

# ABQ company brought home passengers from cruise ship with coronavirus cases

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Luggage is loaded onto a CSI Aviation plane before taking off with passengers previously aboard the Grand Princess cruise ship.

Courtesy CSI Aviation Inc.

By [Collin Krabbe](#) – Technology reporter , Albuquerque Business First  
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U.S. officials turned to a New Mexico company for help in getting passengers on a cruise ship with numerous COVID-19 cases back home.

Albuquerque-based CSI Aviation Inc. flew almost 2,000 people that had been on the Grand Princess cruise ship, owned by Princess Cruises, to various military bases and back to their home states. The work was part of a contract with the Department of Health and Human Services, according to an HHS spokeswoman.

The Grand Princess had seen two deaths and at least 100 confirmed cases of coronavirus as of Wednesday, according to [reporting from The Washington Post](#). After it was found that passengers and staff aboard contracted the virus, the ship docked in Oakland on March 9, the

Post reported. Passengers and staff were then transferred to other sites for a 14-day quarantine or isolation period, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

"We've been heavily involved with emergency response operations with different service organizations over the years," said CSI Aviation Senior Vice President Thomas Dunn. "That's our responsibility and that's why we hold these contracts."

Dunn declined to disclose how much the company was paid for the Grand Princess mission.

The day after the cruise ship was reportedly docked, CSI Aviation began work on a \$13.6 million HHS contract to use four planes to take passengers from Oakland to three locations, according to government data. Dunn said the contract lasted until about March 20.

Passengers and crew were unloaded from the ship by HHS and then bused to an airport. CSI Aviation flew people to at least 20 states, Dunn said. Personal protective equipment was provided to staff by the government, and no people transported were known to have contracted COVID-19, he added.

The company also provided emergency relief in 2017 after Hurricane Harvey hit Texas, helping authorities assess damages with one of its aircraft, Business First reported.

CSI Aviation also provides charter flights, logistics, cargo transport and medical-focused flight services. It was founded in 1979 with facilities in Albuquerque and Killeen, Texas. It employs around 100, most of whom work in New Mexico.

As of Friday, New Mexico reported 136 cases of COVID-19. Symptoms of the virus can include fever, coughing and breathing trouble. Many develop only mild symptoms. But some people, often those with other medical complications, develop severe symptoms such as pneumonia.

There have been 68,440 cases of COVID-19 in the U.S., according to the CDC.