Aviation Emergency Response Planning

Integrating a Family Assistance Service Provider

**A Resource Guidebook
for the Business Aviation Industry**

Made possible by the Global Aerospace SM4 Program

PREFACE

Ask any organization with a solid culture what they would do if faced with an aviation accident, and the answer will often be "take care of the families." These same organizations often face shortages in trained personnel, dedicated resources, and/or deficiencies in post-accident know how.

Even after doing the homework, deciding whether or not to involve an external family assistance services provider, who they should choose, and where in the process of emergency response planning they should be incorporated, can be a daunting and confusing process.

The goal of this guide is to provide a business aviation operator with a *basic* understanding of post-accident Family Assistance and the operational areas where a Family Assistance Service Provider might be beneficial, and in some cases, essential. It offers tools and tips to identify potential organizational support needs, and outlines points to consider when making a logical and informed choice regarding the selection of an external provider.

Requisite core capabilities and competencies of quality Family Assistance Providers are addressed. A sample of important interview questions, links, references and additional resources are also provided.

This guide can also provide clarity and guidance for an operator to enhance its existing emergency response plan, and ensure that the resources and capabilities that are in place best match the needs and expectations of its passengers, owners, and company executives.

After reading this guide if you still have questions or need additional support, the Global Aerospace SM4 program can put you directly and confidentially in touch with the right resources.

This Resource Guide is designed to be a free general reference for the business and private aviation industry and cannot be sold. This Resources Guide should not be mistaken for a policy document, a listing of industry requirements, or a legal treatise. Where certain language and references from official sources have been provided, they are cited appropriately. Neither the authors, nor the sponsoring company are responsible for missing, misstated, or mischaracterized information, or errors in this document.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

Business aviation is a critical national resource. More than just the transportation of people and goods, business aviation is an irreplaceable regional, national, and international network that mobilizes and globalizes modern commerce.

Often miscast as a small collection of the business elite, corporate flight departments and specialized charter, fractional ownership, and niche cargo markets are arguably the workhorses of the international aviation system. The largest private aviation operators in fact, maintain large fleets and conduct hundreds of flights daily, and rival the operational numbers of many commercial aviation operators.

Despite the collective size of business aviation, the availability of resources and industry best practices for emergency response remains elusive and often ad-hoc. Under the auspices of operational differences and uniqueness, the business aviation sector remains an underserved market for a solid and holistic emergency response program.

When compared to commercial aviation however, the business aviation market receives much less post-accident standardization and clarity in the federal response, less transparency in best practices, and less customized training resources for managing the response. This is inequity is hard to understand, as the basic needs of the business or private aviation operator, their crews, passengers, and their families are really no different.

For the business aviation operator perhaps the most important, yet least understood emergency response commitment pertains to post-accident family assistance. This publication provides clarity, recommendations and solutions for business aviation operators as they develop this critical component of their response program.

We hope you will never need the information contained in this guide for purposes other than planning and preparing. In the event you do, we further hope you find it to have contributed to your emergency response program goals and capabilities.

Good luck and best wishes,

The Global Aerospace SM4 Program

The SM4 logo represents the belief that a safety culture is defined by how you integrate your approach to Planning, Prevention, Response and Recovery into the everyday way you work and live.

BEST PRACTICES

Over the course of the past decade aviation safety and management thought leaders worked to develop tools and benchmarking concepts that allow even the smallest flight departments to achieve high levels of safety and management efficiency. Excellent resources are now available at no cost through organizations like the National Business Aviation Association (www.nbaa.org), the Global Aerospace SM4 initiative (www.sm4.global-aero.com) and the International Business Aviation Council (www.ibac.org).

Defining "Best Practices" for an aviation operation assumes a certain commonality and no two business aviation operators are exactly alike. However, good research (and common sense) leads us to accept the premise that there are certain identifiable traits that the industry's top performers' exhibit. A systematic approach to management of almost any enterprise reduces the risk of failure and this is most certainly the case in aviation. The operators that apply a more consistent, measurable, and most importantly **a proactive approach** are more likely to perform at a much higher level.

The International Standard for Business Aircraft Operations (IS-BAO) is generally accepted as the most comprehensive reflection of best practices for our industry. The Standard can be downloaded at no cost on the IBAC website. In the opening paragraphs IS-BAO is defined as a document that "… contains a set of standards and recommended practices that are based upon business aviation best practices, developed by the industry for the industry." Further it states that the Standard "…constitutes —base line‖ requirements which operators should apply in structuring and staffing their organization and planning and conducting their operations."

Section 11 of the IS-BAO document directly addresses the importance of emergency response planning and training. Here are some excerpts from that section:

- 11.1 An operator shall have a plan detailing the procedures to be followed in the event of an accident, incident or other emergency. Compliance with the plan is mandatory in the case of accidents involving substantial damage to aircraft or injury to passengers, crew members or persons on the ground. In the case of other accidents, incidents or emergencies, compliance will be at the discretion of the operator, subject to any requirements imposed by law by the State of Registry or the law of State in which the accident or incident occurred.

- 11.4 The emergency response plan shall include, as applicable:
    a. procedures for notification of next of kin;
    b. procedures for dealing with questions from and providing assistance to the families of passengers and crew members;
    c. procedures for dealing with questions from the media;
    d. procedures for participating or co-operating with State agencies and police authorities who may be investigating the accident; and

e. considerations for dealing with the effects of the accident on the organization's operations and on employees (i.e. trauma counseling services and other crises intervention support for persons involved or affected by the event).

- 11.5 Personnel who have a role in the emergency response plan shall be trained in their role and the plan shall be exercised periodically in order to test its integrity.

These standards define *what* should be accomplished but provide no guidance to *how* the standards should be met. It is left to the discretion of the operator to utilize other resources (internal or external) to develop, refine and test their emergency response program.

Here are some points to keep in mind when building or analyzing your emergency response program.

