

History

Airlift Northwest began when a tragic house fire in Sitka, Alaska, claimed the lives of three children before they could be safely transported for care. Dr. Michael Copass, Airlift Northwest Founder and Medical Director, was teaching in Sitka at the time and was called into the local hospital to help care for the children. He returned to Seattle, determined to find a way to provide air medical transport to areas around Alaska and the Pacific Northwest. Airlift Northwest was the result of this effort and celebrated its 25th anniversary in 2007.

Current Organization

Airlift Northwest was founded in 1982 by a consortium of hospitals in the Seattle area, including University of Washington Medical Center, Children's Hospital and Regional Medical Center, and Harborview Medical Center. In 2002, Airlift Northwest became an independent non-profit 501(c)(3). All remaining funds after expenses are invested back into improving service for the communities in which Airlift Northwest operates. There are no shareholders, investors or subsidy. For rotary-wing services, Airlift Northwest contracts with Air Methods Corporation. For fixed-wing services, Airlift Northwest contracts with Executive Flight, Inc., based in Wenatchee, Washington.

Flight Volumes

Airlift Northwest provides air medical services anywhere in the Pacific Northwest. Patients are transported to the facility that is most appropriate for the level of care they need as determined by the sending physician or the EMS agency. In 2008, Airlift Northwest flew nearly 4,100 flights—51% were rotary-wing, inter-hospital transfers; 25% were rotary-wing, 911/EMS scene responses; and 24% were fixed-wing flights. Since 1982, Airlift Northwest has provided air medical transport for more than 60,000 patients.

Locations

Today, Airlift Northwest provides air medical service from one of five bases located strategically throughout the Pacific Northwest. The rotary-wing division operates four bases in Washington—Bellingham, Arlington, Seattle and Olympia—that provide nearly 700 hours per week of air medical services to Western and Central Washington. In the fixed-wing division, bases are located in Seattle, Washington and in Juneau, Alaska.

Expertise

Each aircraft flies with at least one pilot (two pilots for fixed-wing aircraft) and two-nurse teams with certifications in Advanced Cardiac Life Support, Advanced Trauma Life Support, Pediatric Advanced Life Support, Trauma Nursing Care, Neonatal Resuscitation, Critical Care Nursing, Emergency Nursing and Flight Nursing. This level of expertise is unique in the air medical industry and comparable to a hospital intensive care unit.

Accreditation: Airlift Northwest has been accredited by CAMTS (Commission on Accreditation of Medical Transport Services) since 1997. Airlift Northwest was the first air medical service in Southeast Alaska to receive this recognition. Accreditation means a medical transport service meets a series of industry standards that address issues of patient care and safety.

Community Service: For Airlift Northwest, community service is part of its mission. Staff provides medical education and participates in community activities throughout the region.

AirCare Program: Airlift Northwest is pleased to offer a membership program that helps provide communities in Alaska and Washington state with high-quality air medical service at an affordable cost. Under the program, when Airlift Northwest is requested by a medical facility or an emergency response team to fly a critically ill or injured patient to appropriate medical care, the portion of the Airlift Northwest bill that isn't covered by insurance or Medicare is paid through the membership. A membership in AirCare is \$79 a year and covers all members of a household.

For more information, visit:

www.airliftnw.org