



## SM4 Safety

Planning • Prevention • Response • Recovery

### Vetting and Selecting a Supplemental Lift Provider



**By: Donald J. Chupp**

President, Fireside Partners Inc.

Most organizations that own and operate their own aviation assets are not very keen on bringing in an external lift provider. Likely, there are two principal reasons: First, they believe that there is no safer, flexible, and responsive option than the one they already have in-house. Second, like any professional endeavor, anyone who provides a complementary service in a different manner and at a lower cost (if even perceptually), can be seen as a threat.

Nevertheless, it is sometimes necessary to secure the services of a supplemental lift provider (SLP). Unfortunately, there is no label of ingredients on an aviation provider to help you determine, "Hey, what is really in there?" On the web, the substandard operators can look a lot like the good operators. All it takes is some professional images, fancy words, and a few audit logos.

How can you ensure the same level of safety and professionalism you require in your own operation, especially in an era where the validity and reliability of audits are under intense scrutiny? How can you be sure your people are protected instead of learning too late that you did not get what you thought?

#### **WHERE TO START WHEN SELECTING A SUPPLEMENTAL LIFT PROVIDER**

Your selection must begin with research to find candidates. However, even after doing the homework, deciding whether to engage an SLP is still a daunting and confusing process. It can be quite hard to find the ideal provider. Who operates the closest to your expectations? How developed is their safety program? Do they have a robust emergency response program? How deep is the company infrastructure? What is their reputation in the industry? These and other questions must be answered to your satisfaction.

One helpful resource to use in your assessment is the NBAA (National Business Aviation Association) Supplemental Lift Assessment Tool (SLAT).<sup>1</sup> Another is attendance at one of the NBAA-BACE or SDC conference sessions on the same subject. With what you learn from those resources, you are better prepared to identify critical warning signs that a particular SLP is not up to your standards.



# SM4 Safety

Planning • Prevention • Response • Recovery

## SLP SELECTION: RED FLAGS

As you evaluate SLPs, keep these key considerations in mind:

1. The National Air Transportation Association has done a lot of awareness and advocacy work on the [avoidance of illegal charters](#). Stay away from any operators that are not completely transparent about their ownership, certification, and operational qualifications.
2. Some operators will fly with one company pilot and one contracted pilot. Given the high number of accidents that cite issues in the cockpit from charter pilots who have not flown together before (or flown only in limited cases), it is good practice to not accept flights flown by two contracted pilots.
3. The header on the charter quote sheet may have no connection to who owns or is operating the flight. Ask for and get clear information on who *owns* the aircraft, and who is *operating* it. Look them up and get a sense of who you are depending on to care for your people onboard. Look up the registration number (N-number or tail number) in the [FAA Registry](#). Then search the name of the owner in your web browser. Aircraft are sometimes secured in holding companies or leased through a financial institution. What you really want to know is who and what is behind the airplane. Is it a company or a person? If there is a contingency, what response can you expect? If it is too gray, or there are too many moving parts and players, find a cleaner option - there are plenty out there.
4. If flight crew members are not comfortable with the safety of an operation - listen to them and heed their advice without objection. The same is true for you. If something is making you uncomfortable, have the fortitude to slow things down or stop the process.
5. If integrity is what you do when you think no one is watching, then the ultimate assessment is to visit a potential charter company unannounced. A solid company is always ready to show you what they do and how they do it. In fact, they are proud to have the opportunity. Anything less than that should give you good reason to keep looking.
6. Many brokers will not disclose details on passengers to the owner of the aircraft, perhaps in fear that the operator will obtain their client information. This becomes a real problem in accident and emergency scenarios. The owner or operator will be the first entity to know an emergency has occurred with the aircraft. Without detailed passenger information, critical medical care could be delayed or other important duty of care opportunities missed. Customers should require that the broker share important information with operators and/or the customer should require the operator to contact them *directly and immediately* if there is an emergency or service disruption situation.

## WHAT ELSE CAN I DO TO LEARN AND BE PROACTIVE?



# SM4 Safety

Planning • Prevention • Response • Recovery

The subject of vetting and selecting supplemental lift providers is gaining more and more traction in the industry. Accidents are not the only thing driving it. Service disruptions, poor customer communications, and confusing variable fees have all contributed to the inertia.

Attending the National Business Association (NBAA) sessions on [Vetting Your Supplemental Lift Provider](#) is one of the best ways to interact with thought leaders on this subject and get insights from trusted colleagues in the business aviation industry. The [Global Aerospace SM4 Safety Program](#) is another great resource for safety information.

## Resources

<sup>1</sup> The SLAT is provided free of charge to "Vetting Your Supplemental Lift Provider" attendees at NBAA BACE and SDC Conferences.



### Fireside Partners Inc.

Fireside Partners, Inc., is a fully integrated emergency services provider designed to provide all services and resources required to respond effectively and compassionately in a crisis situation. Dedicated to building world-class emergency response programs (ERP), Fireside instills confidence, resiliency and readiness for high-net worth and high-visibility individuals and businesses. Fireside provides a broad array of services focused on prevention and on-site support to help customers protect their most important assets: their people and their good name.

<http://www.firesideteam.com/>