- Examine your internal support structure. It should include sufficient personnel to staff an effective response. If it does, make sure your team includes key personnel with decision-making authority and clear responsibilities. Ensure these personnel are adequately trained.

- Your program must demonstrate preparation for an event (training, audits, drills, exercises, agreed upon partnerships), response to the actual event itself, and a process for recovery and return to normal operations.

- Your response involvement should be commensurate with your organizational strengths and weaknesses. Capitalize on your strengths by using tried and trusted internal resources, and utilize the services and assistance of a response partner in areas of weakness.

- Your program should outline clear priorities. What is it that your organization values most? Whatever you decide is most important should be inherent throughout your program. Clear priorities provide focus and a fixed direction in which to point and gauge success in all response efforts.

EMERGENCY RESPONSE OVERVIEW

A great deal of confusion and lack of clarity still surrounds aviation emergency response planning. An aviation accidnet is a rare event - so rare in fact that Emergency Response Programs are often underdeveloped or in some instances nonexistent. Despite their rarity, aviation disasters do happen. When they occur they are high profile events and often involve casualties, complex legal issues and multiple government agencies. If an emergency response is handled poorly the effects can be damaging and long lasting.

Often an operator is required to weigh limited resources and time with activities that have more day-to-day safety or operational cost savings benefit. As a result, deficiencies are often not exposed or revealed until an actual event occurs. This is obviously not the preferred scenario and this publication assumes that the reader is interested in a proactive and organizationally responsible aviation Emergency Response Program (ERP).

Responding effectively to an aviation accident will require business aviation operators to react quickly and purposefully with intellectual, material, and human assets that support unique and fluid operational needs. A comprehensive response takes into account both external and internal operational requirements.

EXTERNAL REQUIREMENTS

External requirements are established by outside organizations and agencies that have their own missions and roles in an aviation accident response. Aviation operators have critical parts to play with the relevant external groups like investigators, first responders, and the media but the operator's primary roles tend to be more participatory and supportive than directive.

INTERNAL REQUIREMENTS

The internal operational requirements are the specific focus of this publication. These are derived primarily from the clear establishment of, and collective adherence to, an operator's *organizational priorities* – those cultural characteristics that the organization feels are most important to their identity, and therefore stand as uncompromising commitments in the wake of any emergency response.

TOP THREE PRIORITIES

No two aviation companies are completely alike. Each has a separate and distinct approach to their mission, values, and culture, and operational realities vary widely. However, when leaders of private aviation companies, or non-aviation companies that own and operate corporate aircraft, were asked to list their top three priorities in the event of an accident - those core values that mattered over and above all else - a commonality emerged. This commonality gravitated around the following three key principles and values: *People, Participation*, and *Perception*.

1. PEOPLE

When asked to identify the top post-accident priority that resonated with their internal culture, an overwhelming majority of aviation operators (regardless of their type and size) report that the ability to provide assistance to all the people affected is the leading priority. An organization with a strong culture desires to "assist the people" first.

Ironically, despite its critical importance to the aviation organization, the specific plans and procedures required to meet this leading priority often are only loosely described in the emergency plan. From a planning and responding standpoint, the means and materials to ensure this priority is met are often perilously underdeveloped and vague.

Assisting the people affected by an accident should be foremost on a company's mind. But a business aviation department is typically operated by a non-aviation company. Even if the company has dealt with accidents and crisis situations previously, an *aviation* accident with its unique demands, intense media coverage, and significant government involvement presents unique challenges.

'People' as a top priority refers to two separate populations within this guidebook. First and foremost it refers to the families and friends of the victims who were involved in the accident. They deserve timely and compassionate notification, logistical and personal support, a connection to resources and often, long term financial and emotional support.

Next it refers to protecting the safety and well-being of the company employees who are administering support to the affected families, or who personally knew the accident crew or passengers.

2. PARTICIPATION

While the aviation company will not take the lead in the accident investigation (this is the role of the NTSB) it is important to participate as effectively as possible in the investigation. But it is important to remember, you have a vested interest in the outcome. Appropriately trained and prepared company representatives should be present at the accident location to observe and (as appropriate) assist in the investigative process.

At the base of operations, some company representatives will likely be interviewed as part of the ongoing investigation, and should also be available to provide records and other necessary documentation to the investigating authorities.

Active participation improves the flow, quality and quantity of important information in the immediate aftermath of an accident. Active participation demonstrates to the *People* that you are also working on their behalf to determine causality.

3. PERCEPTION

You must be prepared to become the best source of timely and accurate information. You must be prepared to communicate appropriately and effectively to those families impacted by the loss. You must be prepared to communicate your story to the media at large and you must be prepared to communicate your story throughout the organization. If you can accomplish these tasks, you will lead the way toward protection of your brand name.

What is the alternative?

The alternative is allowing the media to tell your story and allowing other sources to provide information to those impacted by the loss. Dare you entrust your organization's brand name to unknown sources?

Managing participation and perception is generally straight forward. But managing the myriad issues surrounding the management of *people* issues is much more complicated.

POST ACCIDENT FAMILY ASSISTANCE

WHAT IS IT?

> *"Family Assistance is a set of operational practices, having intentional purpose and chronology, being administered by appropriately trained personnel, for the specific purpose of providing information, administering comfort, and directing resources to the families and friends of accident victims."*

> *Don Chupp, President and CEO, Fireside Partners Inc.*

BACKGROUND

Catastrophe Family Assistance has its roots in the military systems of World War I and World War II. As communications improved, family notifications of losses came almost directly from the battlefields. But, many families suffered from the results of errors in notification and a general lack of post-notification family assistance and support. The commercial aviation industry (airlines) took note and initially tapped into military resources for help in developing the first aviation family assistance plans.

Modern Family Assistance was first shaped by the government's response to the 1990 floods in Hardin, Missouri. The massive flooding was so severe cemeteries were breached, causing flood waters to raise coffins from their resting places, and disperse them throughout the region. The victims' families were not satisfied with the simple collection and re-internment of the coffins. The families demanded that each victim be properly identified before burial. In order to accommodate their requests, the government established a Family Assistance Center solely for the purpose of collecting pertinent identification data. This was the first formally documented Family Assistance Center in the United States.

