Aviation infrastructure is a critical piece of air ambulance operations

Here at LifeFlight, we talk a lot about our aircraft and the high level of clinical care happening inside the helicopters and airplane. What you don’t hear about as often is the infrastructure needed to safely and reliably operate the aircraft. Without a comprehensive, up-to-date infrastructure, LifeFlight can’t answer as many calls for help, especially in rural locations and inclement weather.

Almost as long as we’ve been in service, LifeFlight has been working with aviation partners across the state to build the kind of infrastructure necessary for Maine’s uniquely challenging geography. Over the years, this has included hospital and community helipads, remote access landing spots, automated weather reporting systems at rural airports and hospitals, fuel trucks and instrument flight navigation aids.

Since 2015, when LifeFlight added a fixed wing airplane to its fleet, infrastructure upgrades have also focused on runway and airport improvements. Several upgrades were made to the aircraft that allow it to operate in Maine’s unique aviation environment including a short take-off and landing system. But there are a number of airports in rural areas across the state which need runway extensions to reliably accommodate LifeFlight’s King Air.

▶ continued on page 2
One big step was taken last month when the Stephen A. Bean Municipal Airport in Rangeley was awarded an $11.5 million supplemental omnibus grant through the Federal Aviation Administration’s Airport Improvement Program to expand the runway, making it possible for LifeFlight’s airplane to transport patients from one of Maine’s most rural communities.

Another grant was recently awarded to LifeFlight by the Department of Homeland Security through the Maine Emergency Management Agency that will allow us to purchase and install weather-resistant surveillance cameras, with infrared capabilities and internet feeds, at locations across Maine where LifeFlight lands frequently. The cameras will also help secure Maine’s network of AWOS towers (automated weather observing stations). While the immediate goal is safety and security, LifeFlight expects this enhanced surveillance capability will also help us monitor runway conditions. This will improve the fixed wing’s reliability, which means being able to answer more calls for help.

LifeFlight has also been working with the FAA to fund upgrades to all of the organization’s helicopter approaches. The FAA is providing technical assistance to update and maintain helicopter-specific instrument approaches on islands and remote rendezvous points, as well as at hospitals that are far from an airport instrument approach.

All of these improvements result in better emergency medical access while also boosting the local economy with better weather prediction and access to airports.

Since its very first mission back in 1998, LifeFlight has been focused on safe and reliable access to emergency care. Whether a person is hurt in the woods of Maine, suffering a heart attack on the coast, or in a car accident in Naples, they need access to the critical care available at large urban medical centers. LifeFlight provides that access in two ways: by delivering ICU-level care directly to patients, and by delivering patients to a facility that has the specialized care they need. By upgrading and enhancing Maine’s aviation infrastructure, LifeFlight can continue to increase access to much needed critical care for the state’s sickest and most vulnerable patients.

Questions about LifeFlight’s infrastructure projects can be directed to Josh Dickson, Flight Medic and Aviation Systems Coordinator: jdickson@lifeflightmaine.org

There were countless individuals involved in securing the $11.5 million airport improvement grant from the FAA. A few of them made the trip to Washington DC for the official presentation earlier this fall. From left to right: Rebekah Carmichael, Finance Director/Airport Manager, Town of Rangeley; Joshua Dickson, Aviation Systems Coordinator/Flight Paramedic, LifeFlight of Maine; Guy Rouelle, Senior Aviation Project Manager, DuBois and King; Elaine L. Chao, United States Secretary of Transportation; Steven Philbrick, Chairman of Select Board, Town of Rangeley; John Madigan Jr, Interim Town Manager, Town of Rangeley; Shane McDougall, Senior Project Manager, DuBois and King; and Larry Koob, Rangeley Airport Commission Chair.
NATHAN LANKFORD
Brain abscess in Bar Harbor
Eleven-year-old Nathan was in Bar Harbor on vacation with his family when persistent headaches and nausea sent him to the emergency department. There, the medical staff discovered a large mass on his brain and sent him to Bangor. It quickly became clear that Nathan needed treatment from pediatric specialists at Johns Hopkins in Baltimore, so the LifeFlight team was called to transport him by airplane. After two brain surgeries, Nathan is back to his active life.

ALLISA HATT
Undiagnosed heart condition in Mars Hill
Mars Hill teenager Allisa Hatt’s heart stopped more than a half a dozen times at her local emergency depart- ment. The LifeFlight helicopter flew her to Bangor for surgery to remove blood clots, but her symptoms per- sisted. A month later, she was flown again, this time by the airplane to specialists at Boston Children’s Hospital. Although her condition remains officially undiagnosed, medication and life- style changes have brought it under control and Allisa has returned to life as a teenager in northern Maine.

