



Squaw Butte Back Country Horsemen

Yesterday I started to write about Life Flight operations due to some comments I've heard over the years. This morning I see Rob's update and realize most of my post is covered very well in the blog. Having said that, there are still a couple of things worth pointing out or highlighting.

Our area is serviced by both LifeFlight Network and Air St. Luke's. Both are good programs, and I would be hard pressed to find anything significant to use as an argument to use one or the other so I'm just going to list some bullet points regarding Air Ambulance operations:

- the two programs we use alternate being the first one to be called for trauma cases. What that means is if you get hurt on a Monday Air St. Luke's (ASL) may respond. If you get hurt on a Tuesday Life Flight Network (LFN) may respond.

- there are rules that say the closest available aircraft will be requested to assist you. That means if you are hurt on the east side of the state, or in parts of Washington you may be picked up by a different program all together.

- regardless of how badly you are injured if the weather is bad you may not get an aircraft at all. Air Ambulance operators have some extremely strict rules as to what type of weather they can fly in. You may have to be move to a place where an aircraft can get to you. Or you may end up be ground handled for a long way.

- the ability of an aircraft to pick you up is always affected by temperature and altitude so hot days and high altitude may limit the aircrafts ability to carry you and crew. Accurate information regarding your weight, injuries, and location are a big help. Even with accurate location coordinates it may be hard for an aircrew to see you on the ground. Be prepared to have something large and bright you can wave at them. Movement is usually the first thing that catches attention. Smoke and signal mirrors work great too.

So, those are just a few items to think about regarding air ambulance operations but like many things do not plan your survival around the ability to be flown out. Have a plan. If you are riding alone or in a very small group, make sure someone has a first aid kit. On a personal level I recommend having the following items on your body:

1. Signal device
2. Cutting device
3. Fire starter
4. Space blanket
5. Whistle

Ron Fergie