



PILOT MANUAL

Revised 05/18/2012

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Volunteer Opportunities for Pilots

Both aircraft owners and renters fly our missions. As a command pilot, you can sign up for any mission we fly. We classify most of our missions into one of the following categories:

- *Normal/Repeat Mission*: Transporting passenger(s) for medical treatment
- *Compassion Missions*: Transporting passenger(s) for humanitarian/compelling needs
- *Special Missions*: Transporting passengers for children attending special needs camps, safe haven/domestic violence relocations, pre-adoption visits
- *Outreach*: Non-passenger missions to attend events that help create awareness about our services or assist with pilot recruiting (please note co-pilots may fly non-passenger missions)

Member Events and Gatherings

Volunteer members, family and friends gather periodically. The meetings usually include food, sharing mission stories and programs of interest to aviation enthusiasts. For times and locations of meetings in your area click on Calendar of Events on the website. Events are also listed in the newsletter.

Newsletter

A newsletter is produced periodically and uploaded onto our website. It contains information about upcoming events and meetings, plus reports of missions flown, pictures and other news about the organization. We encourage our pilots to send pictures of missions, along with any news or information you wish to suggest for the newsletter. We cannot guarantee all pictures and information will be used but we want to hear from you. Digital photos or scans are preferred.

Local Flights

Flights are developed within the State to assist with creating awareness, fund raising, volunteer recruiting and other outreach opportunities. Each local flight is led by a volunteer. Please contact the office if you wish to offer your assistance to the program in your local area. If you do not see a Flight listed for your area and are interested in volunteering to start one, please contact Vital Flight.

Pilot Orientation

Pilots may receive a one-on-one "orientation," at anytime by request. New pilots to the organization are also encouraged to consider flying as a Copilot on a mission with a current Command Pilot before flying one on their own. Vital Flight also has volunteer CFI's willing and able to provide BFRs and IPCs.

Command Pilot Requirements

We rely on pilot applicants to meet minimum standards and supply requested documentation before applying for command pilot status. Pilot applicants can mail, fax or scan/email their pilot application and supporting documents. New members will receive a welcome package, including a crew badge, dress shirt, and "quick reference" mission checklist.

Pilot applicants must meet the following minimum qualifications:

- 250 hours total time, pilot in command
- Instrument Rating (current)
- Landing Currency
- Comply with all applicable FARs

Filing a Mission Report

As soon as practical following your mission, we need you to file a mission report before we can close our files on that flight. This information is also used to determine the amount of volunteer hours donated.

A Waiver of Liability is required to be signed by all passengers flying on a mission. A copy of the waiver is included for your review each time you receive a mission setup (information) form. Please note: waivers should be faxed to the office prior to takeoff!

Mission Overview

The purpose of this overview is to acquaint you with policies, procedures and forms. The main emphasis for a pilot who flies missions is SAFETY. You are encouraged to cancel a scheduled mission if any conditions are present that could affect the safety of the flight, such as weather, aircraft airworthiness, pilot sickness or any other reason that in your judgment could result in an unacceptable risk.

We have established minimum requirements for pilot applicants, as well as, minimum ongoing requirements, to maintain currency and proficiency. It should be noted these requirements are minimum and each pilot is strongly encouraged to continue her/his own professional development as a pilot through routine training and proficiency flights such as the FAA Wings program or other professional recurrent training designed for her/his aircraft.

Standard Operating Procedures

Mission Qualifications: Passengers must meet certain requirements before being approved to fly on a mission. The qualification process includes:

- Passenger must be ambulatory (young children are the exception)
- In the case of a medically related mission, we will work with the physician to obtain a medical release prior to mission departure
- A minimum of five (5) days is required in order to coordinate a mission
- Contacting the passenger's social worker to verify the passenger's request
- Insuring the circumstances warrant our volunteer pilot services.
- If the flight includes a child under 18 years old, a parent or guardian is required to accompany them on the flight. If this is not possible (child is going to a camp, etc) the pilot is asked to take a second adult on the flight with them.

If you have questions regarding the criteria for qualifying a mission, please contact the office. If, upon meeting a passenger, you believe they should not be using our services for any reason, please notify the office as soon as possible. You are our eyes and ears and since we don't actually meet the passengers who request our services, your feedback is very important!

Missions Available

Pending available missions, that need pilots, are distributed each day by email. Some of our missions are linking missions since they have more than one leg (each leg is considered a mission). Most legs are limited to 200 nautical miles (NM), however pilots may choose to fly more than 200 nautical miles on a mission by signing up for more than one leg. The Missions Available list shows all missions, including those with more than one mission leg available. In many cases, a multiple leg mission may relay with

another organization.