MICHAEL FRIEL
Heart attack in Augusta
After suffering symptoms at home, Michael went to his local emergency department where a CT scan revealed a large blood clot in his pulmonary artery. His kidneys were shutting down and his heart and lungs were struggling. It was clear he needed treatment in Boston. Much more efficient traveling over long distances, the airplane was called to transport Michael the 240 miles to Brigham and Women’s Hospital. After 12 days in Boston, Michael returned home and has since made a full recovery.
This year LifeFlight celebrates 20 years of caring for the people of Maine. Over the last two decades, the state’s emergency medical helicopters have touched the lives of more than 25,500 patients and their families. It began back on September 29, 1998 when dispatchers fielded the first request for LifeFlight: a scene call to the remote woods of Washington County.

On Monday, October 8, LifeFlight formally commemorated its service to a generation of Mainers with a series of dedication ceremonies at each of its three aircraft hangars in Bangor, Lewiston and Sanford.

A lot has changed in two decades, but what has been constant is that more and more patients need LifeFlight’s specialized services. The number of requests for critical care transport has steadily increased at a rate of between 5% and 11% every year.

Over the last several years the organization has added an airplane and a third helicopter to its fleet and established a third base of operations in Sanford. As treatment for conditions like stroke, sepsis and heart attack has evolved, so has the care provided by LifeFlight’s clinical crew and the advanced equipment they carry on every mission. Today, the service LifeFlight provides resembles that of a flying intensive care unit, equipped to bring critical care directly to patients, before transporting them to specialists at large medical centers.

Local TV stations were also interested in marking the anniversary.

Check out these websites for more stories:

- www.wabi.tv
- www.newscentermaine.com
- www.foxbangor.com
- www.wmtw.com
- www.bangordailynews.com
- www.journaltribune.com

Search “LifeFlight 20 Years”

A few of LifeFlight’s original crew members were on hand for the dedication ceremonies, including (left to right): Medical Director Norm Dinerman MD, Executive Director Thomas Judge, Flight Medic Dave White and Flight Nurse/ Medic Heather Cady.
Now, the organization, together with its partners, is contemplating the best possible way to care for the next generation of Maine’s people, and taking a close look at the challenges, opportunities and needs of critically ill and injured patients.

The organization has become an integrated transport system, using helicopters, ground ambulances and an airplane to meet the diverse challenges of Maine’s geography. It has developed a unique partnership with the FAA to establish a statewide aviation infrastructure that improves the safety and the reliability of LifeFlight’s missions. It’s transforming its workforce to include a broader scope of practice, and works with a clinical practice committee to implement state-of-the-art medical technology.

By taking these steps, LifeFlight is preparing to meet challenges like Maine’s aging population, a shrinking healthcare workforce, and the continued regionalization of specialized care. Overcoming these challenges will be necessary to achieve LifeFlight’s stated vision of a place where every person, in every community, has access to the critical care and medical transport they need, when they need it.

Grateful patients stopped by to connect with flight crew members, including Tristan Kaldenberg (left photo) with Pilot Dave Burr, Flight Nurse Veronica Marzonie and Flight Nurse Missy McCann; and KC Ford (right photo) with Flight Medic Frank McClellan, Flight Nurse Missy McCann and Pilot Dave Burr.

Remote Access Ride FOR LIFEFLIGHT

50-mile ride in one of the most beautiful parts of Maine, all for the benefit of LifeFlight’s remote access project and the MSA scholarship fund.

EAST BRANCH SNO-ROVERS
Hathaway Road, East Millinocket
Ride starts at 9am
LifeFlight helicopter visit at 11am if available
Spaghetti Lunch at 12noon
(sold separately by East Branch Sno-Rovers)

REGISTER TODAY! www.lifeflightmaine.org

*Snow date: Saturday, February 9, 2019
In its sixth year, the Islesboro Crossing for LifeFlight, a 5k swim from Northport to Islesboro, filled to its maximum capacity of 150 swimmers. Joined by an additional 150 paddling escorts and dozens of volunteers, this group of enthusiastic LifeFlight supporters and open water swimmers raised more than $500,000 to help purchase two new helicopters to replace its oldest models, which were put into service in 2004.