1995 brought the advent of Family Assistance on an organized and somewhat preplanned national scale with the bombing of the Oklahoma City Federal Building. From that event, many lessons, positive and negative, were learned. Subsequent to the Oklahoma City bombing there was a cluster of aviation accidents - TWA 800, US Air 427, ValuJet 592 and Swiss Air Flight 111.

Following these notable accidents, families had similar expectations and wanted and perhaps even expected, the same level of support they had witnessed after the Oklahoma City bombing. The families joined forces and formed a victim advocacy group. The group lobbied Congress, and as a result of their united efforts, *The Aviation Disaster Family Assistance Act of 1996* (the Act) was passed.

Although this important legislation provided some recommendations and requirements for the responsible parties, it did not specify *how* to do Family Assistance, nor did it provide

guidelines for evaluating one's plans or activities. The Act simply identified the general responsibilities of both government and non-governmental agencies during the emergency response. Further, since its inception, the Act has not been updated substantially to account for changes in technology, international developments, or proven best practices.

From 1998 to 2002, the [International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO)](#) considered at length the assistance provided to air crash victims and their families. During these meetings, ICAO agreed upon the roles and responsibilities of the state of the occurrence and the aircraft operators. Upon conclusion, ICAO *strongly encouraged* states to establish legislation and protocols for air crash victims and their families.

On March 4, 2013, ICAO's recommendation became *policy*. Taking responsibility for assisting accident victims and their families is now a requirement for ICAO member states. According to then Council President Roberto Kobeh Gonzalez,

> *"Elevating this issue to official party level will hopefully accelerate States' adoption of the necessary measures and better ensure that the mental, physical and spiritual well-being of accident victims and their next of kin is full recognized and accommodated".*

WHY IS FAMILY ASSISTANCE IMPORTANT?

The simple answer is: It is the right thing to do, it is expected, and it is good business. Your company's response should reflect what you believe about your organization. Your company's response should reflect those core values that define what you hold in highest esteem. But in addition to the moral necessity there is also the matter of operational necessity.

A response to a disaster can be a very public affair, especially in light of today's sophisticated media outlets. It has become the expectation of the public, legal arena, media, future and current customers, and even your competitors that companies will have established and fully operational Family Assistance capabilities. Responsible organizations must ensure that policies and procedures are in place to assist accident victims and their families.

Whether family assistance is accomplished utilizing organic company resources, a combination of company and Provider's resources, or if it is outsourced in its entirety, the actions taken to support victims and families following an accident will define your reputation for years to come. Effectively manage the support to the people, and the perceptions surrounding it, and the probability that your brand name will continue to thrive is increased. Handle it poorly and your business will likely suffer significant perceptual, legal, and financial consequences.

Consider a company whose brand name has been compromised - most notably for failure to appropriately assist people and failure to manage public perception. What were the

ramifications for that company's image and reputation? What were the long term financial ramifications?

Your public stance and your effectiveness in coordinating the human element is directly under your control and responsibility. These two parts are inherently linked and are the most central to how your organizational brand will be viewed after an accident.

> **"Being prepared to assist victims and families allows you to publicly tell one small, but overtly positive story within the morass of negativity. Why would anyone deprive themselves of this one opportunity?"** [1]

THE FAMILY ASSISTANCE PROCESS IN ACTION

In order to understand family assistance we must identify its parts and what it is *procedurally designed to do*. Once we understand the key components, we can measure our response capabilities and those of any Provider or Response Partner we are evaluating. An effective family assistance process is procedurally designed to do four main things:

A. <u>Notify the relatives (or identified emergency contacts)</u>. From an emergency response perspective, this is the first step in the Family Assistance Process. The purpose of this contact with the family is to inform them that an accident has occurred and advise as to the disposition of their loved one. Expediency and factual information are key here. Engaging the family as soon as possible sends the message that they are foremost in the organizations thinking. The benchmark in regard to prompt, timely contact is *no longer than sixty minutes*. Beyond sixty minutes (which in 2015 and beyond is rapidly shortening), the story will likely have been displayed across media outlets. This obviously makes in-person notification as an effective strategy, a thing of the past. *The key here is to mobilize and deploy your in-person resources <u>while</u> you are conducting family notification.*

Note that the previously mentioned benchmark is not dependent upon knowing all, or even the majority of facts. It moves along with the developing information. Notification is a highly specialized role, requiring sensitivity and deep compassion. Internal Notifiers should undergo specialized training and practice their skills during drills and exercises.

To compare, in commercial aviation, many current models utilize the public releasing of a toll-free telephone number, as required in some forms of legislation designed purposefully for commercial aviation *(ref: Aviation Disaster Family Assistance Act (ADFAA) (49 USCA § 1136; 49 USCA § 41113).* However, even in commercial aviation, this model has not evolved much since the mid 1990's, even though available technology has rapidly advanced. Further, the public nature of

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[1] Donald J. Chupp, *Clearing the Air,* SM4.global-aero.com, (2012).

this protocol, along with its inherently reactive nature, can quickly make it awkward, impersonal and impractical for the business aviation operator.

The relationship business and private aviation operators have with their passengers is often much more connected and personal than the commercial operator. Passengers are often employees of the company that owns the aircraft, executive board members, or high net worth and high visibility individuals. This is not an issue of importance, but of relationship, responsibility, service, and expectation. Therefore models that better address the needs of business aviation passengers have emerged, and are taking a solid hold in the industry. For instance, a leading emergency services provider has developed a 4-Phase Notification Process[2] specifically for business aviation and other unique business concerns.