You may secure a mission by one or more of the following:

- Email: Reply to the mission email with your request.
- Call from Mission Coordinator: You may receive a call from a volunteer mission coordinator requesting your assistance on an upcoming mission. You are never obligated to fly a mission.
- Calling the office directly: You may call the office to inform of your availability. You may be able to sign up for a particular mission at the time of your call. You are encouraged to inform us when you have space available on any trip you're planning with your aircraft.

Please note that we have a variety of missions available during the day and on weekends. Some are short distances and others are longer. You know best the type of missions you would like to fly based upon your aircraft, experience, and time available to contribute. If you're available and anxious to fly, please take the initiative and look through the available missions. It is the best way to get a mission suited to your needs.

Requesting a mission

We encourage you to use a copilot on your mission. Our copilots must have a current medical and license in order to register to fly on a mission. You can indicate your interest in taking a copilot by letting us know when you request the mission. We encourage you to take along a pilot friend, perhaps inspiring her or him to become a volunteer pilot member! Many of our copilots have the PIC hours required but do not have access to a plane or an Instrument rating. If you'd like to volunteer to fly with them, thus allowing them to fly, that's also welcome.

Please remember this is only a request. A coordinator will contact you to confirm your assignment to the mission requested. Communication is normally via email so please make sure your email information is current. We also accept, backup pilots, as they are a very important way for us to prevent last minute cancellations in the event of mechanical problems!

Mission Assignment

Once you are assigned a mission you will receive an itinerary via email, which contains the following: passenger, companion(s), pickup airport, contact numbers for passenger, companion or social worker. It is your responsibility to contact the passenger, unless otherwise indicated, regarding departure time and coordination of meeting at the FBO prior to takeoff.

It is more cost effective to use email so please provide and use email when possible. Please read the entire form before making any phone calls. The form will include the following:

- Passenger's name, address and phone number(s)
- Name(s) of any companion(s)
- Weights of all passengers and of baggage (*Note: If you are flying the first leg of a mission and passengers make last-minute changes in the baggage weights listed which result in an increased weight, you have the choice of denying accommodating the increased weight, including excess baggage. Please remember the pilot flying the return leg may not have the same weight capabilities of your aircraft and may not be able to accommodate additional baggage.*)
- Flight and/or appointment times
- Scheduled date of mission
- Origination and destination airport

- Phone number for the pilot(s) on a relay mission
- FBO preference for each airport (if a fuel discount note is available)

Please contact the passenger directly at least 72 hours prior to their scheduled flight date unless informed otherwise. Passengers get anxious when they do not know if a pilot has been assigned to their mission so they are expecting your call! Passengers are not given your phone contact information but are provided each pilot's name, type of aircraft and tail number. Passengers are aware their pilot will contact them directly once secured for their mission.

Contacting the Passenger

Once all pilot(s) are secured, call the passenger at least 72 hours in advance of the scheduled flight to confirm your assignment to their mission. Your contact with the passenger reassures them their mission has been arranged and a pilot secured. We suggest that you review the following with the passenger once you receive the mission itinerary form:

- Setup and/or confirm the departure and arrival time with the passenger
- If a linking mission, confirm location of transfer(s) and approximate times for each leg
- Discuss flying in your aircraft
- Confirm weights of all passengers and baggage
- Use of oxygen, if relevant
- Pick up location (FBO) at departing airport and drop-off location (FBO) at arriving airport. You may want to give FBO contact numbers for each airport.
- Describe yourself and ask the passenger to describe herself/himself (remember to wear your badge for easy identification)
- Describe your airplane
- Inform the passenger of the flight's estimate arrival time so she/he can arrange ground transportation

It is important to remind the passenger that flight planning is based on the information provided to our office. Changes in the number and weight of passengers and baggage may not be accommodated due to small aircraft limitations so passengers are advised to notify the office in advance of any changes to their original mission request.

Note: Depending upon the circumstances, we may ask you to contact the social worker instead of the passenger. The social worker will then be the person who relays details of the mission to the passenger. These requests will be clearly notated on the mission setup, if necessary.

Linking Missions

As a member of a nationwide network (Air Care Alliance), linking missions for passengers flown out of their immediate area are available. If you are assigned to a linking mission, you will always be given the name and phone number(s) of the pilot(s) flying the other legs, as well as contact information for the other organizations involved in the mission. The itinerary will also provide the linking handoff airport and FBO information. Please note: if an FBO offers a fuel discount (that we know about) it will be noted on the itinerary as "ask about fuel discount."

Make immediate contact with the other pilot(s) to verify location and time of the link. If you and the other pilot make any changes in the linking airport, please notify us immediately by either calling or sending an email to info@vitalflight.org.

