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Pentastar Aviation lands deal to handle UM Health System's Survival Flight

By [Bill Shea](#)

Waterford-based **Pentastar Aviation Charter Inc.** and **Pentastar Aviation L.L.C.** have signed deals to provide pilots and handle management and support for the **University of Michigan Health System's** entire Survival Flight aircraft fleet.

Financial terms of the deal announced today were not made public.

The university in September contracted Pentastar to handle its single fixed-wing medical jet. Today's announcement adds Survival Flight's three Bell 430 air ambulance helicopters.

The choppers are based at **Ann Arbor Municipal Airport**.

The September deal covered the new Cessna Citation Encore light jet outfitted as a medical flight aircraft at **Oakland County International Airport**, for which Pentastar provides pilots, training, management, maintenance and storage.

Pentastar is owned by Edsel Ford II.

Survival Flight is UM's air transportation service for patients who need specialized medical services and organ procurement for solid organ transplantation.

Survival Flight has flown more than 30,000 patient transports since it began in 1983. Pentastar's first Survival Flight jet flight came Oct. 25 when a new heart was flown in for a child, the company said.

The Pentastar management deal comes in the wake of a fatal Survival Flight crash two years ago, and subsequent lawsuits and investigations.

The university ended its contract with Belleville-based **Marlin Air Inc.** six weeks after the June 2007 crash of a Survival Flight Cessna Citation 550 jet in Lake Michigan near Milwaukee. The accident killed two Marlin pilots and four UM organ transplant team members on a return flight to **Willow Run Airport** in Ypsilanti.

UM paid \$350,000 in September 2008 to settle a lawsuit filed by

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Pentastar Aviation is the sole managing company for the University of Michigan Health System's Survival Fleet aircraft.
 Photo credit: Courtesy Pentastar Aviation

Marlin Air that claimed the contract termination was unlawful, a deal that included no admission of wrongdoing. Marlin has provided Survival Flight services to UM for 19 years.

The **National Transportation Safety Board** ruled in October ruled that pilot error caused the crash.

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