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An ambulance in AtlantiCare's fleet, the Crestline CCL 150.  
(Photo: Peter Sciara)

# IMPROVING AMBULANCE FLEET PERFORMANCE:

Practical Solutions for  
Emergency Services

# Solutions for Ambulance Fleet Optimization

**F**irst responders across the nation are facing obstacles in managing their ambulance fleets. With so many obstacles in the way—rising costs, supply chain disruptions, and increasing demands on EMS agencies—EMS providers are facing unprecedented strain.

To ensure optimal performance and patient care, it is critical to adopt a standardized approach to fleet management.

This ebook delves into the key obstacles hindering ambulance fleet optimization and presents dynamic solutions to help streamline operations and improve patient outcomes.

## CONTENTS

### MAXIMIZING EFFICIENCY WITH ATLANTICARE'S FLEET MANAGEMENT

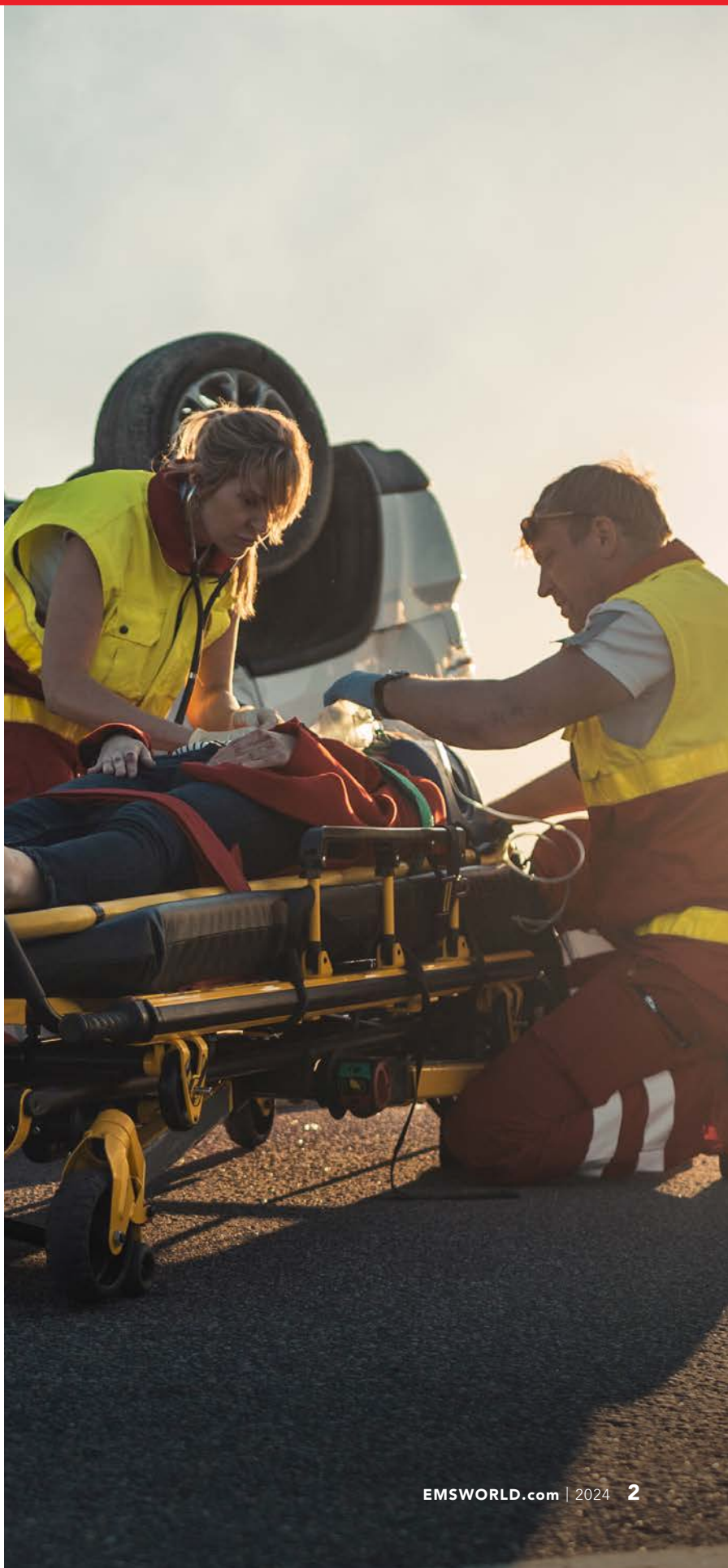
AtlantiCare's assistant chief shares some strategies we can use to overcome obstacles to standardizing ambulance fleet management.

