



Review 8068: Rescue Helicopter

Text by Jetro

Pictures by LEGO® Systems A/S

Set: Rescue Helicopter
Set number: 8068
Number of parts: 408
Recommended Retail Price: 29,95€

The LEGO® Technic assortment is characterised by a large number of cars, trucks and construction equipment. However, there are some other types of vehicles that keep coming back into the Technic assortment and provide the necessary variety.

One of these vehicles is the helicopter, which has been reproduced in LEGO Technic on numerous occasions. The second Technic set I received as a child was the 8844 helicopter, which in addition to the top and back rotors included retracting landing wheels. I remember how tricky it was to get the front and rear wheels properly synchronised, the chain links that were used to operate the rear wheels and how hard it was to make the bent shape of the cockpit with the Axle and Pin Connector Toggle Joint Toothed (4273) that were only loosely held together with half pins. But I also remember how proud I felt when I first completed the model and flew it through the whole house on my imaginary missions.

The 8068 Rescue Helicopter has a sleek and sturdy design, some nice curves which are very easy to build, and the advantage of being designed for rescuing, with a cargo bay that has opening doors and a winch to hoist up victims of a shipwreck. It is ready to spark the imagination of a new generation.

So let's have a closer look at the set.

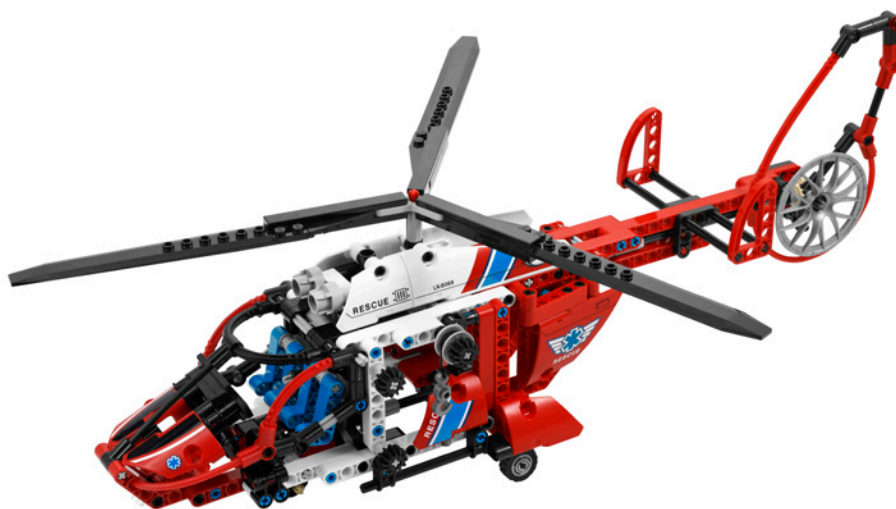
The inventory

In addition to the standard parts you would expect in any Technic set, there are a couple of things that stand out for this set. First off there is a considerable number of flexible elements – considerable for a set this size: 4 flexible axles and 3 flexible tubes help to create the curves that are so hard to get with other parts.

Secondly there is the wheel cover that was initially designed for the Ferrari 599 GTB Fiorano (8145). In this set it is used for the tail rotor of both the main and secondary model. It simulates the protected tail rotor of the rescue helicopter very well, but in the case of the B-model – an emergency helicopter – it doesn't quite fit with what you'd expect.

There are also no less than 12 panel fairings used in the set. To be honest, they are very well used in the main model but only four of them find their way into the B-model. They are simply not needed there.

The model also includes two Toggle Joint (87408) – an improved version of the older 48496 – which are wonderful for making compact gear assemblies at 90 degrees, and four black "spacer" pins (87082), one of my favourite parts from last year.





Last but not least, the set has printed instructions for both models (one booklet for each), which makes it a great starter set if you want to introduce someone to Technic – I always prefer having printed instructions to having to download them from the Internet.

