

CRITICAL CARE in the AIR

SPECTRUMAEROMED'S GOAL IS TO BECOME THE BEST AIR AMBULANCE PROVIDER IN THE WORLD.

BY GRAHAM CHANDLER

When your award-winning business has grown steadily for over 25 years, it's clearly an indication you're doing something right. What is Spectrum Aeromed's secret to a quarter-century of success?

"There isn't just one secret," said Matthew Christenson, vice president and account executive. "A lot of hard work and a lot of teamwork. Throughout the company we are all in and working on the projects together and striving to meet our goals. We want to be the best air ambulance provider in the world."

Spectrum Aeromed is a leading designer and manufacturer of customized air medical and air ambulance equipment and holds supplemental type certificates (STCs) for more than 400 aircraft. Highly customized and field-tested, the company's life support equipment provides unparalleled performance and responsiveness for both fixed- and rotary-wing aircraft, including custom VIP emergency medical interior suites for executive aircraft and heads of state.

Founded in 1991, Spectrum operates in a 17,000 square-foot, state-of-the-art facility at Fargo, North Dakota's, Hector International Airport. The convenient location allows easy access for onsite consultations.



Additional sales offices are in Tennessee and Munich, Germany. Developed product lines include oxygen boxes, equipment mounts, cabinets, stretcher bridges, a series of full medical interiors, and articulating stretchers.

Every installation is tailored to the needs of the customer—each has their own specific requirements.

"They all have similarities—basic components [like] power, oxygen, air pumps and so on," said Christenson. "But there is always some kind of specific need, whether it's a new aircraft or a new mounting for equipment. There is a customization that goes into almost every project. A lot of that comes from working worldwide, where you have different requirements—for example, power or pneumatics, and certification."

One other secret to success is understanding clients' wants and needs, how they need to handle their patients, and then putting it all together into a project. Custom planning starts with that first phone call or email.

"Then the questions go to them right away," said Christenson. "How many patients will they need to carry? What do they need our assistance with, how far along are they? We put it together for their specs so when they get the end product it's doing what they envisioned."

All manufacturing and engineering is done at the plant, including analytics and ground tests like electromagnetic interference (EMI) and egress. Installations can be coordinated at the Fargo Jet Center next door. Others are done at customers' completion centers.

As well as handling specific customers' needs, Spectrum develops its own innovative new products. A recent one is a double stacker unit for air ambulances that carries two patients at a time: one at ground level, on a stretcher, and another on a second tier.

"There is a configuration for two of these units along with one of our other modular systems, and a medical equipment rack to hang multiple medical devices," said Christenson. "So for two or four patients there are multiple configurations you can use to make the most out of your aircraft. Perhaps search-and-rescue, or more of a mass patient transport."

He said it was a challenge to use the space efficiently. The STC for the double stacker unit on the Airbus AS332 Super Puma models is nearing completion.

Another innovation is Spectrum's new 3200 Series Medwall, a complete



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composite system for larger fixed-wing applications like the Boeing 737 and 777 and the Airbus A320.

"The Medwall has a nice easy-locking feature that has power, oxygen, air and vacuum connections and multiple electrical outlets," said Christenson. "Medical devices are secured onto the Medwall mounts and all connections are clean and organized."

There are more under development, including new designs for Leonardo (formerly AgustaWestland) helicopter models. A new equipment base and stretcher design for the AW109SP is under development, along with a new full medical interior for the AW169.

On the fixed-wing side, the company is currently building an innovative dual-purpose divan for the Cessna Citation CJ4. All of the components of an air ambulance bed are kept under the cushions of the divan, and a stretcher can be placed on top of the divan after the cushions are removed.

"You can convert your aircraft very conveniently from a full VIP configuration to a medical configured one," said Christenson. "It's very quick and convenient for that



charter or hospital for flying an organ transplant team—a great way for a company to multi-purpose their aircraft and get the maximum use out of it."

Not to get left behind, Spectrum is also eyeing certified medical interior designs for new models like the HondaJet and the Embraer Phenom 300. "We are always adding to our applications," said Christenson. "While continuing with what we have, creating a balance for the future." ✦



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