Page 3

### FPG SALES REPS OFFER DIVERSIFIED AMBULANCE OPTIONS

Ken Clark, EMS Division Vice President for First Priority Group (FPG), explores Crestline's range of ambulance options.

Page 5



# MAXIMIZING EFFICIENCY WITH ATLANTICARE'S FLEET MANAGEMENT APPROACH

By Kinjal Shah

In the rapidly evolving healthcare landscape, the efficient management of ambulance fleets has never been more critical. Rising costs, supply chain disruptions, and increasing patient demands have placed unprecedented strain on EMS agencies. To ensure optimal performance and patient care, it is critical to adopt a standardized approach to fleet management.

What are some strategies we can use to overcome these challenges and optimize fleet operations? In the most recent episode of EMS World Podcasts titled "Ambulance Fleet Management: Practical Solutions for Emergency Services to Enhance Fleet Performance," host Mike McCabe sits down with Kyle Wells, assistant chief of EMS for AtlantiCare, to delve into these critical issues. Together, they take a look

at practical solutions for cost reduction, supply chain resilience, and the implementation of standardized procedures.

## Adapting Needs to Cities

Though based in New Jersey, Wells got his start at Fitch-Rona EMS, a municipal agency based south of Madison, Wisconsin, serving the cities of Fitchburg and Verona. In this role, he provided care for a wide variety

AtlantiCare's fleet, featuring three of six new Crestline CCL 150s.  
(Photo: Peter Sciara)



of locations—from dense apartment complexes to rural and farm communities. And that experience gave him a unique perspective on ambulance needs.

“We had to deal with a lot of extreme weather: deep snow, ice, places where there are no plows that are going to be going [there] for quite some time,” Wells says. “So, we needed really large, capable vehicles.”

To meet that need, the EMS agency used four-wheel drive diesel ambulances. But the first thing Wells noticed moving out to Atlantic City is how little those types of vehicles were needed. Before he joined AtlantiCare, the agency was transitioning to Ford F-550 ambulances.

“It seemed like overkill for a lot of those neighborhoods,” explains Wells. “You know, we’re considerably further South. So, there’s not really that much in the way of snow or ice. You don’t need all those capabilities. And I was noticing that we were causing a lot of damage, having difficulty maneuvering, you know, ER rooms and ER parking lots.”

Along with that, Wells and his agency noticed the larger ambulance models increase their risk of hitting other vehicles and overhangs. So, one of the first things Wells wanted to look at after joining: “not just replacing an aging fleet, but downsizing.”

### Key Changes Needed: Wisconsin to New Jersey

Luckily, advocating for changes such as these was not a challenge. With the pandemic, the logistics chain was pushed far back, and the ambulances currently in the fleet were already aging. Some of their frontline vehicles were hitting 400,000 miles. Wells knew that that was the right time for change.

“Things needed to happen quickly,” Wells says.

Given the cost of a brand-new ambulance, especially one with custom features, he knew it was not a feasible option. They were considering both remounting and purchasing new vehicles. However, Wells knew that remounting would take too long and was expensive, costing more than \$200,000 per vehicle. And then he found Crestline. According to Wells, they were priced right, fit the agency’s needs well, fit

their growth strategies, and he was able to purchase six.

All six were on the road in the just a few months, a significant improvement compared to the yearlong process for six remounts. But beyond just updating their current fleet, coming from Wisconsin, according to Wells, the difference in fleet size was “night and day.”

“Where I came from, we had three frontline ambulances and we had a couple in reserve,” Wells says. “And now, I mean, Type 1s alone. We’re operating eight type 1s. We have four type 2s and 23 type 3s.”

Wells stressed that that fleet size will only continue to grow with AtlantiCare’s service area rapidly growing. They currently service the Atlantic and Cape May counties. So, the need for more ambulances is rapidly growing every day. All these things led Wells and the AtlantiCare team to Crestline.

