge. In what seemed to be a natural next step, I initiated the Breitling Orbiter project. After completing the first ever nonstop round-the-world balloon flight with my friend Brian Jones in 1999, I came to understand that what had been my ultimate goal for six years was only an opportunity to go further still. Solar Impulse and the vision of flying around the world in a solar airplane had just been born.

People are fascinated by great adventures and want to share in the dreams of pioneers and explorers. A solar aircraft that can fly day and night without fuel until it has circumnavigated the earth could be a powerful symbol. If we can succeed in departing from using fossil energy to power aircraft, nobody will be able to say that it is impossible to achieve this in other areas of our daily lives. We need to arouse emotions for renewable energies and promote environmental protection as something that is positive and exciting. We must show that alternative energy sources used in conjunction with new technologies can lead to solutions that at first glance seem impossible.

Now, in the 21st century, exploration should be aimed at enhancing our quality of life. Our top priority must be to stimulate a pioneering spirit, to arouse curiosity, and on doing so to encourage people to find ways of improving our everyday lives.

You think this sounds utopian? It is no more utopian than launching a space programme back in the early 1960s with the objective of putting a man on the moon! But for this to have a chance of succeeding, we need to stop regarding dispensing with certainties and cherished habits as something that is onerous, but rather to see it as a great, exciting adventure.

Consequently, as explorers we have a responsibility towards others: if we want to prove ourselves worthy of all those who have gone before us, we need to do everything in our power to make the world a better place.

Bertrand Piccard

Mutual respect and accurate assessment
of your own capabilities

Getting through the winter safely

Switzerland is a winter sports country: more than two million people snowboard or ski. But, unlike the snows of yesteryear, the subject of safety should not be forgotten. This is all the more important in view of the fact that over 50,000 skiers and 14,000 snowboarders suffer accidents every year, some of them fatal. Three-quarters of these fatal accidents occur off-piste, away from the secure snowsport runs. The following rules, tips and information are intended to keep the fun in snowsports.

The consequences of accidents on the ski slopes are particularly serious if high speeds have resulted in major impact. In a crash situation, already a travelling speed of 50 km/h has the same effect as a fall from a height of 10 metres. It is also important to note that more than 90 percent of accidents are the skier's or snowboarder's own fault. Consequently, you yourself can do much to ensure that your day on the slopes remains a pleasurable one. Get yourself and your equipment ready for the season and follow the rules when on the slopes.

Properly equipped for fun on the slopes

Safer snowsport starts with your equipment. Always wear a proper helmet when skiing and snowboarding; snowboarders should also wear wrist protectors. Good equipment is little use if it is old or in poor condition. Have your gear checked over by an expert before every season and replace any out-dated items of equipment that no longer satisfy safety requirements. Do not forget to have your ski bindings checked. Being well-equipped also means

wearing the appropriate clothing; it should be functional, warm, winter- and weatherproof, and comfortable. Snow goggles or sunglasses are also essential. As with driving a car, a clear view is of vital importance, so have your eyesight tested regularly and always use the necessary eyewear, even for snow sports.

Time to take to the slopes

Snowsports make high demands on physical fitness. Many winter sports enthusiasts lack the strength, stamina and coordination to cope with the unaccustomed movements. You can reduce the risk of accident by preparing yourself well before the season starts. In particular, you should strengthen your core muscles and leg muscles and train your balance. It is also important to prepare immediately before your descent. Do some warm-up exercises; this activates the circulation, boosts your coordination skills and makes muscles and joints more supple. Focus on your run; a lot of accidents happen towards midday or the end of the afternoon when you are tired and your concentration begins to fade.



Safety on and beside the ski slopes

The local piste patrollers are there to help. Heed the signs, markings and warnings. There is always a good reason for areas being closed or marked with warning signs. Find out about the local snow and weather conditions. Recklessness and ignorance never pay off.

For example, information about the current avalanche situation can be found on the avalanche bulletin page at www.slf.ch or using the free smartphone app, “White Risk”. The local ski patrol and rescue services can also provide you with competent information and advice.

If it does happen

In spite of all precautionary measures, a day on the slopes can still end in an accident. The members of the local piste rescue service are competent, highly trained specialists, who know what to do in emergency situations. They will decide whether a casualty should be transported down into the valley on a rescue sledge or if their injuries are so serious that they need to be flown direct to hospital by Rega helicopter. The rescue services are important Rega partners. They are

regularly trained to work with the helicopter and are therefore well acquainted with the appropriate procedures.

Emergency app

In particular winter sports enthusiasts who seek off-piste adventure are advised to download Rega’s emergency app onto their smartphone. In the event of an emergency, this app enables the helicopter pilot to pinpoint your exact location. Please note, however, that reception is not always guaranteed.

And one last tip: before starting your day’s skiing or snowboarding, make sure that your smartphone is fully charged. Keep it close to your body. Cold temperatures reduce the battery’s capacity – and in an emergency, this could mean the difference between life and death.

We wish you an enjoyable, accident-free winter with an abundance of snow.

Karin Hörhager

With the kind assistance of bfu – Swiss Council for Accident Prevention.

You can find further information at: www.bfu.ch

How to contact Rega

Emergency number in Switzerland (24/7)
1414

Emergency number abroad (24/7)
+41 333 333 333

Patronage Centre
Monday–Friday
8.30–12.00 am, 1.00–4.30 pm
Tel. 0844 834 844 (in Switzerland)
Tel. +41 44 654 32 22 (abroad)
www.rega.ch

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