

Air ambulance flight charges

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Health Care Statistics Program

<http://healthcarestats.health.utah.gov/>

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Statutory requirement

SB95, Air Ambulance Amendments (Sen. W. Harper) from the 2017 General Session requires the Utah Department of Health and Health Services and the Utah Health Data Committee to report air ambulance charges in the state of Utah. This report addresses the required data publication using claims information from the Utah All Payer Claims Database for calendar year 2023. The following section is the relevant portion of Utah Code governing this report.

53-2d-203. Data collection

(3)

(b) The committee shall coordinate with the Department of Health and Human Services, to create a report of data collected by the Department of Health and Human Services under Section 26B-8-504 regarding:

(i) appropriate analytical methods;

(ii) the total amount of air ambulance flight charges in the state for a one-year period; and

(iii) of the total number of flights in a one-year period under Subsection (3)(b)(ii):

(A) the number of flights for which a patient had no personal responsibility for paying part of the flight charges;

(B) the number of flights for which a patient had personal responsibility to pay all or part of the flight charges;

(C) the range of flight charges for which patients had personal responsibility under Subsection (3)(b)(iii)(B), including the median amount for paid patient personal responsibility; and

(D) the name of any air ambulance provider that received a median paid amount for patient responsibility in excess of the median amount for all paid patient personal responsibility during the reporting year.

....

(4)

(a) On or before October 1, the department shall make the information in Subsection (3)(b) public and send the information in Subsection (3)(b) to public safety dispatchers and first responders in the state.

(b) Before making the information in Subsection (3)(b) public, the committee shall provide the air ambulance providers named in the report with the opportunity to respond to the accuracy of the information in the report under Section 26B-8-506.

Requested Statistical Information

The Utah Department of Health and Human Services Health Care Statistics Program provides the following required information for calendar year 2023:

Table 1. Required statistics	
Total billed charges for air ambulance flights	\$71,356,938
Total number of air ambulance flights	1,752
Number of flights with no patient responsibility to pay part of the charges	1,325 (75.6%)
Number of flights where the patient was responsible to pay all or part of the charges	427 (24.4%)
Minimum patient responsibility* (excluding zeros)	\$8
Median patient responsibility* (excluding zeros)	\$1,855
Maximum patient responsibility*	\$75,489

*Note this excludes any balance billing

Table 2. Information for included air ambulance companies			
Company	Number of 2023 claims (Including zeros)	Median patient responsibility* (excluding zeros)	Number/percent of out of network claims
Intermountain Life Flight	1,080	\$1,855	8 (0.7%)
AirMed (University Health Care)	275	\$1,863	5 (1.8%)
Classic Lifeguard (Classic Air Medical)	182	\$2,206	9 (4.9%)
Guardian Flight (AMRG)	64	\$7,402	3 (4.7%)
Mercy Air Service	51	\$1,725	7 (13.7%)
St Mary's Medical Center	18	\$1,115	1 (5.6%)
Rocky Mountain Holdings, LLC	15	\$1,482	2 (13.3%)
Life Flight Network LLC	13	\$3,297	3 (23.1%)

Company	Number of Claims	Charge (billed) amount	Patient responsibility
Flagstaff Medical Center	6	NA	0 (0%)
San Juan Regional Medical Center	6	NA	0 (0%)
Reach Air Medical Services LLC	5	\$4,798	0 (0%)
Aviation West Charters LLC	3	NA	3 (100%)
Hawaii Life Flight, LLC	3	\$1,591	1 (33.3%)
St Luke's Regional Medical Center	3	\$200	0 (0%)
Other	28	\$1,158	4 (14.3%)

**Note this excludes any balance billing*

Analytical methods

The following analytical methods were used.

1. **Data source:** The Utah All Payer Claims Database (APCD) contains information from health plans, insurers, and other carriers with more than 2,500 Utah covered lives. In 2020, the APCD represented more than 80% of covered Utahns (excluding Medicare).
2. **Definition of an air ambulance flight:** Medical claims using Current Procedural Terminology (CPT) codes A0430, A0431, A0435, and A0436.
3. **Claims included/excluded:** Final adjudicated medical claims for an air ambulance flight where the payer was designated as the primary payer, and service date in calendar year 2023.
4. **Air ambulance providers:** We used the National Provider Identifier (NPI) listed on the claim as the billing provider to identify the air ambulance company. If the field is blank, the service provider was used. If both billing and service provider NPIs were blank, the provider name was used. We combined variations in air ambulance names into single entities where appropriate.
5. **Financial fields:**
 - a. **Charge (billed) amount**—The amount that the air ambulance requested to be paid.
 - b. **Patient responsibility**—The total amount the plan estimates to be the patient's responsibility for the air ambulance service. If a patient has secondary



coverage, part or all of this responsibility may be covered by another payer. NOTE however, if the air ambulance is considered out of network the patient may be balance billed (see 5-d below).

- c. **Calculating medians**—Since more than half of the air ambulance claims have no patient responsibility, the overall median is \$0. The reported medians are conditional medians where all claims with no patient responsibility are excluded.
- d. **Balance billing**—If a payer does not have a contract with the air ambulance, the patient may be billed for the difference between the billed charge and the allowed amount. This possibility (called “balance billing”) is not captured on a medical claim.