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MEMORANDUM

TO: Interested Persons

FROM: Michelle Uzeta, Staff Attorney

RE: Airlines and the Use of Medical Oxygen

DATE: July 16, 2001

If you are a person with a disability who uses oxygen for medical reasons, there are things you should keep in mind when planning air travel.

1. The Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) forbids people from carrying and using their own oxygen supply on commercial airline flights. Airlines may allow you to transport your personal oxygen equipment on your flight, so long as you follow their packaging and labeling requirements.
2. Under current FAA regulations:
 - Airlines can choose to offer medical oxygen as a service to its passengers who need it, however, they are not required to;
 - Airlines who do offer oxygen for medical use during flights are allowed to charge a fee for that oxygen;
 - Airlines who offer oxygen for medical use during flights can require up to 48 hours advance notice and 1-hour advance check in. If a passenger does not meet advance notice or check in requirements, the airline will still be required to provide oxygen for medical use during the flight if it can do so with reasonable effort, without delaying the flight.
3. Airlines may ask you to give them the name and phone number of your doctor. They may also ask you for a doctor's letter, to explain your need for oxygen. It is best to contact your airline well before your planned travel date to find out what they require.

4. Airlines do not provide oxygen for in-terminal use. If you need oxygen for medical use between connecting flights, you must arrange for an outside supplier of oxygen to meet you at the airport.

Some disability advocates feel that the current FAA regulations and airline policies regarding the use of medical oxygen on flights are unfair. These advocates would like all airlines to be required to provide medical oxygen for passengers who need it without charge. To voice your opinion on this issue, you can write to the Secretary of the Department of Transportation at:

U.S. Department of Transportation
Aviation Consumer Protection Division, C-75-D
400 Seventh Street, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20590