This distinctive fundraising event focuses on both the challenges and the rewards of living in a rural state with thousands of miles of coastline, millions of acres of forest and farmland, and more than 3,000 islands. Visiting and living in rural Maine, especially on one of the state’s islands, is a unique experience. It offers solitude, natural beauty, and small, tight-knit communities. But the time and distance to specialized medical care is formidable—especially in an emergency.

The swimmers and paddlers making their way across Penobscot Bay physically overcome that distance. The journey is symbolic of the difficulties in accessing critical care in emergencies, and also a way to support LifeFlight, just one of many organizations helping to overcome those challenges.

A half a million dollars is an impressive amount of money by almost any measure. Even more impressive, most of it was collected one $10, $50 or $100 donation at a time thanks to the dedication of this year’s Islesboro Crossing swimmers, paddlers and volunteers.

\[\text{photo by Dev Devereux}\]
With safety at the top of mind, the event’s incident plan was developed by the Waldo County Emergency Management Agency, which then helped to implement it. Throughout the crossing, participants were guided by course and safety boats, all of which volunteered their time and resources. On Islesboro, enthusiastic spectators welcomed swimmers as they climbed out of the water, and a large contingent of island volunteers provided a variety of nourishing, homemade food.

The event couldn’t have been held without support from the volunteer boat captains, the Marine Patrol, Coast Guard, Camden Fire, Islesboro EMS and the Maine State Ferry Service. Also providing critical transportation support were Pendleton Yacht Yard and Island Transporter.

Contributing to the fundraising total were business sponsors including Camden National Bank, Viking Inc., Hannaford Supermarkets, Coastal Healthcare Alliance, Jett Travolta Foundation, Spectrum Healthcare Partners, Fisher Engineering, SevenBar Aviation, Journey’s End Marina, Horch Roofing, Eaton Peabody, Jo Ellen Designs, Rockport Automotive, Sidecountry Sports and BayView Financial Management.

When someone in Maine is suffering from a major medical event, or is the victim of a serious accident, LifeFlight is often called to help. The flight crew brings expertise and equipment, along with speed of the aircraft, directly to the patient, whether at the scene of an accident or at a rural healthcare facility.

Since 2004, two of Maine’s emergency medical helicopters, Echo Mike and Charlie Mike, have been beacons of hope in moments of need. The aircraft have crisscrossed the state, flying millions of miles and helping care for more than 25,500 patients. With flight time racking up and aviation technology continually evolving, LifeFlight is looking ahead to the day when those aircraft must be replaced.

The organization is in the midst of a campaign to raise $8 million of the $13 million total cost to purchase the next generation of fast and safe aircraft.
LIFEFLIGHT FOUNDATION

DISPATCHES is a publication of The LifeFlight Foundation, which provides fundraising and public relations support to LifeFlight of Maine, the state’s only medical helicopter service.

The LifeFlight Foundation is a nonprofit, tax-exempt organization under Section 501 (c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Service Tax Code. It is governed by an elected board of trustees who represent medical, business, legal and educational fields throughout the state.

The Foundation also supports the development and funding of Maine’s major air medical needs, such as trauma training statewide; construction of hospital helipads; and installation of weather reporting, navigational and communications systems.

The Foundation’s office is located in the town of Camden at 13 Main Street, 2nd floor. You can reach us at 207-230-7092 or by email at info@lifeflightmaine.org.

Donations are tax-deductible.

LIFEFLIGHT OF MAINE

LifeFlight of Maine is a nonprofit statewide critical care medical helicopter service jointly owned by Eastern Maine Healthcare Systems and Central Maine Healthcare Corporation. LifeFlight’s airplane, three helicopters and dedicated ground ambulances, based in Bangor, Lewiston and Sanford and operated by SevenBar Aviation, cover the entire state and offshore islands. LifeFlight complements and supports the work of local EMS and hospital personnel in caring for the critically ill or injured. Each base is staffed by a highly qualified team of pilots, mechanics, flight nurses and paramedics. More than 25,000 patients have been safely transported since LifeFlight’s founding in 1998.

LifeFlight was fully re-accredited by the Commission on Accreditation of Medical Transport Systems in 2017.

EDITOR

Melissa Arndt
Director of Communications
LifeFlight of Maine / LifeFlight Foundation

CONTRIBUTORS

Kim Grindle
Communications Specialist

Thomas Judge, CCT-P
Executive Director
LifeFlight of Maine / LifeFlight Foundation

Billy Stuart, Flight Paramedic
Outreach Coordinator
LifeFlight of Maine