

A LIFELINE ON THE GROUND

Universal's Air2Ground (A2G) global concierge agents serve as an on-the-ground extension of the clients' trip support teams, providing invaluable assistance in case something goes wrong.

BY SYLVIE PERON

You know operating to a congested airport that doesn't really prioritize business aviation is going to be a challenge. But you're feeling good because you've done the prep work – you may also have appointed a reputable ground handler. Your trip support provider has confirmed all of the services for your upcoming international mission. You may have travelled 3,000 miles, but it is the last 30 yards that can create mission failure.

What could go wrong? This is a question many international operators ask themselves. It's also one that's quickly answered upon arrival and discovering that the ground transportation you arranged isn't there, immigration documentation incomplete, or your passengers now want to change the schedule, which may mean quickly changing slots and your flight plan filing. And oh by the way, they've asked if you can arrange a helicopter charter to do some last-minute transfer.

ADDITIONAL GROUND SUPPORT

In some cases, ground handlers can support some of those requests, but depending on your schedule and your location, it's likely you'll need an additional extra layer of support on the ground to make it all happen. ▶







► “I can’t tell you how many times we’ve seen services requested and confirmed at certain ‘high-risk’ destinations somehow manage to still slip through the cracks of third-parties,” says Greg Evans, Chairman, Universal Weather and Aviation, Inc. “Remote destinations or highly congested airports, particularly those that are primarily focused on commercial traffic, present unique challenges that require the attention and focus of a dedicated concierge (supervisor) with an intimate knowledge of the local scene and regulations and the contacts to get things done.”

GLOBAL CONCIERGE NETWORK

It is with that in mind that Universal established Air2Ground Concierge (A2G) - it’s global concierge network. According to Evans, A2G concierge agents serve as an on-the-ground extension of Universal

clients’ trip support teams. “At some challenging locations, we found a need for a higher-touch service than what a typical ground handler can provide,” he said. “Because our Air 2 Ground agents are an extension of our trip support teams, every change is seamlessly communicated, avoiding the ripple effect that a single error can cause, resulting in a delay, critical meeting being missed, additional workload for the crew, or worse.”

Having that local concierge agent recently proved to be a literal ‘lifeline’ for one Universal client, whose relative suffered a severe injury overseas. Several thousand miles away and needing assistance, the client turned to his local Air2Ground concierge for support.

“Our local agent coordinated all of the transportation logistics, including securing hotel accommodations for the family, arranging transportation for family members arriving at airports, navigating local insurance and healthcare requirements, even serving as a translator with the doctors and nurses,” said Evans.

While that scenario may be atypical, what’s more common is a ‘simple’ schedule change or AOG situation.

Recently, a Universal charter client on departure from Yantai, China experienced a maintenance issue while taxiing for departure.

“Every minute on the ground is lost revenue and the charter company needed to find flights for its passengers while simultaneously coordinating maintenance for the aircraft,” explains Evans. “That’s a lot for a crew to handle. Our Air2Ground agent served as the clients’ go-to person on the ground. They expedited maintenance for the aircraft while working with the client to arrange commercial flights for all the passengers.”

Air2Ground has a network of supervisory representatives around the globe. Either on-site at major airports as well as specially trained agents who are ready to launch to less frequented locations with advance notice.

“Based on our own experience and feedback from our clients, we determine what level of support and presence we should have in a region – from full Universal Aviation ground support locations to maybe just having a dedicated agent supporting regional ICAOs. At the end of the day, it’s about finding the right mix of infrastructure, resources, and talented and dedicated people to reduce our clients’ operating risk and stress and ensure the success of their missions.” 🌍

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Isabelle Grazon, Universal Aviation Senior Representative in the South of France is on-hand, optimising all facets of a client's trip in cooperation with the region's handlers.

