



501 E. Hampden Avenue
Englewood, CO 80113
24-hr dispatch: (toll free) 1-877-2-GET-AIRLIFE or 303-360-3400
Admin 303-788-5251
www.airlifedenver.com

April 2, 2009

Dear AIRLIFE Denver Community Partners:

Last year AIRLIFE Denver celebrated 25 years of service touching more than 40,000 lives. We are proud of our history, enthusiastic about our future and committed to growing safely. In fact, safety is our absolute priority. Over the past year the country has seen an unprecedented number of air medical crashes, and we fully understand how this may be of concern. In an effort to help open discussions surrounding safety, we are sending this letter to outline just a few of the measures we provide to meet the expectation that each and every member of our team, our patients, and all those who assist us, return home safely at the end of the day.

There are four main elements that contribute to our culture of safety: **our philosophy, our technology, our training, and our people.** Safety requires the inclusion of each of these aspects, as well as each of us working together to reach this goal. Attached you will find a copy of our **Commitment to Safety** which outlines our safety philosophy. Each member of the AIRLIFE Denver team must sign this document when they begin their employment with us and annually thereafter. At all times we expect each team member can live by this commitment, and it is everyone's responsibility to ensure this happens.

OUR TECHNOLOGY

At AIRLIFE Denver we have always gone above and beyond the recommended safety practices set by the FAA; in fact, **we already have in place all four of the 2006 NTSB recommendations for air medical safety, as well as every single one of the recommendations being discussed publicly by the NTSB this year.** From a technology perspective, our aircraft are equipped for satellite or radar flight-following and have GPS and terrain warning systems. In addition, our helicopters have night vision technology, traffic avoidance warning systems, high intensity anti-collision lights, highly visible paint schemes, and onboard satellite weather information. Our pilots also use a standardized risk assessment tool before every flight is accepted. In the situation where we deem a flight as unacceptable due to weather considerations, that information is communicated to other flight services in the area to contribute to their safety. We were the founding program of this Colorado Weather SAFE Alerts initiative and we are pleased it's now in use throughout our entire region and being duplicated across the country. This is one example of how we demonstrate our firm belief that safety is not proprietary.

OUR TRAINING

Safety is at the forefront of our practice, and our culture of safety is ingrained from the beginning. Safety training starts with orientation and continues throughout the career of every AIRLIFE Denver crew member. Ongoing training includes events such as daily safety briefings and our annual Safety Stand Down Day (a day of education, reflection, remembrance for those lost in the line of duty, and collaboration for future improvement in the safety of our industry). The safety culture at AIRLIFE Denver is prevalent throughout everything we do. Every meeting agenda begins with safety. Every shift begins with a safety briefing. Every transport begins with a safety check. Every completed transport ends with a safety debriefing.

OUR PEOPLE

It is the total commitment of each and every member of our entire team, and yours, to make good and safe decisions. A transport begins with the communications specialist taking the request and the pilot accepting or declining the flight, but in the end, it is a team decision whether it is safe to go.

The hallmark of our safety culture is: ***"all to go, one to say no."***



PROPER UTILIZATION

We recognize there has been some debate about the over-utilization of air medical helicopters, primarily on the east coast. We want to assure you that we have a rigorous process in place to continuously review our utilization to ensure when a helicopter transport is appropriate. We have had consistently less than 1% of our transports deemed potentially over-triaged, meaning that the patient might have been appropriately transported via a different method. When we identify such cases, we work to educate the sending agency or physician to identify opportunities to improve. We also use external means to review appropriateness of transports and vehicle utilization. A recent report from the Colorado Department of Public Health state trauma registry - prepared for the State EMS and Trauma Advisory Council (SEMTAC) - showed appropriate use of helicopters for trauma and improved outcomes. Some highlights from the report "*Characteristics of Trauma Patients by Transport Mode*" published on January 28, 2009 include:

