

Case Study: Operations & Safety Consulting

Air Medical Operator

Situation

A large trauma center with multiple satellite clinics, ~150 ground ambulances, and nine helicopters operating under their own aviation operating certificate experienced a series of major incidents and accidents over the years prior to working with us. Senior leadership needed help determining where best to direct resources, guidance on next steps for best practice, and a strong change agent.

Intervention

The trauma center CEO engaged VyClimb, seeking an ongoing assessment and enhancement of all aspects of their air medical transport program. The project included direct engagement with flight operations, maintenance, safety, clinical, communications, and business staff at the program and hospital level. This project started with an informal assessment of all individual departments and their interactions throughout the flight program with regular feedback to the CEO and CAO. In the early stages of this engagement, the certificate's Director of Operations and Aviation Training Manager both resigned, and the scope was increased to assist with recruiting, vetting, training, and mentoring their replacements. Several key findings from the ongoing assessment included:

- Understaffed & poorly structured aviation certificate leadership team
- Underpaid pilot & maintenance staff leading to few viable applicants for open positions
- Numerous outdated & non-standardized policies, procedures, and manuals
- Ineffective safety program
- Non-industry standard operations (non-NVG program, no flight suits, etc.)

We were highly engaged addressing these and other key findings for approximately 14 months. For a portion of time, we filled the Director of Operations role to allow the operator more time to find the best permanent replacement. In addition to constant communication with senior hospital leadership, we met with the certificate's insurance broker and underwriters to communicate the initiatives and progressive approach to safety that was being implemented.

Result

As a result of this project, the operator has a robust aviation leadership team across flight operations and maintenance. Additionally, they have established a safety department that is working towards a fully implemented SMS under the FAA's voluntary program, started an ASAP / MSAP, and is now meeting or exceeding industry standards of requiring flight suits for air crews and NVG for night operations. Upon completion of this project, the operator's insurance broker provided feedback that the work was applauded by industry underwriters and realized an insurance savings of approximately \$350K on their renewal premiums.