



# Mercy Flights Flies High with Efficient Billing and Dispatch Operations

## MERCY FLIGHTS

### At a Glance:

- 56 years of service in the northwest
- 18 vehicles/aircraft
- 180 employees
- Transports over 9,000 patients per year

### ZOLL Data Systems' solutions

- RescueNet Billing
- RescueNet Dispatch

### Benefits

- Increased accuracy and efficiency
- Centralized reporting for improved business processes
- Increased productivity and employee satisfaction
- Improved customer service

*"It was the ZOLL Data Systems' vision of an integrated family of products that was of most value to us. Several vendors have high-quality standalone applications, but ZOLL Data Systems was ahead in integrating enhancements and products."*

—Ken Parsons, General Manager

## OVERVIEW

Mercy Flights was founded as a non-profit organization in 1949 by George Milligan, an air traffic controller in Medford, Oregon. Through fundraising efforts by school children, scouts, and others in the community, George Milligan raised enough money to buy the first aircraft, a twin-engine Cessna. A "membership" program was established that provided people in the community with an opportunity to contribute to Mercy Flights, while insuring they would be financially covered in the event they needed air medical transportation.

As demand for these air transports grew, Mercy Flights responded to that need, adding additional aircraft and personnel to provide medical transportation. In 1992, Mercy Flights purchased Medford Ambulance Service, expanding operations to include ground ambulance transportation. This acquisition combined the strengths of these two community service organizations, building on the varied background and experience of each.

Through a cooperative effort, the volunteer first responders and EMTs serving outlying communities now do so as a valuable part of the Mercy Flights organization. These communities benefit from the assurance of consistent, professional EMS services and a stronger economic base, and the EMTs benefit through increased training, improved equipment, and some financial compensation for the crucial role they play.

In 1995, Mercy Flights and Timberland entered a joint effort to provide an emergency helicopter service available to all citizens and agencies within a 150-mile radius of Medford, further expanding the type of medical transportation provided. This added resource allows rapid transport for critical patients, as well as improved access to remote areas.

## BUSINESS CHALLENGE

The main challenges were the implementation of HIPAA and the CMS ambulance fee schedule. HIPAA regulations required technological advancements; and the fee schedule called for improved efficiencies and operational reports. The "old way" consisted of mostly paper claims and financial reporting, which was done adequately by the existing system. But then, there were not as many insurance company-specific filing requirements and "write-downs".

# CUSTOMER SUCCESS STORY: Mercy Flights

*“Mercy Flights has improved ambulance utilization, reduced the days outstanding of accounts receivable, and improved accuracy in documentation and coding.”*

—Ken Parsons, General Manager

## BUSINESS SOLUTION

The initial interest was in ZOLL Data Systems’ RescueNet Billing solution. Their progress in anticipating HIPAA requirements and their involvement in the HIPAA standards development committee made them the superior choice.

The RescueNet solution was developed to meet HIPAA requirements, and its ease-of-use and logical format were features that helped Mercy Flights make the right decision. ZOLL Data Systems’ knowledge of the ambulance billing business also greatly assisted them in analyzing the “fit”. They also talked to other EMS organizations who used ZOLL Data Systems in their operations. “I would have to say it was ZOLL Data Systems’ vision of an integrated family of products that sealed the deal.”, said Ken Parsons.

“Several vendors have high-quality standalone applications, but ZOLL Data Systems was ahead in integrating enhancements and products. The staff’s interest in our input to improve or further enhance the product family was refreshing and contagious. We wanted to help develop it,” he continued.

They purchased RescueNet Billing in the summer of 2002, installed it in October, and went live in November 2002. They have since gone live with RescueNet Dispatch in November 2003. It has been a continual process because they enhance the product (add options) as they are ready to benefit from these enhancements.

## BUSINESS RESULTS

Mercy Flights now has reports to improve operations and the billing has transitioned into electronic submittal and receipt. The implementation of RescueNet Dispatch was a significant improvement to the billing process in reducing data entry duplication.

Following the initial “it’s different” stage, the employees now enjoy working with the system and are continually impressed with its capability to improve business processes.

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“Hopefully it will allow us to offer better customer service and information than our competitor, but I am sure it will help us survive longer. After all, I think we all agree ambulance services are in a survival mode at this time,” added Ken Parsons.



Mercy Flights provides expert emergency and non-emergency medical care and transport. Their air and ground ambulances carry the latest in life-saving technology. Mercy Flights is best known as the first civilian air ambulance organization in the nation

ZOLL Data Systems offers the RescueNet suite—computer-aided dispatch, billing, field data collection, crew scheduling, and mobile data software for the emergency medical services (EMS) market. RescueNet is the only fully integrated EMS data management system that allows EMS organizations to manage critical information for maximum performance.

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