

Why Air Cargo is a Viable Solution for Transporting Medical and Pharmaceutical Products

By Todd Keefe



The ecosystem tied to the movement of medical and pharmaceutical products is complex and highly distributed. Shippers and receivers for these life-saving products are spread out around the country, and there are no centralized routes between them.

One company in this ecosystem is the National Kidney Registry, who maintains a nationwide database of donors. Other parties include hospitals and operating rooms, Universities, pharmaceutical companies, and research labs in every city in the US. In short, the supply chain serving this industry must be able to reach anywhere and everywhere in the US, and all within a moment's notice.

One specialty courier serving the National Kidney Registry is [Quick International Courier](#), a full-service priority transportation and logistics provider specializing in the transportation of life saving organs, blood and bone marrow for transplant and research, investigational drugs, medical implant devices, and critical parts to repair diagnostic equipment for the medical industry. The value placed on Quick's cargo is often immeasurable, so on-time delivery and temperature compliance are non-negotiable items during transit.

To meet the urgent logistical needs of its customers, Quick deploys every means available, from hand-carried courier services, to chartered flights, to commercial air cargo services. Quick follows an exclusive set of Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) for every situation, providing unmatched cold chain logistics and strict protocols for maintaining the viability of each shipment.

One of the airlines that Quick works best with is Southwest Airlines Cargo. With more than 3,400 non-stop flights each day, Southwest provides a "next-flight-out" option that is critical for Quick - whose products must arrive in condition to be used immediately by the recipient.

According to Quick's VP of Marketing, Marie Vigliarolo, "90-percent of the time, we opt for a next-flight-out option, or we have a courier hand-carry the product onboard the aircraft."

Quick has achieved a successful track record with Southwest Airlines Cargo, due in large part to the airline's reliability, its customer service, and its strict adherence to industry protocols. "Southwest has been fantastic to work with. Our QA team works seamlessly with theirs to ensure that all protocols are followed, and Southwest's cargo operation understands our unique needs. They do whatever it takes to ensure that our shipments arrive on time, with integrity intact," adds Vigliarolo.

One of the reasons that Southwest can ensure the successful handling and on-time delivery of medical and pharmaceutical products, is because it is the first commercial air cargo company to accept wireless asset-tracking technology for its operations.

Last summer, Southwest Airlines Cargo announced acceptance of OnAsset Intelligence's [SENTRY FlightSafe®](#) technology, which tracks the temperature, humidity, pressure, light, shock & vibration, and location of cargo during transit. SENTRY also features patented intelligence that is necessary to comply with the FAA's requirements for safe operation during flight. FlightSafe® automatically suppresses its wireless radios during flight, but sensing data is continuously tracked during transit.

In the event of a breakage or temperature alert, the technology enables Southwest's customers to respond quickly to remedy the situation. This visibility provides piece-of-mind that is essential when it comes to transporting medical and pharmaceutical products.

"Our first and foremost objective with our customers is to provide excellent service, and the visibility our customers gain from the asset tracking technology plays a key role in providing this service," said Wally Devereaux, Director of Sales & Marketing for Southwest Airlines Cargo.

"The depth and the breadth of data that can be provided is second-to-none, from light sensing, which lets a customer know if and when a package has been opened; to shock & vibration alerts; to location tracking; and temperature and humidity alerts - which are set by the customer to conform to their own unique requirements," adds Devereaux.

Within the last year, Southwest Airlines Cargo has been recognized by the Express Delivery & Logistics Association (XLA) as the "Domestic Airline of the Year." For the second consecutive year, The Airforwarders Association has named Southwest Airlines Cargo its "Carrier of the Year." Southwest also received Air Cargo World Magazine's "Air Cargo Excellence Award" as well as Logistics Management's "Quest for Quality Award", where Southwest Airlines Cargo was named the highest rated carrier worldwide.

"We feel as though Southwest clearly understands the protocols associated with shipping medical and pharmaceutical products," states Vigliarolo. Beyond the ability to track cargo in transit, Vigliarolo points out a few other reasons why Quick relies on Southwest. Reliability, including on-time performance, and back-up plans must always be accounted for. "For every shipment, we need a plan B, and even a plan C, and an airline like Southwest has enough non-stop flights spread out throughout the day to provide alternatives in the event of a delay."

Both Devereaux and Vigliarolo see demand increasing for the transportation of medical and pharmaceutical products. "Today, our world is connected in ways that weren't possible years ago," states Devereaux.

Through communications technology, it's becoming easier to connect organ donors with recipients in need. Research labs and pharmaceutical companies are collaborating in ways that were not possible in the past. And thankfully, the transportation industry has developed a means to move the precious cargo these industries need in a safe, secure, and same-day manner.

So why is commercial air cargo a viable option for transporting medical and pharmaceutical products? If speed; reliability; flexibility for contingency planning; temperature tracking; and overall visibility regarding the whereabouts and status of your cargo are important factors, then commercial air cargo should be placed at the top of the list for shipping alternatives.

About Quick International Courier:

As a highly experienced and proven source for global priority shipping and logistics, Quick delivers fast and reliable door-to-door service for shipping blood and organs for transplant, to critical high-tech parts and medical devices, to crucial time-sensitive and highly confidential documents. At the forefront of innovations, Quick sets the standards for the priority transportation industry and provides our extensive list of clients an unparalleled level of service. A global solutions provider, Quick has been meeting critical deadlines with care and urgency for over 30 years. For additional information visit [Quick International Courier](#).

About OnAsset Intelligence:

OnAsset Intelligence is a leading service provider of remote monitoring and freight intelligence solutions. With a rich history in design and engineering services, OnAsset has created the leading service portfolio with rapid customization features for unique applications that enable freight protection, chain of custody, and security. We specialize in covert, highly intelligent applications for air freight, trucking and transportation, and intermodal and ocean freight. Our brand names, Vision and SENTRY, combine leading edge platforms that enable companies to create and view a transparent supply chain. For more information visit [OnAsset Intelligence](#).

About Southwest Airlines Cargo:

In over 40 year of service, Southwest Airlines continues to differentiate itself from other low fare carriers—offering a reliable product with exemplary Customer Service. Southwest Airlines is the nation's largest carrier in terms of originating domestic passengers boarded, now serving 72 cities in 37 states. Southwest also is one of the most honored airlines in the world known for its commitment to the triple bottom line of Performance, People, and Planet. To read more about how Southwest is doing its part to be a good citizen, visit [southwest.com/citizenship](#) to read the Southwest Airlines One Report. Based in Dallas, Southwest currently operates more than 3,400 flights a day and has nearly 35,000 Employees systemwide. Anyone interested in learning more about Southwest Airlines Cargo can contact [Wally Devereaux](#) or visit [Southwest Airlines Cargo](#).