

Tampa General Hospital Rooftop Helipad

Tampa, Florida



Tampa General Hospital, a cornerstone of medical care in West Central Florida since 1927, serves over four million people across twelve counties. Located on scenic Davis Island in Tampa Bay, its prime waterfront setting offers easy access for patients and emergency services but also presents significant challenges, particularly corrosion from the harsh saltwater environment.

In response to these challenges, Tampa General Hospital made the decision to upgrade its helipad, which had originally been situated at ground

level, adjacent to Tampa Bay. The saltwater spray and rotor wash from the Aeromed emergency helicopters intensified corrosion, and the area's vulnerability to tropical storms and hurricanes only added to the strain. Moving the helipad to the hospital's rooftop was the most practical solution, as it not only mitigated these environmental hazards but also provided better access for emergency air transport.

Tampa General Hospital partnered with FEC Heliports, a leading designer of custom helipads based in Cincinnati, OH, to create a solution that included two landing pads, one designed specifically for the U.S. Coast Guard's large Jayhawk rescue helicopter. This dual-pad setup offers flexibility for various emergency operations while ensuring operational resilience.

Given the challenging marine environment, FEC Heliports selected hot-dip galvanized steel for the helipad's construction. Hot-dip galvanizing, which involves dipping steel into molten zinc to form a protective alloy coating, ensures long-lasting protection against corrosion from saltwater exposure, storm surges, and the abrasions caused by rotor wash. The helipad's steel structure, weighing 122 tons, features a zinc coating averaging 11.4 mils in thickness, providing a lifespan of over 100 years with minimal maintenance.

Kevin Gaudet, President of FEC Heliports, emphasized the importance of the hot-dip galvanizing process, stating that "In the beginning of our journey we realized that the hot-dip galvanized coating was the path we needed to take because the use of other coatings systems did not compare. The hot-dip galvanized coating provides you with long-term survival of the steel." The decision to use galvanized steel also aligns with Tampa General's commitment to sustainability. The helipad's structure is fully recyclable at the end of its life cycle, further reducing the carbon footprint and enhancing the hospital's sustainability efforts.

This durable, corrosion-resistant solution ensures that Tampa General can continue to provide life-saving services for generations to come, while also advancing its sustainability efforts. Through this investment, the hospital demonstrates that its commitment to innovation and excellence extends beyond patient care to environmental stewardship and resource conservation. ■

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Galvanizer
Valmont Coatings - Tampa Galvanizing
Fabricator
FEC Heliports
Owner
Tampa General Hospital

Original Equipment Manufacturing



American Galvanizers Association