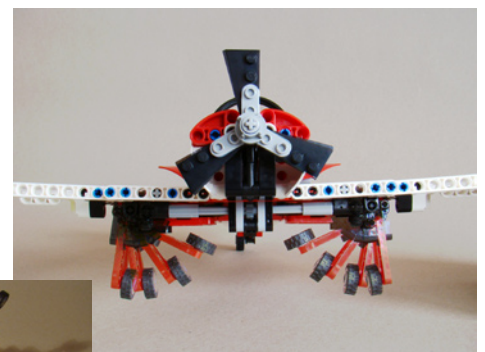
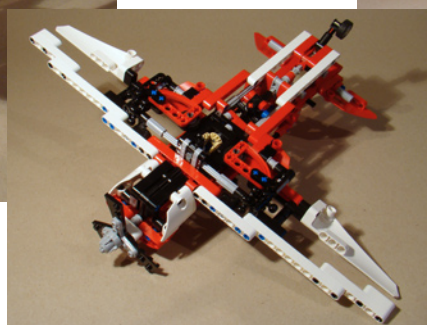
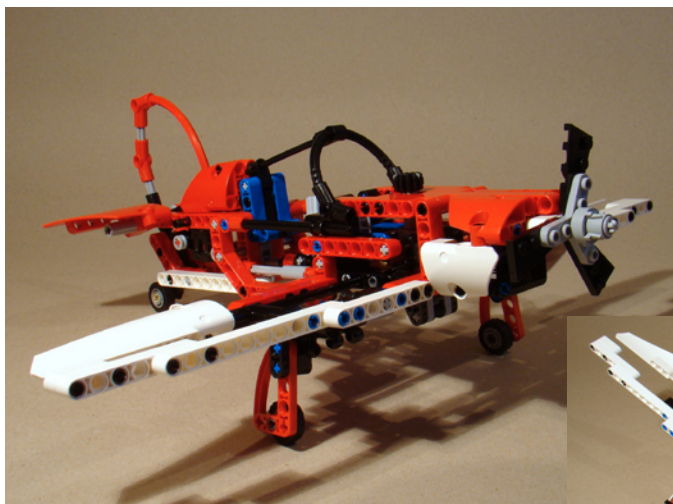
Building the main model

The building process is quite attractive. In addition to the structure, one of the first elements you start building is the mechanism for retracting the landing gear, using a worm gear to ensure the wheels will not collapse into the model if not extended completely and strong knob wheels for transmitting the force. A mechanical stop at the front wheel prevents the assembly from going too far in, as does a mechanical stop at the rear wheels in the opposite direction.

Next up is the mechanism for the rotors. Despite the 1:1 gearing the rotor speed you can achieve by turning the 12tooth gear attached to the assembly is adequate (faster might be dangerous). The simple assemblies for the opening doors and the chairs in the cockpit follow, after which it is time to start bending flexible elements to finish the cockpit design.

As noted earlier, the use of panel fairings is not excessive and in some cases especially right, like in those protecting the rear landing gear or in the simple though very effective assembly that simulates the engines on top of the helicopter.

The pulley mechanism (which is repeated identically in the B-model) is so simple it is almost disappointing, but it is very effective. It simply takes advantage of the friction of the long pin with stop bush it is attached to.



The tail rotor assembly is achieved with a minimum number of pieces, but lends great realism to the model, as do the stabilizers.

The main rotor (which again is used identically in the B-model) contains the only studded parts in the set (not counting the round transparent plates that are used as lights) and the slight offset from the normally odd Technic elements to the usually even System parts lends it additional realism by simulating the inclination of the rotor blades.

The only drawback I find in the construction is a series of 6 liftarm 1x2 thin which are placed next to each other on the same axle and are very hard to separate later.

There is a sticker sheet with 12 stickers, 10 of which are for the Panel Fairings and the remaining two for the control panels in the cockpit (built with two tiles). However, even though the stickers enhance the model, without them it still looks great.

The B-model

The second model in the set is an emergency helicopter. As usual in B-models, it is simpler than the main model and since it is another helicopter it uses virtually the same mechanism, including the winch. In this case there are no opening doors or retracting landing gear and the build is a bit simpler. Nevertheless, the model is again very playable and sturdy

Conclusions:

The 8068 Helicopter set brings a return of a medium scale helicopter in the Technic range. The design of the main model is very close to real life rescue helicopters and the fact that instructions for both models are included in print is definitely a plus. In addition, the relatively large number of panel fairings and some other interesting parts make it a nice addition to an existing Technic collection.

Acknowledgements: LEGO® Iberia S.A., Joachim Schwidtal and Rosa Seegelken for the set and official images.

If you want some more inspiration for something to build with the pieces from this set, have a look at the plane Tomas Vit ("Tomik") built. It features turning ailerons and elevator controlled by a stick in cockpit and a retractable landing gear. There are more pictures in his Brickshelf account:

<http://www.brickshelf.com/cgi-bin/gallery.cgi?f=470007>

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