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Air ambulances, balance billing and the road to a solution

Balance billing of medical air transport has become the poster child for “surprise billing, something that Congress wants to eliminate. Given the climate on Capitol Hill, now is the ideal time for private insurers and air ambulance providers to begin negotiating in-network agreements

By **Randy King** | June 05, 2020 at 07:25 AM

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An estimated 85 million Americans live more than an hour from a major hospital, so ground transport is often too slow to save lives. An “air ambulance” is either a helicopter or fixed-wing aircraft that is specially equipped to transport patients from accident scenes and community hospitals to trauma centers in large metropolitan areas.

Unlike ground EMT vehicles, air ambulance providers are regulated not by health care agencies, but by the Federal Aviation Administration, as authorized by the Airline Deregulation Act of 1978. This law prohibits states from limiting aviation rates, routes and service terms. There are two parts to most air ambulance bills: the lift-off fee and a per-mile charge.

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