1. Volume
 - Less than 10% of trauma patients are transported via air, meaning most trauma patients are appropriately transported by ground ambulance
 - This corresponds well with the numbers of severely injured, demonstrating that those that are flown are those that are the most injured
2. Disposition (the result after the patient was flown to a trauma center)
 - Only 2% of the patients flown to trauma centers were discharged home from the ED
 - More than 90% of the patients flown were admitted; more than 60% going directly to the OR or ICU
3. Injury Severity Score or ISS (the higher the number, the more injured the patient based on specific injuries)
 - ISS scores are higher in the helicopter group, meaning that those that did require helicopter transport were appropriately flown according to their injuries
 - More than 75% of the patients flown by helicopter had an ISS of 9 or greater; almost 50% had an ISS greater than 15, considered to be "significant trauma" by the American College of Surgeons
4. Mortality
 - Mortality for patients with the highest ISS was lower in those transported by helicopter.

A SAFE PARTNERSHIP

You are an integral part of our safety culture and your involvement is paramount. We encourage the use of air medical resources *when appropriate*. In Colorado, patient condition is not the only reason to use air medical transport. Our unique terrain, traffic, geography, and varying weather conditions can dramatically change ground transport times and impact safety. There is also a known phenomenon called "chopper shopping" which we emphatically discourage. Chopper shopping occurs when a caller is told that a mission cannot be done safely due to weather or other conditions, yet they continue to call other air medical services hoping to get someone to say "yes." This places a great deal of pressure on agencies to set safety aside and has been shown to be a dangerous practice. In Colorado, all of the air medical programs have agreed to a "one call" system: if the program initially contacted is not available or can't do the call, but another program may be available due to their alternative resources or not being affected by weather, the original program will make the call for the second program, eliminating the need to "chopper shop." We all strive to work together to assist you whenever possible.

As an extension of our team, we are also concerned for your well being. We realize you may have questions and concerns. At all times we encourage open communication within the AIRLIFE Denver family, and we are always available to provide training and answer any of your questions or to address any needs that you might have. We also encourage you to visit AIRLIFE Denver to see first-hand how all of these safety measures work together to meet our community needs and ensure we all go home safely at the end of each day.

We realize that there are ultimately no absolute guarantees, and that the noble work we do carries risk. Our hope is that you have a better understanding of the seriousness with which we approach each situation, and the measures we take to provide the safest work environment possible for our crews, our patients, and our collaborators – you! We offer our heartfelt thanks for the support you give to our team and we hope you will feel free to contact our administrative offices at (303) 788-5251 for any feedback that you may have.

Respectfully sent to you on behalf of the entire AIRLIFE Denver team



Our Commitment to Safety

At AIRLIFE Denver, Safety is second to none.

Safety is the cornerstone of what we do day in, day out
and a living breathing part of our culture.
It's a commitment we take seriously—it starts with our leadership
and is embraced by everyone on our team
as evidenced by our signatures below.

What that means is:

- There is no transport, no mission that is worth us not returning home. We will put safety first always.
- Four (All) to go, ONE to say no is not a mantra; it is an expectation and all of our responsibility.
- We commit to an open and non-punitive safety culture that seeks to continually improve and evolve. We do not accept the status quo.
- We understand the principles of Crew Resource Management (CRM) and Air Medical Resource Management (AMRM). We pledge to speak up and when possible proactively address safety concerns. We hold each other accountable to this.
- Vision Zero is a safety initiative we have embraced. It increases safety awareness by creating a culture of intolerance to the loss of life and the suffering caused by the consequences of poor decision-making. All of us commit to do our part to accomplish Zero Errors of Consequence with no fatal crashes or serious injuries.
- We subscribe to the premise that safety is not proprietary. We will share what we know and what we learn so that others might benefit. We seek broad solutions and are not limited by traditional norms.
- We choose to be an active member of this team and make a personal commitment to ourselves, to those that support us and to those we support, to operate at all times, in the safest manner possible.

It starts with me—