

AFRL

INFECTIOUS DISEASE TRAINING

C-STARS OMAHA AND COVID-19 PATIENT MOVEMENT

What is C-STARS Omaha?

The Center for Sustainment of Trauma and Readiness Skills, or C-STARS, in Omaha, Nebraska, is a medical training program offered through the United States Air Force School of Aerospace Medicine (USAFSAM), in partnership with the University of Nebraska Medical Center/Nebraska Medicine. This program, which joins three other C-STARS programs around the U.S., was designed to prepare Air Force medical personnel to respond to highly hazardous communicable diseases – infectious diseases that are capable of causing serious illness and spreading from person-to-person – to ensure operational readiness and maintain clinical currency.

The Air Force's C-STARS program and partnerships with civilian hospitals provides opportunities for medical Airmen to receive advanced training outside of their military treatment facility in skills needed in an operational setting. With the addition of C-STARS Omaha, this training platform will continue to evolve to ensure medical Airmen remain current and ready.

C-STARS Omaha's inaugural course is "Principles of Biocontainment Care", which will cover recognition, diagnosis, and management of highly hazardous communicable diseases; infection prevention and control principles; communication, skills training, and simulation scenarios while donned in appropriate personal protective equipment. The program, which was designed and developed following the 2014-2016 Ebola outbreak, trains and prepares medical Airmen to respond to infectious disease threats that could impact military personnel and operations. Medical Airmen require specialized training to not only deliver safe and effective care to the patients suffering from infectious diseases, but also to protect themselves from infection.

The other C-STARS locations are in Cincinnati, Ohio; Baltimore, Maryland; and St. Louis, Missouri.

USAFSAM is located at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base in Dayton, Ohio, and is part of the Air Force Research Laboratory's 711th Human Performance Wing.

How is C-STARS Omaha aiding in the COVID-19 response?

In March 2020, medical professionals from USAFSAM's C-STARS Omaha program deployed to Joint Base Charleston, South

Carolina, in support of COVID-19 patient movement operations. This included adapting training and procedures for the Transport Isolation System (TIS), a system initially designed for transport of patients with Ebola that was operationalized to transport patients with COVID-19; conducting operational utility evaluations on the Portable Bio-Containment Care Module (PBCM), a system utilized by the State Department to transport patients with highly infectious diseases; and joining a "team of teams" interdisciplinary effort to develop a capability for high capacity airlift of COVID-19 infected passengers in response to the US TRANSCOM Commander's Joint Urgent Operational Need to transport a large number of COVID-19 infected personnel.



The TIS is an enclosure the Department of Defense can use to safely transport patients with highly contagious diseases. (U.S. Air Force photo by Senior Airman Cody R. Miller)

The Negatively Pressurized CONEX, or NPC, was developed from metal shipping containers retrofitted with air-handling and medical equipment to transport and care for patients with COVID-19 on a C-17 while protecting members outside the NPC from exposure. A smaller version, the NPC-Lite, was designed for use on a C-130.

Following operational utility evaluations of the NPC and NPC-L, a C-STARS Omaha team member traveled with a mobile training team to Ramstein Air Base in Germany, and Travis AFB, California, to train deployed force teams how to safely operate and adhere to infection prevention and control procedures while delivering care in these new units. The C-STARS Omaha director continues to support the COVID-19 response through consultation with Air Mobility Command.