

# New Caltrans App Can Be a Lifesaver

Mobile 'HeliPlates' Allows Pilots To Retrieve Hospital Helipad Data in a Touch

Not all emergency medical helicopter pilots know which local hospital offers the services their transport patient needs, the best way in or out of the landing area, or the size and weight limit of the landing pad — but Caltrans does.

Each year, Caltrans' Division of Aeronautics staff inspect hospital and public use airports to ensure the safety of the facilities and compliance with permit requirements.

Caltrans used this information to create the "Caltrans HeliPlates" app, an interactive map now available in iOS and Android formats at the App Store or Google Play. The app provides information on all 166 state-permitted hospital heliports. It breaks down information by geographical area, with pinch and zoom capabilities and drop-down menus detailing specific hospitals and helipads.

In 2012, Caltrans created a [website](#) with "data plates," or web pages of hospital and helipad data, to help connect helicopter pilots with hospital helipad data. Pilots said the website was good for planning ahead, but requested a mobile app to access information during emergency situations on the fly.

So Caltrans continued its work with medical air transporters, hospitals and U.S. armed forces branches to develop Caltrans HeliPlates.

By tapping on a hospital name on a map, pilots can access specific medical services and heliport information for each facility. This is critical for day-to-day emergency responder use, as well as for large-scale emergencies when pilots unfamiliar with an area must transport patients needing immediate care.

Pilots also can preload the Caltrans HeliPlates app onto their tablet or cell phone so they can still access up-to-date information even in a location without a signal. This is an example of how Caltrans is providing a safe transportation system for workers and users.



Caltrans photo by Don Haug

Helicopter pilots fly critical missions for California hospitals, such as this one in Fresno. A Caltrans app gives them details on landing pads.

CalStar Pilot Mark Ramos flies a medical helicopter to rescue and transport the critically injured or ill to the nearest appropriate hospital as safely and quickly as possible. Ramos tested Caltrans HeliPlates app and said, "This app is quick and easy to navigate with accurate information that is good to know. It saves me time and is really helpful for new nurses and pilots."

Other air ambulances that use California hospital helipads include REACH Air Medical Services, Air Methods, Enloe FlightCare, Stanford Life Flight, Children's Hospital of Los Angeles, as well as local sheriff, fire and California Highway Patrol pilots.

Caltrans was recently honored by other state agency peers for its innovative QuickMap mobile app, which allows motorists to view closures, traffic incidents and other travel information. **MM**

Source: Jeff Brown, Caltrans Office of Airports Chief, and George Williford, Associate Transportation Planner