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For Immediate Release

New Helicopter Landing Pad Dedicated in Blanco

Volunteer-led effort means safer and quicker medical service for eastern San Juan County

Aztec, NM—Officials from San Juan County Fire & Rescue and San Juan Regional Medical Center dedicated a new helicopter landing pad east of Blanco on Thursday. The designated landing area adjacent to US 64 means better access to rapid medical care for patients in the Blanco area and all the way to Rio Arriba County.

With the increasing number of medical calls for service in the Blanco area which require the use of San Juan Regional Medical Center's AirCare 1, there was a need for a dedicated landing zone serving extreme eastern San Juan County. So far in 2022, AirCare 1 has been requested to respond to the Blanco area 62 times. Of those, almost half of requests were to intercept an ambulance and transport a patient from Dulce to SJRMC.

"This means that the community now has more rapid access to emergency medical services, and it reduces the burden on our volunteers who are typically relied on to make safe a landing zone for AirCare," said San Juan County Fire Chief John Mohler. "It doesn't take much more than a piece of land and a concrete pad to save lives. We are proud of the effort to make this happen."

Typically, if AirCare 1 is dispatched, it requires assistance from the local fire department to establish a landing zone, which involves two to three SJCFR volunteers and may involve closing roads. A dedicated landing zone increases safety and reduces the amount of time it can take to transport a patient by air. This transfer point reduces the time an ambulance may need to travel on winding and hazard-laden stretches of US 64.

"SJRMC would like to thank those in the community who came together and contributed to the development and construction of the new landing area on Hwy 64, which sits on the eastern edge of San Juan County," said **Brent Hamilton** RN/EMT-P, AirCare Flight Coordinator, and Supervisor. "This new LZ will enhance the safety of air medical operations when AirCare is called to provide service to those in the eastern side of the county and extending into Rio Arriba County. Special thanks to the landowner who graciously provided the area and location for this new LZ."

San Juan County Fire & Rescue volunteer and District Chief, Carrie Trujillo spearheaded the multi-year effort to build this landing pad, securing the use of land, materials, and monetary donations to complete the project. The property's use is donated by Richard Hodgson on the Gobernador Canyon Ranch, with concrete donated by Mesa Concrete with help from Dave Fransisco. Harvest Midstream and Mark Trujillo provided a cash donation for materials, Billy T Trucking donated dirt work and gravel, Gingerich Landscaping cleared the land, SJCFR District 5 volunteers donated labor and Chris

Trujillo with CLT Welding welded the fence. Don and Jane Schreiber of Devil's Spring Ranch worked to survey the location and donated fencing work through the help of Kathy at Tuboscope, Winston Cole at Cold Steel, Joe and Kelvin Allen and Leigh Kirkeeide worked to build and paint the fence.

The landing area has a concrete pad and is fenced with a concrete ramp to facilitate the transfer of patients from an ambulance to helicopter. This ensures all-weather landings as well as safer landings and takeoffs in a known landing zone. It will be available for use by mutual aid helicopters serving the area.