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Medical airlift company Life Flight closes McCall base

[Life Flight Network](#), an Oregon-based not-for-profit that acts as an ambulance in the air, will no longer house a helicopter in McCall, though it will still provide transportation and rescue services for the region. Closing the McCall base, which employed several pilots and emergency medical staff, was necessary because the company didn't have enough flights to justify the costs of renting hangar space.

“If the helicopter is sitting there with fixed costs and there are no flights, it's difficult to maintain service,” said Holly Love, Life Flight's director of customer service in Aurora, Ore. While it's not looking for a profit, Love said the company needed to break even on service to McCall and the surrounding region to justify keeping helicopters in McCall. After Life Flight transports a patient from a hospital or remote location to a full-service hospital, it bills the patient's health insurance company, though it also offers annual memberships for people who may need emergency air transportation services.

Life Flight still has a base in Ontario, Ore., where aircraft can quickly get to McCall. Officials with [St. Luke's McCall](#), the city's hospital, say patients needing an airlift shouldn't experience much of a delay.

“We've appreciated having the Life Flight base in McCall, but we're not dependent on it,” said Lyle Nelson, a spokesman for the hospital. He said that by the time doctors at the hospital have diagnosed and stabilized a patient for air transport, a helicopter can be summoned. Nelson said that only 4 percent of the hospital's patients need to be transported to a larger hospital, and most of them go by ground. In addition to Life Flight, [Air St. Luke's](#) also serves the McCall hospital.

The closing will have an impact on [McCall Aviation](#), which rented crew quarters and hangar space to Life Flight.

“It's a loss of a good customer; one of our top 10 in terms of sales dollars,” said company President Laura Scott. “I expect that we'll recoup some of what was coming from them. They'll need to buy fuel when they come up here.” Scott said no new tenants were lined up, though the hangar space could go to the many transient planes that land in the area during the summer and need hangar space for just a few nights.