### Smaller Sizes, Efficient Replacements, and Safety

Wells initially chose Crestline because of his interest in minimizing the size of the ambulances in AtlantiCare’s fleet. Due to their small size, according to Wells, they are easier to maneuver and easier to get in and out of tight spaces. But Wells would not move forward unless the whole agency was on board.

“We really make sure that all of our staff, all of our people, we work together as a team and we don’t just make these big moves without getting buy-in with all the staff,” explains Wells.

To make their decision, a local vendor of Crestline came down to AtlantiCare to demonstrate on one of their vehicles, and that got more of the team on board.

“People really were like, ‘okay, it’s not that small,’ and it’s not,” says Wells. “It’s really quite roomy.” The team was also concerned about the E 350 chassis.

After taking the vehicle for a test drive, and seeing how the vehicle had auto loaders, power cots, and a lightweight yet sturdy build, the team was starting to turn around.

“Everything is all powder coated. It’s all metal, clean surfaces, easy to clean. Lots of room on a vehicle that’s easy to take care of. So, brakes are cheaper, fuel is cheaper, everything is cheaper to main-

tain. And then on top of that, there’s no real customization, so you get that one size that it comes in. It’s easier to replace.”

Remounts are more of a work in progress, and every couple of years, there is a new theme, new plan, or different vendor. So, the fleet becomes more of a cobbled together collection of mismatching vehicles. But with Crestline, according to Wells, they are able to “assembly line it and get quick replacements that are all identical.”

One of the other concerns that came with the size: having enough room to perform tasks in that back. To ensure that these ambulances would lead to the best quality ride for patient and providers, Wells made sure they really put the ambulances to the test during the test drives.

“[The team] was very impressed with how smooth it is,” he says. “Still very roomy, you know, not like I heralded from all the way back when I first got my start in the type 2s, the old Traumahawk ambulances. Everything was close by within arm’s reach and it was a relatively smooth ride.”

Safety was also another critical concern with these ambulances. And according to Wells, it meets all the metrics. With everything being power coat metal, everything is secure, so they do not have to worry about cabinets breaking free or drawers flying open. And all the harnesses are where they need to be.

“We added camera systems that are inside the back,” Wells says. “So, we can use that as QA and also for our provider safety. We were able to put in striker auto loaders so that our crews are protecting their backs. The oxygen even comes with a ramp.”

One of the key features Wells was looking for was the ability for remounting. While that was an option the agency was looking into prior to finding Crestline, it was still an important option for the team.

“If we couldn’t remount this box in the future, we weren’t going to go with it,” says Wells. “We needed something that we could get that life out of. Because I mean, let’s face it, the chassis go, the box is still good. We haven’t had to remount them yet because they’re all brand new, but these are something that we plan to get in at least two, maybe three rotations. And really get the life out of them.”

Monmouth County's fleet of ambulances, including three Crestline CCL 150 Type III units.  
(Photo: Peter Sciarra)



# FPG SALES REPS OFFER DIVERSIFIED AMBULANCE OPTIONS

By Larry Beresford

**V**eteran EMS managers generally know what they want from vehicles and other big-ticket equipment—even if their primary training was in emergency medical care. They have a clear idea of what works and doesn't work for them.

A skilled ambulance sales representative can assist agencies in determining their specific needs, exploring available options and products, identifying opportunities for crucial upgrades, and finding solutions that enhance emergency response capabilities and simplify daily operations. That is, according to Ken Clark, EMS Division Vice

President for First Priority Group (FPG), a regional diversified manufacturer, distributor, upfitter and dealer of emergency and specialty vehicles in Flanders, N.J.

## FPG Provides Emergency Vehicle Solutions

FPG is the regional distributor in the states of New Jersey, Maryland, Delaware and the District of Columbia for the partnering ambulance manufacturers Demers, Braun and Crestline (DBC), Crestline Coach, Demers Ambulances and Braun Industries. Clark is responsible for sales and product management activities for their major product lines.

DBC is one of the largest ambulance manufacturers in North America with multiple production and service center facilities across North America. With eight production and service centers, they build close to half of the ambulances in North America as of today. In the US, the total ambulance market size is now estimated at \$12.9 billion, according to Global Market Insights.