> *"Family notification is a key issue, because it is the start of process and sets the tone for how families are treated."*
>
> Kendra St. Charles, Survivor USAir 405, and Task Force Member
> Final Report, Task Force on Assistance to Families of Aviation

B. <u>Provide for the immediate and continual needs of the families</u>, including, but not limited to, travel support, additional information, or any other support the family requires. Think in terms of what the family member expresses as a need in that moment. Whether it's arranging a taxi to the airport, assistance with obtaining a passport, or resources for grief counseling, the families' needs are the top priority.

C. <u>Create a mechanism by which all families may receive timely and accurate information.</u> Families will want access to information about their loved ones, their personal belongings, and details about the crash itself. You must provide the families and friends of accident victims with answers from legitimate official sources.

Within the scope of information sharing, **Family Briefings** should be conducted at least once daily, preferably twice. Briefings are formal communications to the families informing them of ongoing developments. They may receive information regarding the accident investigation itself, or they may hear from the medical examiner, the CEO of the company, company officials, etc.

D. <u>Create a plan for ongoing support.</u> Arranging for transportation of the families to a location close to the accident site is a coordinated effort between various organizations to include the operator, NTSB and sometimes, the American Red Cross. This is an important, yet difficult step in the grieving process. Privacy and compassion are vital components.

It is the inherent responsibility of the aircraft operator to ensure the personal belongings of the victims are recovered, catalogued and "made as safe as possible

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[2] Fireside Partners Inc.

for handling" or cleaned of fuel and other fluids or debris before being returned to the families. It is highly recommended that a Provider be used to handle this task. A good plan also includes assistance in coordinating the return of the loved one's remains to local funeral homes.

Although the creation of and dedication of a memorial is not a universal requirement, the potential for family's interest in this should be considered.

E. Disengagement. It is essential that a plan include a clear definition of the point of disengagement. Family Assistance begins to wind down with the return of remains to loved ones, or release from a hospital. After the point of disengagement, other assistance may continue in the form of Human Resources assistance, psychological support, burial and funeral details, company benefits and insurance entitlements, and information sharing.

The well-being of the organization's response team must also be considered even after disengagement. The team has existed in a heightened emotional state while tending to the families. It is important to monitor their exhaustion and stress and direct them toward any needed emotional resources. *Remember a fundamental difference in business aviation is the closeness that can exist between the company and the passengers.*

"Won't The Police, NTSB or Red Cross do these things for us?"

Many assume that the Police, NTSB or the Red Cross fulfills the role of the Family Assistance Provider. While these agencies do perform either an advisory role, or provide important ancillary functions, none of them can truly protect or represent the brand of the operator, or perform the comprehensive role of the Family Assistance Provider.

Police services can be used, if needed, to assist in securing an accident scene or to secure the safety of families, but the extent of their services revolves primarily around security-like logistical support. There are instances where the police step into the role of Notifier but their involvement is very short, and usually ends when notification has been performed. Utilizing the police as Notifier may be less than optimal, and will likely not represent your organization well.

NTSB Transportation Disaster Assistance (TDA) provides information and limited direct assistance for family members and friends of accident victims and survivors in the immediate aftermath of an accident and in the months following.[3] The duties and functions of the NTSB TDA are quite limited, and it is critical to note that in private and business aviation accidents their onsite presence is not assured.

The purpose of the NTSB TDA is twofold. It provides *information* to families about the investigation, consulting assistance to officials involved in the victim identification and personal effects, and it provides *coordination* with local, state and federal assets for

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[3] *Information for Families, Friends and Survivors,* http://www.ntsb.gov/tda/family.html

response needs. An example would be assisting with arranging a Site Visit in coordination with the local officials, Red Cross and the operator. The TDA office does not replace the responsibilities of the operator or the far reaching capabilities of an effective Family Assistance Provider. Their span of control, although quite valuable, is simply investigative, advisory and informative.

The Red Cross Condolence Program is an emerging program, and has been likened to the role of the Family Assistance Provider. The Condolence Program is staffed with volunteer Red Cross Nurses who visit the legal next of kin after fatal single or mass casualties. In addition to Disaster relief these volunteers also provide in-person emotional support. [4] The Condolence Program is not universal (it may not be available in your area) and the scope of their responsibilities and capabilities does not equal those of a fully functioning Family Assistance Provider.

It is also important to consider the voluntary and public nature of the Red Cross. For a private or business aviation operator, this may provide too much visibility and lack of organizational control given the demographic of the passengers, owners, and company principles.

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[4] *Red Cross Condolence Program Volunteers Help Families In Need*,
http://news.nurse.com/article/20130506/NY02/105060039?sf12523217=1 (May 2013).

WHAT DO I HAVE TO DO?

Technically, you should at least be prepared to manage and/or coordinate all of the family assistance tasks from notification to potentially setting up a Family Assistance Center (FAC), administering short-term support, coordinating with outside agencies, recovery, processing and return of personal effects, and preparing for long term support. However, by now you know there are several areas of the family assistance effort you may not want your own personnel directly involved in. Now it is time to consider your options.

The call to action is to select one of three options in regards to implementing a Family Assistance Program. We of course are assuming that doing nothing is not an option, by the sheer fact you are reading this guide.

1. You can assume full responsibility for all Family Assistance functions, solely utilizing your own internal resources

   Pro - no one can protect your company brand like your own personnel

   Con - your personnel were likely not hired for these roles, and the emotional, psychological, and even physical requirements may present significant organizational risk. Further you may not have the depth in personnel available

2. You can retain a Family Assistance Provider to assume control of the entire process, and they can maintain responsibility to perform all functions

   Pro – you can avoid having to send any personnel into the very difficult roles required by an effective response

   Con – you will be relinquishing control and tactical management of perhaps the most important brand protection element. Reasonably you cannot expect any external party to protect your brand interests as vigorously and completely as your own organization's decision makers

3. You can integrate a Family Assistance Provider to assimilate their resources with yours, work under your direction, and adhere to your organizational policies

   Pro – you can retain visibility in the response, integrate the expertise and resources of a trusted Service Provider, demonstrate your organizational culture, and not place your own employees in roles they are not prepared for

   Con – you simply may not have the "bench strength" to support even a limited management and control role. Operators with very limited resources may find option 2 more attractive

ESTABLISHING THE NEED FOR OUTSIDE SUPPORT

There are several important challenges to a business aviation operator. A unique factor separating the commercial airlines from business aviation involves the available workforce to devote to an accident response. Traditionally for a private charter or aircraft management company, there are not groups of employees available to stop working their normal jobs and devote themselves to supporting accident victims and their families. Further, even in cases with corporate flight departments, most business and private aviation companies have not invested the time and resources to appropriately train and equip a cadre of employees to respond.

