

Just A Phone Call Away

Autolaunch program speeds helicopter to severe trauma

It might be a frantic phone call from a mother whose child found a loaded handgun. It might be a summons from a motorist who witnessed a massive car accident. With Air Life's Autolaunch program, those heartbreaking calls from community members can be enough to set the helicopter in motion.

In most emergency situations, 911 operators dispatch the closest ground ambulance crew to the scene. However, Air Life's Autolaunch program gives dispatchers the option of sending Air Life's helicopter crew simultaneously in cases where air transport is most likely to make a difference.

"With many types of trauma, the ground crew will respond first and then call us to the scene if they think the patient should be flown," explained flight nurse Grant Boswell, RN, CRFN, Air Life's Autolaunch coordinator. "Though that's still the best option in many cases, there are some situations where we know at the outset that the patient will benefit from Air Life arriving on scene sooner."

Some instances where Autolaunch would be appropriate include:

- ◆ Major motor vehicle accidents, particularly those involving head-on collisions,

passenger ejections, semi-trucks or any street motorcycle at highway speed

- ◆ Any trauma involving prolonged extrication in a remote geographic area
- ◆ Severe head injury
- ◆ Amputation of arm or leg
- ◆ Penetrating trauma (i.e. stabbing, shooting or impaled objects) between the groin and head
- ◆ Major burns covering 25 percent of the body
- ◆ Near drowning
- ◆ Mass casualty incidents
- ◆ Industrial or logging accidents

Currently, the Autolaunch program is limited to agencies in

Bend, Redmond, La Pine, Sunriver, Sisters, Black Butte, Prineville, Madras and Warm Springs. Though Autolaunch has existed since 2001, Air Life has recently been working

to increase awareness about the program and offer additional training to dispatchers who might be called upon to make a decision to launch the helicopter.

So far, the program has been well received by ground ambulance providers and dispatchers alike. Air Life is the first program in Oregon to implement such a

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The Autolaunch program establishes protocols for 911 dispatchers to send the helicopter to the scene of certain severe traumas, including major motor vehicle accidents, amputations and severe head injuries.

program and one of only a handful of elite air ambulance services around the nation to do so. According to Air Life Medical Director Helenka Marcinek, MD, it all comes down to offering what's best for the patient.

"The statistics we've gathered so far indicate that it's very valuable to reduce the amount of time in the field for severely injured patients," Marcinek explained. "The sooner you can get a trauma patient to a facility where they can get definitive care, the better the outcome is likely to be."

NEW FACES At Air Life

Please join us in welcoming the three newest members of our Air Life family . . .



Denise Anderson, RT
Respiratory Therapist

Kim Kolander, RN
Flight Nurse



Julie Barbour, RN
Perinatal Flight Nurse



Air Life Director Vern Bartley talks with volunteers from around the state at the team training event on April 24. Volunteers learned about changes in the program and gathered information to share with members of their community.

Volunteers get fired-up at team training

They came from Fossil. They came from Lakeview. Some traveled more than 350 miles. In all, about 100 volunteers came to Bend April 24 for Air Life's annual team training event.

Team training takes place each spring to prepare Air Life's dedicated volunteer troops to educate their communities about Air Life.

"They're our ambassadors throughout the state," explained Joyce Newgen, Air Life membership assistant. "Air Life's volunteer teams are crucial to our mission of educating

the public about what Air Life does."

At the event, Air Life highlighted the La Pine volunteer team for an outstanding year of service. Madras volunteer Debi Wyzard — also the first Air Life patient ever flown — received the First Sustaining Volunteer Award for her 16 years of dedicated service.

"Volunteers are the cornerstone of our program," Joyce added. "It's very exciting to have the opportunity to meet with the people who serve as our eyes and ears in outlying areas."