



UTAH DEPARTMENT OF  
**HEALTH**

Division of Family Health and Preparedness  
Bureau of EMS and Preparedness  
Air Ambulance Committee, in collaboration with,  
Center for Health Data and Informatics  
Office of Health Care Statistics  
NORM THURSTON, DIRECTOR  
801-538-7052 NTHURSTON@UTAH.GOV

---

## **Air Ambulance Flight Charges, 2015**

### **Statutory Requirement**

SB95 (Sen. W. Harper) from the 2017 General Session requires the Utah Department of Health 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 2015.

#### **26-8a-203 Data collection.**

(2)(b) Beginning July 1, 2017, the committee shall coordinate with the Health Data Authority created in Chapter 33a, Utah Health Data Authority Act, to create a report of data collected by the Health Data Committee under Section 26-33a-106.1 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 (2)(b)(i):
  - (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 (2)(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.

## Requested Statistical Information

The Utah Department of Health, Office of Health Care Statistics (OHCS) provides the following required information for calendar year 2015:

Total billed charges for air ambulance flights	\$43,903,112
Total number of air ambulance flights	2,020
Number of flights with no patient responsibility for paying part of the charges	1,491 (73.8%)
Number of flights where the patient was responsible for paying all of part of the charges	529 (26.2%)
Minimum patient responsibility (excluding zeroes)	\$15
Median patient responsibility (excluding zeroes)	\$1,827
Maximum patient responsibility	\$20,368

Company	Number of claims	Median patient responsibility (excluding zeroes)
Intermountain Life Flight	1,184 <sup>1</sup>	\$1,697*
AirMed (University Health Care)	406	\$501
Classic Lifeguard (Classic Air Medical)	179	\$500
AirCare (Mountainstar)	97	\$488
Guardian Flight (AMRG)	65	\$2,569
Eagle AirMed (AMRG)	40	\$1,127
St Mary's Medical Center	25 <sup>2</sup>	\$96 <sup>3</sup>
San Juan Regional Medical Center	18*	--*
Mercy Air Service	6*	\$1,777*

\* Unconfirmed by provider

\*\*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 2015, the APCD represented over 90% of covered Utahns (excluding Medicare).

<sup>1</sup> Disputed – 3,019 reported by provider

<sup>2</sup> Disputed – 41 reported by provider

<sup>3</sup> Disputed - \$322 reported by provider

## 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 2015, the APCD represented over 90% 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, service date in calendar year 2015.
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. In order to reduce the impact of services originating in other states, out-of-state air ambulance providers with fewer than 5 flights were excluded.
5. **Financial fields:**
  - a. **Charge (billed) amount** – The amount that the air ambulance requested to be paid
  - b. **Allowed amount** – The total amount the air ambulance is entitled to receive. This may be less than the charge amount under the terms of a contract between the plan and the air ambulance if a contract exists.
  - c. **Plan paid amount** – The total amount that the plan is obligated to pay, taking into account contract terms, patient deductibles and co-pays, and other limitations.
  - d. **Patient responsibility** – The total amount that 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.
  - e. **Calculating medians** – Since over 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.
  - f. **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. However, due to the way patient responsibility is calculated, it would be highly unusual for an air ambulance to bill a patient more than the patient responsibility calculated on the claim.
6. **Disputed Data:** Data was shared with all licensed air ambulance providers. The following table indicates if the data was disputed, accepted, or unconfirmed by each provider.