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# The \$60,000 Flight: SkyMed Sounds Alarm over Virgin Islands' Air Ambulance Services Affected by Skyrocketing Fuel Prices

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An escalating crisis looms over the Virgin Islands as rising fuel prices threaten to skyrocket the cost of air ambulance services, according to testimony from Joseph Sabino, Regional Marketing Manager for SkyMed International.

In a hearing last week before the Senate Committee on Health, Hospitals and Human Services, Sabino highlighted the growing concerns and the potentially catastrophic impacts on residents.

SkyMed International, renowned for its discounted air travel programs and compassionate service, offers a crucial lifeline for patients and their families in times of medical emergencies. According to Sabino, the company prides itself on accompanying patients with their loved ones during such

critical situations.

However, the rise in costs, chiefly attributed to escalating fuel prices, could lead to a flight cost reaching up to \$60,000, as Sabino warned. This spike threatens the wellbeing of those without air ambulance coverage, particularly in a territory where some specialized medical services aren't available on-island.

Sabino also shed light on the emotional and financial toll that families face when dealing with emergency medical situations without pre-secured coverage. In such cases, the burden of transportation costs falls solely on the patient and their family, often leading to them maxing out multiple credit cards just to afford the airfare.

Senate President Novelle Francis raised concerns about post-emergency services, citing situations where patients were left to find their own way home after initial medical evacuations. In response, Sabino reassured the senator of SkyMed's commitment to a safe return journey for both the patient and their loved ones, even covering the travel of a medical assistant if necessary.

Sabino advised lawmakers to direct complaints about air ambulance operators to the division of Banking and Insurance in the Office of the Lieutenant Governor for proper tracking and resolution. He proudly reported having received no negative feedback from any of SkyMed's members.

In his closing remarks, Sabino underscored the pressing need for air ambulance coverage amidst the Virgin Islands' unfolding health crisis. He urged residents to grasp the severity of the situation and make informed decisions about their medical safety.

Sabino also issued a stern warning about the looming crisis: "I'm looking at a serious crisis when it comes to air ambulance services, and people who don't have it. Where are they going to get this money? By the next three months, it could be \$60,000 for a flight. Who's going to pay that? That patient is going to die if they don't have ambulance service."

The company offers a range of options, from \$11 a month for a single family flying to Puerto Rico, to \$56 a month for families traveling to any city in the United States. These pricing tiers provide respective coverage, as outlined on the [SkyMed USVI website](#).