



NTSB National Transportation Safety Board

EMS Helicopter Safety: Time for a paradigm change

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NTSB Board Member**

- HEMS safely transports nearly 400,000 patients each year in U.S.
- HEMS performs a vital function of providing critical care



However:

- Current HEMS accident record is alarming and it is unacceptable



- Improvements must be made

Last 6 years - 85 accidents; 77 fatalities

- 2003 - 19 accidents; 7 fatalities
- 2004 - 13 accidents; 18 fatalities
- 2005 - 15 accidents; 11 fatalities
- 2006 - 13 accidents; 5 fatalities
- 2007 - 12 accidents; 7 fatalities
- 2008 - 13 accidents; 29 fatalities

49 weeks without a fatal HEMS accident

UNTIL ...

NTSB



September 25, 2009
3 Fatalities



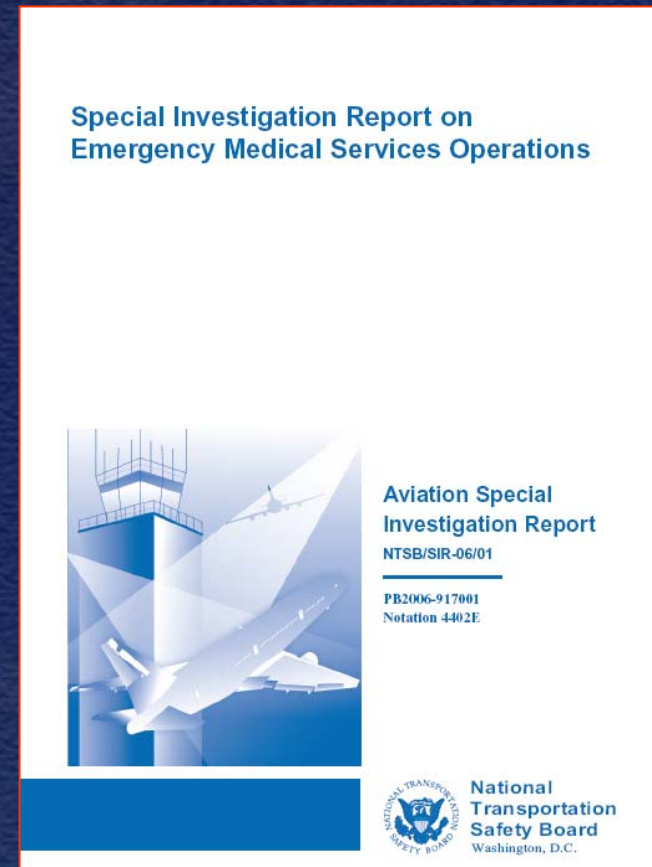
September 25, 2009

3 Fatalities



2006 Special Investigation Report

- Analyzed 55 EMS Accidents
 - 14 Airplane
 - 41 Helicopter
- Determined that 29 of the 55 accidents could have been prevented
 - if corrective actions in the report had been implemented



2006 Safety Recommendations

- To FAA:
 - Require operations under Part 135 for all legs of EMS missions.
 - Require flight risk evaluation for all EMS missions.
 - Require EMS operators to utilize flight dispatch procedures.
 - Require that EMS operators use Terrain Awareness and Warning Systems (TAWS).





NTSB MOST WANTED LIST

Transportation Safety
Improvements

2009

*Critical changes needed to reduce
transportation accidents and save lives.*

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NTSB Public Hearing on HEMS



Feb 3-6, 2009

- 41 witnesses representing
 - HEMS operators
 - industry associations
 - manufacturers
 - hospitals

2009 Safety Recommendations

- 10 recommendations to FAA, including:
 - Better training for flight crews
 - Require use of Night Vision Imaging Systems (NVIS) equipment and training
 - Require autopilots if second pilot not available