Most corporate flight departments operate and maintain modern and technically capable aircraft, and they meet the highest industry standards for safety and technical competency. However, the requirements and capabilities needed to comprehensively support the needs of victims and their families are often unknown. Industry standards and best practices are often loosely defined and seem to be dependent upon the opinion of the one who is asked to provide them.

The discussion should begin with examining the resources required to deliver an effective family assistance response:

Typical Minimum Family Assistance Staffing Requirements

The proven model for family assistance staffing assumes one (1) notification team member per crew/passenger family, and two (2) Family Assistance Team members per family unit. The typical family unit consists of 4-6 people, often more.

Note: This assessment <u>does not</u> take into consideration additional staffing at the accident site, an advance team to secure and set up the FAC if necessary, coordination with outside agencies, team leads, etc.

Total Pax/Crew	3	7	9	12	18
Notification	3	7	9	12	18
Family Assistance	6	14	18	24	36
Admin Support	3	3	4	5	7
Total	**12**	**24**	**31**	**41**	**61**

No one can better decide which path is best for your company than you. No one will be better at navigating the process in a manner that best highlights and protects your organization's reputation than you.

It is the author's collective recommendation that you utilize the resources of a high quality Emergency Services/Family Assistance Provider while you maintain contractual control in a way that protects and preserves your brand name.

PROVIDER BEST PRACTICES

Preparing for an effective response to an accident often results in the emergence of a large number of "experts" offering their services. It can be a real challenge to sort through the sales pitch and marketing information to determine which Providers are legitimately capable. Which ones can offer the quality services your passengers, crew, and their families will expect, and who will be a trusted partner before, during and after a response?

There are some very capable and qualified Providers who can be tremendously helpful to your organization. The key is to single out the most qualified ones, and then the exclusive one that has the best fit for your requirements.

To assist in the process of selecting the most qualified Providers here are the essential characteristics, or Provider *core competencies*, your organization should consider.

ESSENTIAL CORE COMPETENCIES FOR PROVIDERS

1. **24/7/365 Availability**

   Minimum Standard: Accidents are not partial to the time of day or the day of the week. They do not occur neatly during business hours on Monday through Friday. Any Provider you select should have the capability and capacity to be reachable at all hours, and under all circumstances. The Provider should have ready resources to activate immediately, and deploy upon request, whether it's 3:00 am on a Sunday morning or during the Friday evening rush hour.

   Evaluation Factors:

   - Evaluate the Provider's procedures and resources to assure 24/7/365 availability, including back-ups and failsafe resources
   - Examine information and data and cyber security procedures, physical facility security, and the Provider's own emergency response plans and processes
   - Examine the Provider's continuity plans, in the event of power, internet, and/or phone loss, and if evacuation of the facility is necessary
   - When you think you are close to a selection, you should plan to visit your potential Provider and conduct a tour and operational walkthrough. Make sure the written description matches the physical capability. Meet the people who would be responding to *your people*

   Differentiator: Some Providers utilize sophisticated modern technologies to track a client's flight operations around the world. They continuously monitor developing world events, government websites and emergency communications channels. The more adept Providers provide a daily value to their clients on a daily basis, and do not need to rely exclusively on the operator or the media to

inform them of an accident and educate them on the facts of the event. They are aware of a developing event in real time, are supporting the operator with confirmation of factual information, and are already working on the deployment portion of the response. This can save a significant amount of time during the critical first minutes and hours, and can put you the operator in a much more favorable position with families and the media. *Remember aviation emergencies include a wide variety of events, not just an accident.*

2. **Notification Call Center and Call Volume Support**

Minimum Standard: The Provider should have an operationally ready call center that can be rapidly staffed and ready to receive and place calls. This is crucial in any aviation emergency response situation. There are a few different service models but at a basic working level any emergency service call center should have the core communication and personnel capabilities of any 24/7 professional call center.

Evaluation Factors:

- Adequate capacity for the anticipated volume (number of crew and passengers). Evaluate the Provider's *immediately available* personnel and resources, along with those that would take time to assemble or coordinate
- Evaluate the training the call center technicians receive. Consider how you want the Provider's personnel to represent themselves (*see the Notification section that follows*)
- Evaluate the ability of the Provider to centrally manage the call center communications in the fast moving and dynamic post-accident environment. How will the Provider ensure only factual data is provided? How will the Provider's management immediately assist the technicians if required?
- Evaluate the Provider's employee/subcontractor[5] requirements for confidentiality and privacy. Look at the environment where calls will be made, is it private and secure? Consider your Company's expectations and the expectations of your passengers and corporate customers in terms to privacy
- For operators that are based internationally, evaluate the Provider's international calling capabilities and resources

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[5] Note the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) Common Law Employment Rules which place new restrictions on organizations attempting to use subcontractors and non-employees in employee-like environments.

Differentiator: The selected Provider should have call center capacity to manage your additional call overflow and be able to screen and triage. The Provider should have the resources and know how to handle multiple inbound calls, and to perform caller identity/call subject screening, and message taking for at least a 24 hour period. A high performance call center should operate at least as fast as, or faster than, the rapid speed at which the media moves. This essentially equates to spin-up no later than 30 minutes from the time of the accident.

3. **Notification of Emergency Contacts and Families**

   Notification can often be a confusing and misleading process, replete with traps and pitfalls. The evaluation of a Provider should include significant discussions and technical exploration in this area. Providers should be able to describe in detail how their notification process works, and how it helps to support and protect the operator in terms of both perception and liability.