FPG was established in 1998. Its Conversion Division is one of the country's largest upfitters of emergency vehicles. The Conversion Division upfits emergency and specialty vehicles such as emergency service units (ESUs), mobile command centers, fire rescue vehicles and paramedic

rapid response vehicles for police, fire, EMS and hospital systems. It also represents other service vehicles such as paramedic fly caps cars, also known as rapid response vehicles and police emergency service units (ESUs), as well as other specialized response vehicles for police, fire, EMS and hospital systems.

“Currently we have four facilities, three in New Jersey, as we just opened a second body shop in Northern New Jersey and are looking at adding an additional remount facility,” Clark says.

FPG is a large ambulance re-mount-er. That involves taking an old chassis out from under an emergency vehicle’s module, refurbishing the module using an a la carte menu of possible upgrades, then dropping it down on a new chassis and presenting it back to the customer for extended life at less cost. The vehicle is then titled as new. Ambulance remounting may also involve replacing the vehicle’s electrical system or heat and air conditioning, or putting in new flooring, new lettering and graphics, or new lights.

### Taking a Customer-Centric Approach

FPG meets its clients via social media, at trade shows such as the annual Fire Department Instructors Conference in Indianapolis, and through cold calls. Its sales reps are out in the field consulting with the people who make the decisions for EMS agencies about their ambulance fleets.

“The sales rep’s role, truthfully, is as a consultant, looking out for what’s best for their customers,” Clark says.

“That means offering advice and solving problems—whatever the customer needs to know.” It also means working with the client throughout the sale and delivery of the vehicle. Sometimes clients have questions about features and benefits, which means the salesperson needs a good understanding of the product and the latest upgrades and accessories.

For instance, does the EMS provider have the right-sized vehicles? Does their fleet need updating, refitting, refurbishing or upfitting?

“If they are concerned about terrain or weather—for example, snow—we can offer them a 4X4 vehicle in the same size,” he says.

Crestline’s multiplex modular connected electrical system provides digital controls for ambulance crews to manage their workspace and comfort and vehicle diagnostics. Crestline is also known for its paint, which contains a powder-coated, anti-microbial bio-spray additive called CrestClean, which can repel bodily fluids and biohazards, prevents growth of bacteria, is easy to wipe clean and comes with a lifetime warranty.

“Whatever the customer needs to do, we can do it,” he says. “We’re blessed in that we have Crestline, a very high-quality, entry-level ambulance product in a smaller vehicle. We also offer Braun, which is a totally customizable vehicle, and Demers, which goes from small to larger vehicles.”

Demers’ Type II ambulance models offer significant reductions in maintenance costs along with ample space for medical equipment, Clark says.

### Crestline’s CCL 150 Strives for Durability & Reliability

Crestline is a global leader in ambulance and specialty vehicle manufacturing. Its fleet of ambulance models in the US is led by the CCL 150, available in Type I and Type III sizes, known for its practical

standard features, all-aluminum extruded body construction, extended warranty and quality approach. The Type I, mounted on a truck chassis with a more powerful engine and higher load capacity, is designed with fire departments in mind.

The Type III model, mounted on a cut-away chassis with a wide-open cab behind the front seats, is aimed at EMS services that are looking for durability, reliability and worry-free maintenance. It offers a full-size advanced life support module with a square patient compartment and 68 or 72 inches of headroom.

Like many EMS administrators with frontline experience as first responders, Clark has been a firefighter for over 40 years. He has also coordinated the Office of Emergency Management for the Township of Vernon, N.J., for the past 20 years. For Clark, working in an EMS supportive sector such as his is about giving back to the field, helping to answer its call of need, and guiding EMS services to move their ambulance fleets forward.

EMS, like police and fire, is a setting where you only get called when somebody really needs you.

“I’ve seen the excitement in a volunteer EMS group’s eyes when it gets its new ambulance after many years. It’s about seeing our product servicing the first responder community to help its residents in their time of need,” he says. “It’s the satisfaction of giving back and answering that call of need.”



AtlantiCare’s Crestline CCL 150  
(Photo: Peter Sciarra)

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## CCL 150



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Practical Solutions for Emergency Services

- Hosted by Mike McCabe



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