

40 – PLANE CRASH

SOUTH DAKOTA



THE STORY:

NOTE: the following is an exercise in triage. Assume you were one of the EMTs on scene and were responsible for making the decisions regarding patient treatment and evacuation. Develop a prioritized list of all patients on scene and then, following the parameters detailed below, make a decision as to whom to transport.

A twin engine aircraft with seven passengers was chartered to return a group back home after a weekend meeting. The pilot tried to get through a mountain pass, but lost power and pancaked into a snow field at the 3000' (900m) level. The FAA picked up an ELT signal, and launched military and commercial helicopters. There were two EMTs equipped with a small jump kit and BLS supplies in a Bell 206 that initially found the wreckage. The weather was deteriorating and it was not clear if any other aircraft would be able to reach the crash site. The helicopter could carry a single stretcher patient or up to three patients sitting upright.

Patient 1: 30 y/o female, awake and calm, grimacing in pain with movement, sitting outside the wreckage, sustained a crush fx of the distal left tib/fib. with good CSM. **P:** 80, **R:** 14, **BP:** 130/80, **S:** warm.

Patient 2: Pilot, 40 y/o male, lying under left wing, moved from the cockpit by others. Awake and lethargic, c/o: difficulty breathing. Bruise on chest w/ crepitus in the ribs and decreased breath sounds on

rt. angulated open Fx of the R ankle. Lac. over L eye. **BP:** 140/80 **P:** 100, **R:** 30, shallow, **S:** pale, cool.

Patient 3: 24 y/o female, awake and groggy. This patient was standing upon arrival, c/o: pain in left chest and elbow, c/o feeling cold. **P:** 50, **R:** 10, **BP:** 100/60, **S:** pale, cool.

Patient 4: 51 y/o female, awake and lethargic, shivering. Trapped in the wreckage for 90 min., c/o: severe pain in right hip. Exam shows deformity in pelvic region w/ unstable right femur. Open Fx left tib/fib. Deep lac. from bridge of nose to left cheek. **P:** 130, **R:** 36, **BP:** 110/70, **S:** pale, cool.

Patient 5: 28 y/o male, awake and anxious. Pt is ambulatory on arrival. Exam shows 1" (2.5 cm) laceration on chin and contusion on the rt. lower leg. **P:** 100, **R:** 20, **S:** normal.

Patient 6: 34 y/o male. Supine in snow next to tail of the aircraft. No palp. pulse or respirations. Survivors dragged him from the wreckage, stating: "he was still alive a few minutes ago." Exam reveals an open crush fracture on the L side of the patient's forehead.

Patient 7: 31 y/o male, awake and anxious. Pt is cold and shivering, c/o: left shoulder pain. Exam shows unstable left clavicle with obvious deformity. **P:** 120, **R:** 20 easy, **BP:** 150/80, **S:** pale, cool, moist.

QUESTION

1. If it were doubtful whether another helicopter could make it to the scene before the weather deteriorated, and it was your decision, who would you transport and how in the small helicopter?

ASSESSMENT AND TREATMENT PLAN

A = Assessment (Problem List)	A' = Anticipated Problems	P = Treatment Plan
triage order:		

NOTES

What Actually Happened Next ...

Once again, the situation was helped immeasurably by the availability of helicopter evacuation. All Pts were eventually transported by aircraft and the difficult decision of who got evacuated and who didn't, never had to be made. These tough decisions have been made on much larger scale incidents than this plane crash in the past and will undoubtedly continue to be made in the future. It is helpful for students to know that, in most cases, the medical crew onboard the aircraft will make the decisions when it comes to triage and an example of that decision and the reasoning behind it follows:

Triage: the Greatest Good for the Greatest Number.

#1 Pt 2 — He is a critical Pt and could be positioned upright despite the MOI to help with his respiratory distress.

#2 Pt 3 — Her mental status and vitals in addition to the unspecified pain in her chest make her a priority candidate for evac.

#3 Pt 7 — He has an unstable clavicle injury and its proximity to vital structures in the chest as well as his vitals make this Pt a priority over Pt 1.

These three could fly out with the first available aircraft. Pt 4, although critical, must fly in a supine position and therefore will have to wait for the second available aircraft. Pts 1 and 5 are stable at the time of assessment and although that could change over time, these folks will wait for evac. Pt 6 will be evacuated last as his arrest was likely the result of trauma and his chances for recovery are nonexistent. As a final note, where is the last Pt? You can imagine missing someone in a situation like this, can't you?