   Consider how you want the Provider to represent themselves when communicating with emergency contacts and families. For example, do you want the Provider to be the visible entity and use their own name, or do you want your company to be visible during the Notification and Family Assistance processes, even if your employees are not the ones actually performing the role.

   Minimum Standards: The first communication with emergency contacts and the families of crew and passengers sets the stage for future interactions. Families expect to hear from the company first, and they expect factual and timely information on a continual basis. If families are notified by media broadcasts first, then establishing and maintaining trustful relations, and maintaining positive brand perceptions becomes significantly more difficult.

   Evaluative Factors:

   - Evaluate the Provider's protocol for notification, ensuring that practice meets your service expectation. There are different models to consider, ones designed for very high volume airline type operations, and precise models that are designed for private and business aviation concerns.
   - Evaluate the Providers employee/subcontractor requirements for confidentiality and privacy. In today's highly social media environment, it is vital for the Provider to effectively manage their employees and subcontractors to prevent public disclosures. Ask to see the documentation for the caller's confidentiality agreements
   - For operators that are based internationally, evaluate the Provider's international calling capabilities and resources, especially in terms of multiple language capabilities and cultural knowledge (see next section)

4. **Domestic and International Reach**

Minimum Standard: No Provider can have countless people everywhere, at any given time, simply standing by for an event that will probably never happen. That said, the ability to rapidly deploy personnel to wherever the accident is, and where the families are located is essential.

International capability is critical, perhaps even mandatory, for operators with overseas bases of operations, or for operators who fly outside of the continental United States.

Evaluative Factors:

- Evaluate the Provider's physical office or building location(s), and the locations of their response personnel. Note that these may not be one in the same, in that maintaining multiple physical buildings can be very costly. Depending upon the model the Provider uses, they may have many personnel on call in many regions, versus many physical buildings.
- The Provider must be adept at communication with the U.S. States Department, the corresponding Embassy and Consulate, and our FAA and NTSB counterparts around the world.
- Working knowledge of the cultural norms and nuances of foreign countries is also pertinent.

Differentiator: Internationally located "in country" resources not only lend to faster response times, but often global team members have regional contacts that help to get important things done, and the necessary language capabilities and local cultural knowledge.

Beginning with the most formal and controllable options first, evaluate whether the international responders are employees, subcontractors, agents, or volunteers (see more in the following section on Team Members). Volume may also be important, in that only a percentage of the resources on the roster would actually be available in an event.

5. **Trained Family Assistance (or equivalent) Team Members**.

Minimum Standard: Trained Family Assistance Team members must be capable of providing information, resources, and logistical support to families, with compassion and operational knowledge as their foremost assets. They must be kept abreast of relevant laws and best practices, and be capable of professionally interacting with and responding to the same cultural demographic that you currently serve on your aircraft.

Evaluative Factors:

- Evaluate the Provider's professional screening program. Note that the Provider may choose to use employees, subcontractors, agents, or volunteers. The Provider's personnel interacting with the families of

your crew and passengers must be appropriately screened. Further, the Provider should be able to exercise organizational control over their responders; at least to similar degrees they would a full time employee. This safeguard allows the Provider to immediately correct inappropriate behaviors or address actions inconsistent with customer culture

- Evaluate the Provider's internal training program for quality (perhaps by using much of the information in this Guidebook as a reference) and for frequency. Consider how often *you* would need to train and exercise your Emergency Response Plan in order to become confident and adept at it. This parallel comparison may help you decide what seems appropriate. A "one and done" training is likely not an effective strategy

- Compare the Provider's responders with your own employees – especially for those that would have direct access to your passengers and their families. Think in terms of "professional fit," for some operators only a very select few have access to passengers and their families – ask to meet the individuals that the Provider would send to work along with your employees

- It is perfectly appropriate to ask about the relationship that the Care/Family Assistance Team members have with the Provider. Possibilities range from broad volunteer networks to full time employees. See the additional evaluation framework that follows:

Pro/Con Evaluation Framework: the relationship the Care/Family Assistance Team members have with the Provider organization is an important consideration. The following may help shed some light on the *potential* positives and negatives of the different approaches:

Affiliation	Pro	Con
Employee (FTE)	High organizational control, screened, labor law compliant, usually has similar priorities to operator	Adds significant expense, fewer personnel available, less regional locations
Employee (PTE)	High/moderate organizational control, screened, labor law compliant, usually has similar priorities to operator	Adds significant expense, less personnel available, less regional locations
Contractor	More numbers of personnel available, more regional locations, written contractual requirements	Organizational control only within terms of contract, cannot be directly supervised, may/may not be screened, may not have same priorities as operator

Agent*	More personnel available, more regional locations, more professional specialties	Reduced organizational control, reduced guarantee of who and how many may be available, usually not screened by the responding Provider, may not have same priorities as operator
Volunteer	More personnel available, more regional locations, much less expensive	Very little or no organizational control, no guarantee of who and how many may be available, usually not screened, may not have same priorities and commitment as operator

* Typically an Agent would be an on-call member of a professional (medical, mental health, etc.) network, or may work with an organization that has a partnership agreement with the Provider.

- Evaluate the professional affiliations of the team members; for example what are the criteria to be on the team, do the team members have professional capabilities beyond just working one on one with families, and examine how the Provider recruits for its team.

Often Care/Family Assistance team members are selected from the mental health community or from a pool of individuals with some pre-established variable – perhaps that they themselves have had a relative who has been through an accident, or maybe they come from other aviation operators.

Know who the actual responders are, often families are not in need of grief counseling for quite some time after the event (see the differentiators below). If the Provider uses volunteers or agents you might have personnel from your competitors on the team, or other conflicts of interest (e.g. ex-employees of your company).

Differentiator: Training frequency varies, but to stay relevant and fully capable, full day training once annually for a Care/Family Assistance Team member is generally the minimum standard. The more exclusive Providers will conduct training and internal exercises much more frequently than once a year, in order to keep skills sharp and maintain individualized readiness for their clients.