If you are the first leg pilot on a linking mission, you will need to contact the second and third leg pilot (if applicable) prior to contacting the passenger. Most passengers will have questions regarding departing and arrival times, which you should be able to answer since you will have coordinated with the other pilot(s). Please review with the passenger the departure time and coordinate the meeting at your FBO. We suggest you ask the passenger to arrive approximately 15 minutes prior to departure so you can obtain required signature(s) on the Waiver of Liability. Signatures on the waiver are required for everyone flying on the mission. The waiver protects the organization, however, most importantly it protects the pilot.

Flight Plans and Call Sign (CMF "Compassion")

We highly recommend pilots file a flight plan. This assists our office in locating your aircraft in the event of a late arrival. Volunteer pilot organizations now have their own call sign.

The "**Compassion**" call sign will be used on all missions. To use this call sign, please use "**CMF**" and the last three characters of the aircraft tail number in the Aircraft Registration section of your flight plan. Normally, pilots would use the last three characters of the tail number, unless it is known that another aircraft using the same number might be flying in the same area. In this case, the last four characters would be used in order to avoid confusion. In the remarks block the pilot should enter the word "Compassion," followed by the full registration number of the aircraft.

When communicating with ATC, identify yourself as "Compassion XYZ" using the last three digits of your tail number. If you would like further clarification on this procedure please contact the office.

The call sign should only be used when the aircraft has a passenger or supporting equipment onboard. It is also acceptable to use the call sign when the flight "time critical," such as a connecting flight, or previous delay. Please keep in mind that this does not provide a priority in air traffic sequencing, however you will commonly find that controllers assist where possible, as they understand the mission you are flying. The call sign is not the same as "Lifeguard," which is only to be used in life threatening situations.

Not all ATC personnel are aware of the "Compassion" call sign. If you encounter a controller who does not know this procedure, please educate them as best as you can and let us know so we can communicate directly with the facility.

Cancellations and Changes

CANCEL THE MISSION IF THERE IS ANY CONCERN ABOUT SAFETY INCLUDING WEATHER, AIRCRAFT, PASSENGER OR PILOT HEALTH

When a mission must be cancelled:

- If the passenger or requester cancels a mission, we will inform you immediately.
- If the passenger or social worker calls you to cancel, please immediately inform the office and any linking pilots (if applicable). To reach the office, call 800-276-0300 for a coordinator. If after hours, and the person on call can direct you to a coordinator. An emergency back-up number is 888-297-9312.
- If you make any major changes in the mission schedule with the passenger and/or social worker, for example an airport handoff change, please immediately inform the office. If

another organization is involved in a linking flight, please notify their pilot. Their contact information is on your itinerary.

If you must cancel because of weather, mechanical or other reasons:

- Call the office at 800-276-0300.
- If you feel the office may not be able to notify a passenger in time, please call the passenger and/or social worker immediately.
- If you feel the office may not be able to notify a return pilot in time, please call the return pilot to notify she/he about the cancellation.

You are encouraged to cancel a mission whenever you believe a situation warrants a cancellation. SAFETY IS OUR TOP PRIORITY. There are never any passenger situations that should ever cause you to compromise the safety of a mission. All passengers are informed that they must have a back up plan to implement if the mission is cancelled.

Arrival at Airport

Introduce yourself and your copilot upon arrival at the airport. Explain expected flight time and weather, including any turbulence expected, etc. Address any concerns of the passengers, remembering they are already in a stressful situation with their medical issues. Evaluate passenger and baggage weight and size. If weight is more than indicated on the mission itinerary and as discussed in your phone conversation, inform the passenger the weight must be reduced. Please consider other pilots assigned, including return pilots, may not be able to accommodate weight above the stated amount. Our standard operating procedures limit total baggage weight to 50 lbs. and passengers are notified in advance of the limitation.

Secure signatures on the Waiver of Liability form. If a passenger is a minor, confirm that the parent or legal guardian has signed for the child. Mail or fax the waiver back to office prior to departure. The majority of FBO's will fax the waiver for you, otherwise, place in a stamped, preaddressed envelope and mail the waiver. Take pictures (optional) if okay with passenger, include any family members who may have transported the passenger to the airport. Remember to get everyone's name included in the picture and email to info@vitalflight.org. In the event of an emergency, the waiver can not protect you and/or Vital Flight unless it was transmitted/mailed prior to departure.

Provide a headset if your airplane has intercom capability (optional).

Waiver of Liability

Every passenger(s) you fly on a mission must sign a Waiver of Liability form prior to the mission. The waiver must be faxed or mailed to the office prior to the flight or other arrangements must be made in advance.

