

# U.S. Air Ambulance Announces Disaster Preparedness Program for Hospitals and Nursing Home

By Don Philpott, Senior Executive Editor

**U**.S. Air Ambulance, an industry leader in worldwide fixed-wing medical transportation, now offers a comprehensive program for hospitals and nursing homes across America to prepare for a catastrophic disaster and to execute mass evacuations when necessary.

The Disaster Preparedness Program for Hospitals and Nursing Homes draws upon the company's extensive experience in moving hundreds of people from harm's way, and offers private, non-governmental assistance to local, state and federal relief efforts. Examples include assisting FEMA in the evacuation of nearly 200 nursing-home residents in New Orleans following the devastation of Hurricane Katrina and their safe return once the danger had passed. Additionally, U.S. Air Ambulance moved 1,500 inmates from Florida prisons prior to Hurricane Wilma in cooperation with the U.S. Marshals Service, the repatriation of illegal Mexican immigrants to support the efforts of the Department of Homeland Security and the evacuation of a major cruise ship in conjunction with the U.S. Coast Guard.

The multi-tiered program is being presented to medical facilities as a third-party option, to objectively evaluate evacuation plans in place, and then to supplement staff efforts by providing triage, communications, logistical and security support via trained and highly experienced medical personnel.

Additionally, recognizing that local EMS resources may be overwhelmed by the needs within their community, U.S. Air Ambulance has identified a virtual arsenal of more than 600 transportation units from across the nation. These companies have agreed to aid and support the program in a local community's time of need by evacuating patients, staff and all medical records to facilities that are prepared to accept them.

To date, more than 500 hospitals and nursing homes across the country have contracted with U.S. Air Ambulance to provide these services, including two major hospital groups that serve primarily the western and southern states.

"As a nation, we watched in horror as Katrina devoured the resources of the local, state and federal agencies," said Clif



Carothers, President of U.S. Air Ambulance. "Especially poignant were the images of the area's most vulnerable people – the frail, elderly and ill. When FEMA called on us to help with the evacuation, we were prepared with experienced medical personnel and air and ground ambulances, and could respond immediately.

"We have decided to offer these services on a national scale to help other medical facilities prepare for any type of mass casualty emergency – floods, fires, bio-terrorism, pandemics, tornadoes, hurricanes – acts of nature and of man."

Carothers noted that some of the findings from the company's research have been somewhat alarming but suggest that there is a real need for this program. "Many facilities think they have an adequate preparedness plan when, in reality, they are relying almost exclusively on local EMS support," he said. "What they often fail to realize is that the support system in place will be stretched to the breaking point in the event of a community-wide mass disaster.

"Further, we have found that 67 percent of the facilities which have identified their 'go-to' person or department in the face of an emergency turn to the maintenance department. Some have even identified lab personnel or pharmacists to execute their plan. Our program provides a multi-tiered, multi-departmental approach, addressing every aspect of evacuation planning and execution."

For additional information about the company's Disaster Preparedness Program for Hospitals and Nursing Homes, contact U.S. Air Ambulance at 800/633-5384. To learn more about the company, see [www.U.S.AirAmbulance.net](http://www.U.S.AirAmbulance.net). ■

#### *About Clif Carothers:*

*Clif Carothers holds an MBA from the Wharton School at the University of Pennsylvania. A Palmer Scholar, Carothers purchased U.S. Air Ambulance in 1999. The company is based in Sarasota, Florida, and has a 100-percent safety record while transporting more than 70,000 patients across the country and around the world.*