Quality of the training is also an important consideration. In the end compassion and professionalism are appreciated and expected, but families want someone who has useful information, knows the process well enough to advise them of what to expect, and who can get things done for them. The training curriculum that the Provider uses should also incorporate these considerations.

6. **Staffing Commensurate with Organizational Needs.** Make certain there are adequate personnel to provide notification and family assistance services for families**.** For each person involved in the accident, there could be 4-6 people who will be part of the victim's family unit, sometimes even more. Best practices illustrate that at least two Family Assistance Team members should be assigned to each family unit.

    Evaluative Factors:

    - Providers can purport to have virtually any number of responders, especially if they are using agents and/or volunteers. Interestingly, prospective clients will often not ask for proof of these numbers, but they should

    - Even for those that transport very distinct clientele, rarely will an operator ask for a contractual document with the legal requirements of the Provider's team members. Operators should legally bind the Provider just as they would any other external entity whose actions could directly affect their public image and brand reputation

    - Much more than a simple numbers game, quality counts, especially if the operator transports high net worth and/or high visibility clientele. If the Provider principles and their responders do not portray the image of and/or conduct themselves in a manner that reflects the expectations of your organization and its aviation guests, then a different choice is likely appropriate. Additionally the Provider and its employees/contractors /agents should all display a high level of knowledge in the post-accident humanitarian skills and processes

    Differentiator: The most adept Providers understand that family assistance is *just one component* of a multitude of interwoven capabilities they should offer the operator.

    Therefore instead of just numbers, these Providers look at the tactical areas that will most likely be needed, and they fill positions with elite specialists that have the unique qualifications and experience required. Credentialed specialists with medicolegal competencies, personal effects recovery and processing, licensed mental health practitioners, international cultural specialists, investigative technical experts, and communications experts are some examples.

    Some other important considerations that help identify the best Provider for your operation:

7. **Flexibility in Shaping Needs to Culture.** The Provider should display a commitment to learning about your business, priorities and culture. They should then have the ability to communicate with families, first responders, insurers and outside agencies in a manner that aligns with the company's culture and

core values. If privacy is important to you, then your Provider should have enough respect for your organization not to advertise that they have a contract with you, or post pictures of your employees in their public newsletters. Take a close look at their website and other public materials to see if they publicize and expose their clients

8. **Strategic and Practical Perspective.** An effective Provider respectfully identifies your deficits, and applies tools, knowledge and resources to ensure your company's response protocols are not just compliant and comprehensive, but "industry leading" in the manner that the Company CEO and their major stakeholders expect. A common complaint is that Providers adopt a "call us if you need us, and pay us monthly for the privilege" stance; look for a Provider who lends an ongoing operational benefit to your organization

9. **Continuing Education, Training and Support.** Your Provider should be a partner, and should actively engage in the emergency plan development, and is committed to conducting response training and testing in the form of drills and exercises. The Provider should help you document your successes, and review past lessons learned in order to improve on future audits and organizational capabilities

10. **Proven Track Record.** Any quality Provider should be able to provide direct referrals to operators they have supported in emergency events. The feedback should demonstrate a proven proficiency in managing a response and supporting the operator and the families in the difficult post-accident environment

    The following are additional competencies that can help you separate the more capable providers from those with a more limited scope of operations. Consider that effective family assistance does not occur in a vacuum – its effectiveness depends upon many other operational areas. The more capacity and capability a Provider brings to the response equation, the more assistance you could get in a unified package

11. **On-Site NTSB/FAA Investigation Consultation.** The most adept Providers realize that effective Family Assistance is dependent upon information, and investigative developments. Examine the Provider's knowledge of and connections with the investigative authorities

12. **Coordination with National Authorities and Coordination of Resources for Personal Effects Recovery and Return**. Examine the ability of the Provider to coordinate with authorities for identification, repatriation and return of remains, whether within or outside of U.S territories

WHAT WILL IT COST

Each Provider has its own pricing structure and retainer or contractual model, as you would expect. To begin this discussion, we will examine one common and fundamental question from operators: "Why would/should we pay for a service we may never need? Why not just call a Provider if we have an accident, and pay them for their services then?"

The very essence of preparedness speaks to thought and action before any event befalls you. This guide has illuminated the need for prior research and action. Therefore it is not only a logical next step to secure and maintain a relationship with your Provider, but to develop an ongoing partnership and shared vision with them. That said, since resources are always a concern, it is a worthwhile activity to ensure the Provider's fiscal expectation equates to some degree of ongoing value to your organization.

In the end, the Providers listed in Appendix A have all invested in various levels of response capability and readiness, so that aviation operators do not have to. These investments and their continual training and development have real value to any organization. Waiting until their resources are needed, then trying to work out the details is not a best practice in any component of aviation.

The issue of cost has two primary focal points, the cost to *retain* the service, whether monthly or annually, and the costs to *use* the services in the event of an emergency. Normally, unless you are provided a special concession by an insurance producer or other industry partner, the upfront retainer or contract cost is usually a direct expense for the operator. Therefore the amount should at the very least be similar to your other support resources and services.

The fees and expenses for actual usage are almost always a separate expense, and costs can be very substantial, especially in larger passenger operations, and in international events. This presents the natural opportunity to introduce the role of the insurance underwriter and/or broker.

The roles that your insurance underwriter, claims adjuster, and insurance broker play after an accident are extremely important. This guide should serve as a reminder to contact your insurance broker and your underwriter; ask some very specific questions about coverage and endorsements available. Talk to your own internal risk manager perhaps using this guide to examine the depth and scope of your current coverage. Talk specifics, not generalities, and take caution in "I'm sure it will all be taken care of" assurances. Like anything else in safety systems, you do not want to find out when it is too late that what you thought you would have is not available.