2009 Safety Recommendations

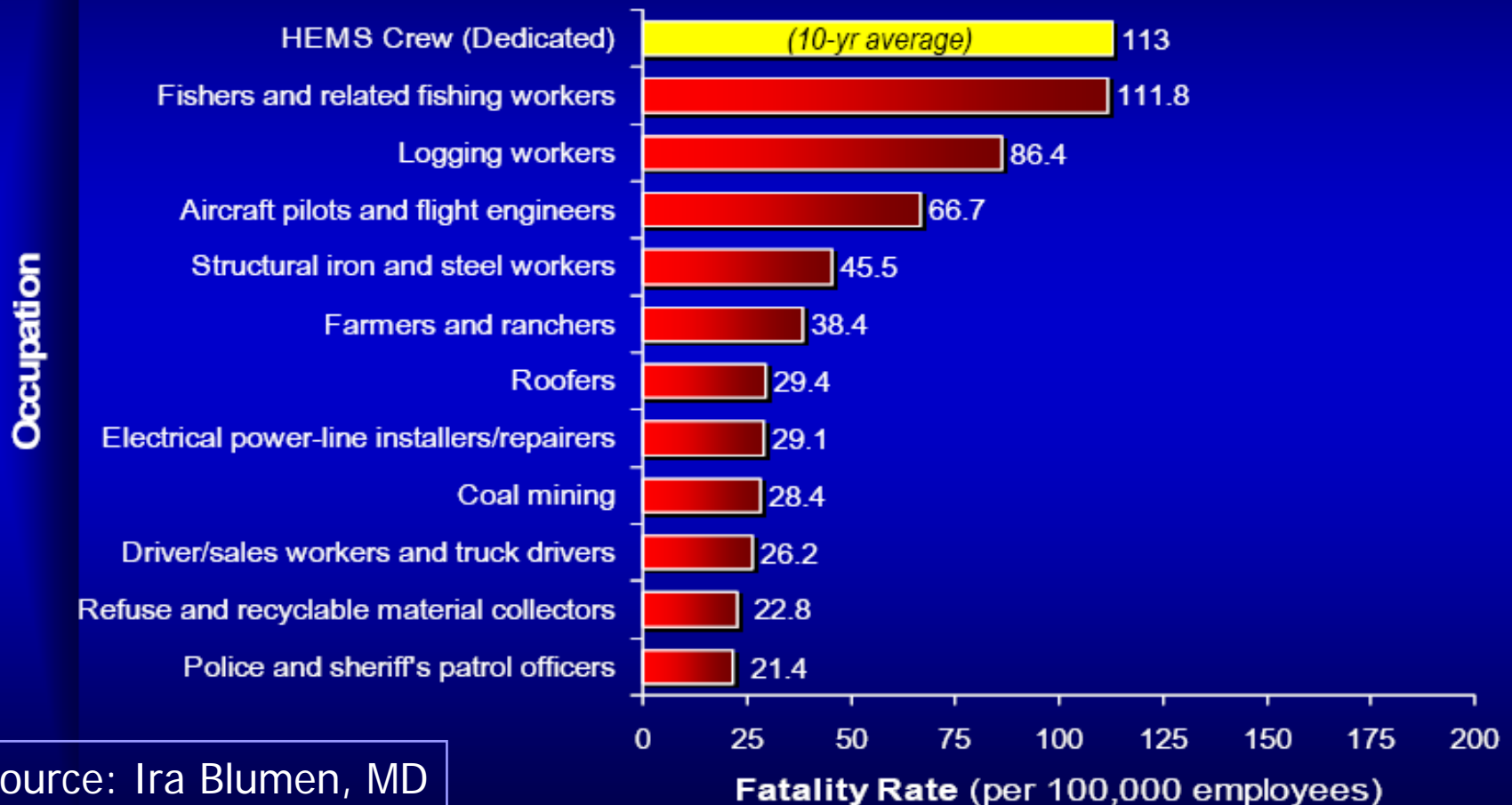
- Recommendations to Federal Interagency Committee on EMS (FICEMS)
 - Develop national guidelines for the use and availability of HEMS by regional, state, and local authorities during emergency medical response system planning.
 - Develop national guidelines for selection of the most appropriate emergency transportation mode for urgent care.

2009 Safety Recommendations

- Recommendations to the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid:
 - Evaluate the HEMS reimbursement rate structure to determine if reimbursement rate should differ according to level of HEMS transport safety provided,
 - Establish new rate structure, if warranted
 - Develop minimum safety accreditation standards
 - Provide Medicare reimbursement only for HEMS transportation that meets accreditation standards

Something to think about:

High-Risk Occupations, 2007



Source: Ira Blumen, MD



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