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chased a limited number of rail cars a couple years ago when there was a shortage of cars to transport sand, giving his company a competitive advantage at the time.

"It is more stable now," he surmises. "We know the customer is the most important thing, and that is something we have built into the network. It is our job to move the sand cost effectively and swiftly, with reliability and agility for our customers. We have the ability to be agile, focused and flexible."

Aviation Services

Among the more unique logistical firms is CSI Aviation in Albuquerque, N.M. It is unique in that it doesn't own any aircraft. "We are strictly a logistics firm," explains Marc Ramthun, manager of sales and business development. "We find out what their needs are, and then we coordinate everything. It is a niche market."

Ramthun says CSI Aviation started in 1979, doing charters for college athletic teams. It still does that, but the company has expanded to include providing air service for government agencies, corporate clients and emergency response. "We put the pieces together," he remarks.

While much of its work for the oil and gas industry may be simply providing air service for company executives that need to be in four places in the same day—including setting up ground transportation and meals for them, which commercial airlines can't accommodate—Ramthun says CSI Aviation has been involved in a number of more unusual logistical operations.

Perhaps the most unusual, he offers, occurred when a 50,000-pound piece of



CSI Aviation provides airplanes ranging in size from a single-engine Cessna to a Boeing 747 to move people, equipment and supplies when and where they are needed, anywhere in the world.

machinery broke at a production facility in Manitoba, Canada. The only place to get it fixed was in Naples, Italy. He says CSI Aviation found a Boeing 747 to haul the equipment from Winnipeg to Milan, Italy. The company coordinated trucking to the airport in Winnipeg and from Milan to Naples. It even worked with engineers to build a special case around the equipment to balance its weight and protect it on the 12-hour flight, Ramthun details.

CSI Aviation had to coordinate the cranes necessary to move the equipment at all locations and work with both Canadian and Italian customs. "It took three days to get the equipment to Naples, but

we got the repaired part back a week ahead of schedule," Ramthun relates. "It cost the company \$1 million every day that equipment wasn't operational. We saved it \$7 million through our efficient efforts."

Another unusual logistical situation for CSI Aviation involved some kidnapped oil workers.

"One of our customers had oil interests in the Nigerian delta," Ramthun recalls. "Three Americans and an Italian worker were kidnapped. The company was negotiating their release, and it wanted to get them medical attention as soon as possible. So we flew into a neighboring country to wait. When the men were released, we flew in, picked them up and took care of their immediate medical needs. We flew to Rome, and then flew the three Americans on to a hospital in Germany."

Ramthun says CSI Aviation has a network of companies to draw on, and can provide airplanes ranging in size from the 747 it needed to haul the equipment from Canada to Italy, to a single-engine Cessna that a fertilizer company in Alabama wanted for aerial surveying.

"Every day is different," reflects Ramthun. "We could be flying oil company executives or moving a high school marching band."

Such is the challenge of logistics, he says: planning for the unexpected and eliminating problems that come with "procuring, distributing, maintaining and replacing material and personnel," often in remote locations. And it is a critical element in the oil and gas industry today. □



Halliburton delivers 350,000 trucks and 18,000 rail cars of sand each year from facilities such as this sand plant in Windsor, Co., which includes storage for 40 million pounds of sand and has the capability to unload 13 rail cars an hour and load 50 trucks an hour.