

Letters to the Editor  
The Olympian  
July 8, 2008

Re: Airlift Touts Safety Record

In the July 8 issue of The Olympian, an Airlift Northwest spokesperson touted their safety record following a spate of air medical accidents that have killed 35 people in less than 18 months across the country.

Touting is one thing. Facts are another. Airlift has had five accidents since 1995, not three since 1982 as reported. Those five accidents killed six people, seriously injured one, and caused minor injuries to two others. All five accidents either destroyed or significantly damaged aircraft.

On Sept. 11, 1995, three flight crew died when their helicopter crashed into Puget Sound. On Jan. 11, 2002 a pilot was seriously injured near Baring. On Sept. 29, 2005 my sister Erin and two others including the pilot mentioned above died when their helicopter crashed into Brown's Bay. On Oct. 28, 2005 a helicopter crashed off a helipad in Olympia injuring a patient and flight nurse; the aircraft was destroyed. In 2007, an emergency landing in Stanwood, WA damaged a new aircraft but fortunately no one was hurt.

In a timely coincidence, Senator Maria Cantwell (WA) introduced air medical safety legislation in Congress yesterday. Let's hope our lawmakers can separate fact from fiction and protect flight crews and patients.

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