

I. Authority:

Division 2.5 Health and Safety Code, Sections 1797.178 and 1798; Title 22 California Code of Regulations, Division 9, Chapter 8.

II. Purpose:

To establish Imperial County policy for requesting air ambulance services in the pre-hospital setting.

III. Definitions:

Air Ambulance.

"Air ambulance" means any aircraft specially constructed, modified or equipped, and used for the primary purposes of responding to emergency calls and transporting critically ill or injured patients whose medical flight crew has at a minimum two (2) attendants certified or licensed in advanced life support. Air Ambulance includes EMS helicopters and EMS fixed-wing aircraft.

Rescue Aircraft.

"Rescue aircraft" means an aircraft whose usual function is not prehospital emergency patient transport but which may be utilized, in compliance with local EMS policy, for prehospital emergency patient transport when use of an air or ground ambulance is inappropriate or unavailable. Rescue aircraft includes ALS rescue aircraft, BLS rescue aircraft and Auxiliary rescue aircraft.

IV. Policy:

A. **Determination of need for EMS helicopter:**

First Responders (rescue, fire, law enforcement) and EMS personnel may request EMS helicopter response. Before dispatching an EMS helicopter, on-scene personnel should take into account the medical condition of the patient(s), the medical necessity for air transport, access to a landing site, and the safety of air and ground personnel. EMS helicopter should only be requested by the on-scene Incident Commander, or designee, and only when the benefits outweigh the risks.

1. The Imperial County Sheriffs Department (ICSD) Dispatch Center may dispatch an EMS helicopter for a report received from another PSAP, witnesses or first responders of any of the following:
 - a. Victim is located in an area which is inaccessible to ground ambulance;
 - b. Ground transport may aggravate patient's injuries due to rough (off-road) terrain;
 - c. Any patient who appears to meet critical trauma criteria, regardless of location or proximity to nearest hospital. For example, this could include

a report of a victim involved in a vehicle crash that is unconscious, or appears to have multiple fractures or difficulty breathing.

2. An EMS helicopter may be placed on "standby" status under the following conditions:
 - a. Based on initial report from ICSD dispatch, responding agencies may request an EMS helicopter be placed on "standby" status to prepare for the quickest possible response in the event they are needed.
 - b. ICSD dispatch center may at any time place an EMS helicopter on "standby" status when the patient(s) condition is unknown and either of the following situations exist:
 1. Prolonged response time to the scene for ground ambulance (>30 minutes)
 2. Delayed scene time due to extrication or other unusual scene conditions and combined scene and ground travel time is >30 minutes.

B. Dispatch Guidelines:

1. Single Point of Contact:

A single point of contact for dispatch of EMS helicopters is essential to ensure appropriate and efficient use of these resources. First responder, law enforcement, EMS personnel, and other PSAPs should not contact EMS helicopters directly (with the exception of the local CHP and CHP Air Operations). The ICSD is the designated PSAP in Imperial County for dispatching EMS helicopters. CHP dispatch should notify ICSD as soon as possible whenever the CHP helicopter has been dispatched to a medical emergency in Imperial County.

2. Information to be provided to dispatch:

First responder, law enforcement, EMS personnel, and other PSAPs should provide the following information when requesting an EMS helicopter:

- Type of incident (vehicle rollover, multi-vehicle collision, etc)
- Location of Incident (GPS if available)
- Approximate number of patients
- Approximate age, weight and condition of patient(s) if known
- Special scene conditions (terrain, winds, hazards, power lines, etc)
- Location of landing site for helicopter
- Ground contact and radio frequency

3. Ground Ambulance:

Ground ambulance (ALS or BLS) should always be dispatched concurrently with an EMS helicopter, or continue response to the scene as directed. The dispatch of an EMS helicopter should not preclude the dispatch or continued

response of a ground ambulance. Dispatch shall inform the responding ground ambulance that an EMS helicopter has also been dispatched. Ground ambulance crew should be informed of which EMS helicopter provider has been dispatched and their ETA to the scene. The EMS helicopter provider should also be informed of which ground ambulance provider is responding and their ETA to the scene.

4. Selection of EMS Helicopter Provider:

ICSD Dispatch will alert an EMS helicopter provider, authorized by the local EMS Agency to provide air transport services in Imperial County, which is capable of completing the mission. ICSD should initially attempt to alert a private provider of the need for air transport services, and if none available, dispatch a public or military provider. If multiple private EMS helicopter providers are authorized to provide service in Imperial County, then ICSD should attempt to dispatch providers based on their proximity and response time to the scene. If there are multiple locally based providers, then ICSD should attempt to dispatch on a rotational basis. If an EMS helicopter is not available or is unable to complete the mission due to unusual terrain or other conditions, it is appropriate for ICSD to dispatch a Rescue Aircraft (MCAS/SAR, CHP, Border Patrol, etc).

(Note: Any EMS Helicopter Service Provider authorized to operate in Imperial County shall notify the ICSD Dispatch Center whenever they will be unable to respond to calls due to maintenance, staffing, or other reasons excluding weather, when such period of inability to respond is expected to exceed 12 hours.)

5. Cancellation policy:

- a. The ground ambulance crew may only cancel a responding EMS helicopter under the following conditions:
 - It is determined that ground ambulance is more appropriate after consultation with the base hospital;
 - Ambulance personnel consult with base hospital regarding patient's refusal of medical care or transportation, and base hospital concurs with cancellation of EMS helicopter.
- b. The EMS helicopter may only cancel a responding ground ambulance if the air team determines they can transport the patient(s) before the ground ambulance arrives.

C. Rendezvous with EMS Helicopter:

If the responding EMS helicopter has a delayed response to the scene, the ground ambulance should consult with the base hospital concerning the decision to begin transport to the nearest, appropriate hospital, or to a pre-designated rendezvous

site with the EMS helicopter (including rendezvous at a local airport).

D. Patient Destination:

1. The determination of patient destination should be made in accordance with patient's preference, triage criteria, safety, weather, fuel availability, and other appropriate factors.
2. Patients will only be transported by air to hospitals that have an FAA approved helipad, unless it is determined that an emergency landing is necessary at an alternate site.

E. Patient Care Guidelines:

Medical personnel responding with an EMS helicopter shall operate under the patient care policies, procedures, and protocols established by their base medical control and/or their county of origin, subject to approval by local EMS Medical Director.

F. Continuous Quality Improvement:

Imperial County policies for CQI apply to all patient transports (both air and ground) originating within the county. Individual cases, providers and system issues may be audited upon receipt of an Incident Report in accordance with Policy #1200 or at the request of the local EMS Agency.

G. Withdrawal from Operations:

Imperial County EMS reserves the right to suspend, place on probation or restrict air ambulance services for cause, following an investigation and establishment of a practice that is outside the parameters set in this policy.

APPROVAL



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EMS Medical Director