Have each passenger sign the waiver prior to boarding. This includes companions, social workers, media, copilot, etc. You may fax or mail the Waiver of Liability from the airport's FBO prior to departure. Do not take the waiver on the airplane. Please note that on occasion, a FBO may not allow use of their fax machine so you may wish to ask in advance of the mission. Plan ahead for a method of returning the waiver prior to takeoff if you are in a remote location or will not have access to a fax machine. Remember, in the event of an emergency, the waiver can not protect you and/or Vital Flight unless it was transmitted/mailed prior to departure.

You will receive a copy of the waiver with each itinerary assigned to a mission. You are encouraged to make a number of photocopies of the waiver so you will always have a sufficient number available. Please keep waiver forms in your airplane or with your flight bag so they will be with you at all times. The waiver is designed to protect you and the organization from legal action connected with your mission. Failure to return a properly executed waiver places you and the entire organization at risk. On some occasions, such as some special missions, waivers will have been completed and signed in advance of the mission date. If this is the case, a staff member will notify you prior to the mission flight.

Mission Operation

Once your mission is underway, always wear your photo ID badge. If you lose your badge please call the office and a new one will be provided. Wearing logo merchandise is also recommended (dress shirt, hat, polo shirt, etc.). If you have a camera you are encouraged to take pictures during your mission for inclusion in our website and/or newsletter. Please take close up pictures, and send pictures to the office by emailing info@vitalflight.org after the mission is completed. Please be sure to include the mission number and names of individuals in the picture(s). Please note: we cannot use low resolution or Polaroid photos for the newsletter.

Prior to boarding, suggest to the passenger(s) they may wish to use the restroom. Assist passengers into the plane and insure all are securely buckled in.

Give all instructions pertinent to your aircraft.

- Explain how the seatbelts work
- Indicate door handles and how they operate
- Point out where the exit(s) are located and how they work
- Explain the "Sterile Cockpit" concept
- Offer headsets, if available, and explain their operation
- Point out location of airsick bags, but keep them out of sight
- Give a brief explanation of what they may expect during flight, e.g. sounds, ATC communications, turbulence, length of flight, etc. This is especially important for first time passengers on a small airplane. Encourage flight related questions.

Be sensitive to a passenger's wishes regarding talking about their medical condition. Some are eager to converse about their health and others prefer silence. Please remember to also not take it personally if someone has minimal conversation during the flight since many of our passengers are facing serious medical situations.

Never provide any medication of any kind to the passengers.

On occasion passengers request permission to bring oxygen canisters with them. You will always be notified in advance and your acceptance of the mission with this condition will be at your discretion. If you agree to carry the oxygen tank please be certain it is firmly secure and DOT approved. The passenger or companion is responsible for operating the oxygen container.

Mission Flight

- Conduct a thorough safety briefing in airplane

- Brief passengers on sounds and turbulence possibilities
- Point out the location of airsickness bags
- Discuss how passengers should communicate with pilot and/or copilot (if applicable)
- Discuss how to deal with in-flight needs or emergencies (sickness, bathroom, or other issues)
- Provide periodic reports to passengers on flight progress, weather changes, ETA, etc.
- Fly the aircraft as smoothly as possible -gradual turns, power changes, etc.
- In the event of adverse weather or any other occurrence affecting the safety of flight, return to departure airport or alternate as planned

Final Destination or Drop-off

- Confirm all baggage and personal items are removed from your aircraft
- Confirm ground transportation arrangements

Mission Completion

After you have landed please provide assistance as needed in connecting passengers with a linking pilot or those picking them up to provide ground transportation. All passengers are informed in advance that we do not provide ground transportation.

Wish the passenger(s) well thanking them for the opportunity to assist with their transportation need. Many passengers will be enthusiastic in their expression of thanks to you. Do not be surprised, however, if some passengers express little thanks. Their preoccupation with their health challenges and their weakened condition frequently leave them little margin to be expressive of their feelings of appreciation even though they do appreciate our services.

File your Mission Report within 48 hours of mission completion. If you are unable to file your report online a hard copy may be mailed or faxed to the business office. A copy of the form is located in the Forms section of this manual.

We welcome any suggestions you may have in order to better assist in serving both you and our passengers in the future. Your generous and compassionate spirit is a part of the healing and treatment process for the passengers you will serve. Thank you for your willingness to fly and we appreciate your continued support!

Other Volunteer Opportunities

If you are a pilot and do not wish to fly as a Command Pilot on missions, you're welcome to fly as a Copilot, or participate in some of the various ground volunteer functions we have:

- Outreach visits to hospitals and other facilities
- Public speaking to spread the word
- Pilot and ground volunteer recruitment
- Public relations
- Fund development
- Computer services
- Printing
- Photography
- Clerical duties

Of course, if you have other areas of experience you wish to share with us, please contact the office.