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Re: *Air-ambulance crashes trigger FAA's 'full attention'*
June 11, 2008, USA Today

“An Unfortunate Cluster”

I read with interest the June 11 article *Air-ambulance crashes trigger FAA's 'full attention'* in USA Today by reporter Alan Levin.

In 2005, my sister Erin was killed when the helicopter she was working aboard crashed in Puget Sound. The accident that killed Erin, fellow flight nurse Lois Suzuki and pilot Steve Smith was also part of the 2004-2005 “cluster of unfortunate accidents” that Tom Judge, former president of the Association of Air Medical Services, refers to when describing this most recent spate of fatal crashes. That cluster killed 50 and seriously injured 11.

Meanwhile most of the families who've lost loved ones in these accidents wonder when these unfortunate clusters will end? Yes, the industry gets shaken out of complacency for a short period of time following an unfortunate cluster, but soon enough those clusters reappear. Are we expected to believe this is simply coincidence, bad luck, or just fate? What about the lack of basic safety equipment in an already aging fleet of EMS aircraft? What about increasing competitive pressure to fly dangerous missions or the lack of weather standards when patients are not on board the aircraft?

Congress is currently considering two EMS flight safety bills (H.R. 3939 and S. 1300, Section 508) that would make the skies safer for flight crew and patients. Let's hope our elected officials can see beyond the cluster theory and demand change from the FAA and the industry.

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