

The Florida Aeromedical Transport system is supported by 56 licensed medical helicopters and 19 licensed medical airplanes that provided 20,137 patient transports in 2005 and 19,871 in 2006. Of the total transports in 2006, more than 95% were transported by helicopter - often referred to as Helicopter Emergency Medical Services (HEMS).

Services provided by Helicopter Air Ambulances include scene (pre-hospital) and inter-facility (hospital) transportation. Aeromedical program model types operating within Florida include: Hospital-based programs that are supported by a for-profit vendor and the hospital; Community-based privately operated programs that are supported by a for-profit vendor; Public programs that are supported by county taxpayers; Public/Private programs that share support between taxpayers and a for-profit vendor; and Public programs that hold an Air Carrier Certificate and share program costs with taxpayers and other users.

Programs within the State of Florida participate as part of industry organizations such as the Air and Surface Transport Nurses' Association, Florida AeroMedical Association, Pediatric and Neonatal Transport Nurses' Association and the Florida EMS Pilots' Association. In addition, these groups actively participate to maintain representation on the State Emergency Medical Services Advisory Council. This cooperative commitment also includes involvement on a national level through organizations such as the Association of Air Medical Services and the Helicopter Association International. Representatives from state organizations participate at the national level, continually monitoring current and future direction and promoting a better understanding of the industry.

All Florida aeromedical programs promote quality healthcare and safe, efficient transportation services for those in need. They also offer their services and provide vital support during disaster operations within and outside the State upon request.

The Federal Aviation Administration has comprehensive regulatory control governing aviation safety, specifically related to such matters as airworthiness, crew training, and flight operations.

The Federal Department of Transportation has asserted that, pursuant to the Airline Deregulation Act of 1978, it has exclusive authority over Air Ambulance certified Air Carriers as it pertains to "rates, routes and services" pursuant to the Airline Deregulation Act of 1978. Contrary to that assertion, the Florida legislature has granted each county the authority to control the operation of rotor-winged aircraft as part of aeromedical transport within their boundaries.

The Bureau of EMS enforces and promotes Florida Statutes and Administrative Code that regulate medical licensing and minimum standards for air ambulance operators. All components of the industry have cooperatively developed a complex list of quality assurance indicators to ensure the safe and professional transportation of patients within Florida.

The industry has been impacted and influenced by aeromedical accidents across the country, particularly nine within the last year. Focus among the providers within Florida has been to gain insight and understanding and to support methods which may serve to lessen the chance of accidents within the State of Florida. Annual statewide safety summits initiated by the HEMS operators have been supported by the aviation community including aviation vendors, emergency medical services, law enforcement, the media, and other public and private entities who operate in Florida airspace. Ideas from these meetings have positively impacted our industry and ultimately the State of Florida.

In summary, this document provides basic information regarding the Florida Air Medical Transport System. The aeromedical community believes it is vitally important and encourages further correspondence between the constituency groups mentioned above, the Bureau of EMS and the Office of the Governor to communicate on issues which affect air medical operations as they relate to statewide healthcare planning.