

ABQ aviation firm adds ground ambulance to its medical flights

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Albuquerque-based CSI Aviation Inc. recently added a ground ambulance to supplement its medical air transport services. (Courtesy of CSI Aviation Inc.)

CSI Aviation Inc. now offers a complete turnkey solution for patients arriving in Albuquerque on its medical charter flights thanks to the company's new ground-based transport service.

CSI received permission this spring from the state Public Regulation Commission to operate ground ambulance service in Bernalillo County, and the company rolled out its first emergency vehicle this month.

An exponential increase in demand for CSI medical charter flights, plus congested ambulance service by third-party providers in Albuquerque, encouraged the company to initiate its first ground operation since launching in 1979, said Tommy Dunn, CSI executive vice president of business development and services.

“Ground ambulances are stressed in Albuquerque, and we’ve been experiencing some delays,” Dunn told the Journal. “To improve our care and response times, it made sense to develop a ground ambulance program for CSI.”

CSI has offered charter flights, aircraft leasing, management services and more for businesses and government agencies for 41 years from its base of operations at the Albuquerque International Sunport. But medical charter flights have grown to represent about 90% of company activity over the last five years, after CSI began operating its own fleet of medical transport planes, Dunn said.

The company started offering medical flight coordination for third-party providers in 2004. But in 2017, it launched its own medical charter operation after upgrading two company-owned King Air planes for medical flight specialty service, equipping them with critical care systems.

Until now, it relied on independent ambulance services to transport patients to Albuquerque hospitals and clinics after flying them into the Sunport from other places.

With the addition of its own ground ambulance transport in Albuquerque, the company now provides full in-house service from start to finish for all Albuquerque-bound patients, who are flown on CSI planes that are entirely staffed with company pilots and medical teams.

CSI now has five King Air craft in its medical fleet, plus three more planes for other aviation business operations. It’s workforce has grown to over 100 since 2017, when it employed 40 people.

“Our King Airs are extremely busy,” Dunn said. “Every month our medical missions continue to increase all over New Mexico and the Western U.S. We’re looking now to get another King Air for our medical fleet.”

The company’s new ambulance service will be limited to Bernalillo County. It will only serve CSI medical flights to not compete with other local ambulance operations, Dunn said.

CSI was formed by retired Marine Corps Reserve Col. Allen Weh, former chairman of the New Mexico Republican Party and a former candidate for the U.S. Senate.

Many company employees are veterans who served in all branches of the military, including combat medics, medevac pilots and flight operations specialists.