For more information, check out the video on Family Assistance available on the Global Aerospace SM4 website: http://sm4.global-aero.com/safety-resources/videos/

Review

Responding effectively to an aviation accident will require business aviation operators to react quickly and purposefully with intellectual, material, and human assets that support your unique operational needs. A comprehensive response takes into account both external and internal operational requirements.

When asked to identify the top post-accident priority, an overwhelming majority of aviation operators, regardless of their type and size, report that the ability to provide for the care, safety, and support of all the people affected is the leading priority. It is the right thing to do, and it is good business. You must be prepared to manage and/or coordinate all of the family assistance tasks from notification to potentially setting up a FAC, administering short-term support, coordinating with outside agencies, and monitoring and preparing for long term support.

There are three options to consider in regard to integrating a Family Assistance Service Provider.

1. You can assume full responsibility for all Family Assistance functions, solely utilizing internal resources

2. You can retain a Family Assistance Provider to assume control of the entire process, and maintain responsibility to perform all functions

3. You can integrate a Family Assistance Provider to assimilate their resources with yours, work under your direction and advisement, and adhere to your organizational policies

It is the collective recommendation of the authors that you selectively utilize the resources of a high quality Family Assistance Provider, while you maintain control and direct the process in a way that protects and preserves your brand name. Core competencies for outside providers have been identified within this guide, and should be evaluated rigorously.

To provide even more assistance in making a selection, Appendix A provides a representative list of companies that provide support for post-accident Family Assistance.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

"Is there a regulatory requirement for Emergency Response Planning and Family Assistance for Part 91, 135, and similar business and private operators?"

Not in a specific and literal sense, yet failing to provide for the needs of the families of crew, passengers, and other affected persons is increasingly indefensible. An air carrier (as defined by the FAA definition in 49CFR § 40102) is any "citizen of the United States undertaking by any means, directly or indirectly, to provide air transportation". An air carrier has post-accident and incident responsibilities as outlined in National Transportation Safety Board, 49 CFR Part 830. An air carrier also has responsibilities within the Aviation Disaster Family Assistance Act of 1996. Although not cited as such specifically, it is commonly held that this Act only applies to CFR Part 121 operators.
http://www.ntsb.gov/doclib/legal/NTSB_830_revision_Aug2010.pdf
http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/CRPT-104hrpt793/html/CRPT-104hrpt793.htm

"Beyond Federal regulations are there any other legal requirements that address planning for emergency response and family assistance for Part 91, 135 and similar business and private operators?"

There is a significant body of law that clearly outlines an operator's duties to protect the lives and property of people associated with the operation. Failure to perform those duties creates a liability. Injured parties can (and often) sue operators in the aftermath of an accident or incident. Operators who do not adhere to best practices related to emergency response and family assistance are at significantly higher risk from those potential suits.

"It seems like every time I turn around somebody publishes a new "Standard" for best practices. Which one should I use?"

Best Practices have morphed into "Audit Standards." Most of these standards are tightly aligned around the concepts of Safety Management Systems (SMS). The most widely accepted Standard for Part 91 and similar operators is the IS-BAO (International Standard for Business Aircraft Operations.) http://www.ibac.org/is_bao

However, Best Practices for emergency response and family assistance are not deeply addressed in any of the generally accepted Standards. See the section of this Guide titled, "*Best Practices"* for a more complete discussion.

"If I decide to utilize the services of a consultant to build my Emergency Response and Family Assistance Plans, how much should I expect to pay?"

That depends upon your type of operation, and the services you require. There are generic free resources available through associations like the NBAA. If you want a consultant to evaluate your needs, then to create, test and implement a specific plan that reflects your culture, then prepare to invest commensurate with your expectations for experience, and service. This Guide can help create a concise approach to evaluate the options.

Appendix A: Family Assistance Providers

The following list was initially provided courtesy of the NTSB Transportation Disaster Assistance Office. The list has been increased as a result of the general web-based research of the authors. This list of Family Assistance Service Providers is limited to those purporting to maintain Notification and Care/Family Assistance responders, and have responded with these resources to aviation and other transportation accidents. Further, these are organizations (versus individuals or small team of consultants) with the resources, or access to the resources, considered within this Resource Guide.

As the sponsoring company of this document, Global Aerospace Inc. strongly suggests including Fireside Partners Inc. (Fireside) in your research. Fireside is Global Aerospace's go-to emergency services provider for customers requiring business aviation emergency services. Fireside is also a founding partner in the Global Aerospace SM4 safety program:

Fireside Partners
http://www.firesideteam.com

In keeping with the spirit of this guide, balanced and comparative research is always a good idea. The following list of additional service providers is sorted by alphabetical order, and inclusion does not necessarily imply endorsement by the sponsoring company:

ACCESS
http://www.accesshelp.org/

Aviem
http://www.aviem.com

Blake Emergency Services
http://www.blakeemergency.com

Empathia
http://www.empathia.com

FEI Behavioral Health
http://www.feinet.com/crisis.htm

Kenyon International Emergency Services
http://www.kenyoninternational.com

Response Works
http://www.responseworks.com

Appendix B: Resources

GLOBAL AEROSPACE, INC
http://sm4.global-aero.com

Guidance on Assistance to Aircraft Accident Victims & Their Families
International Civil Aviation Organization (IACO). (2001). *(Circular 285-AN/166).* Montreal: IACO.
www.icao.int/Newsroom/Pages/ICAO-policy-document-puts-renewed-focus-on-care-of-aircraft-accident-victims-and-family-members.aspx

NTSB Information for Families, Friends and Survivors
http://www.ntsb.gov/tda/family.html

Task Force on Assistance to Families of Aviation Disasters
http://www.ntsb.gov/Family/Task_Force.pdf

Guidance material for development of emergency response
http://www.nbaa.org/admin/sms/manual/Accident-IncidentPreparedness.pdf

EBAA Emergency Response Guidance Manual
http://www.ebaa.org/content/dsp_page/pagec/ERP_Manual

International Business Aviation Council (IBAC)
www.ibac.org

Air Charter Safety Foundation
www.acsf.aero