



COMMUNICATIONS OPERATIONS
EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICE POLICY

Policy No. 6980 Date Issued: June 1, 1996
Section: 6900 - Specific Procedures, Continued Date Revised: September 8, 2014
Accreditation Standards: None
SUBJECT: AIR AMBULANCE DISPATCH
APPROVED: Santa Cruz County EMS/San Benito County EMS
APPROVED: American Medical Response
APPROVED: Dennis Kidd, General Manager

1.0 Purpose

1.1 To establish guidelines for dispatching air ambulances.

2.0 Dispatch of Air Ambulance

Air ambulances (helicopters) may be activated and dispatched in one of two ways

2.1 Automatic Dispatch

CAD will automatically recommend and dispatch an air ambulance on specific calls in a defined geographical remote zone (ALS response time twenty minutes or greater). The specific incident type codes that will generate a CAD air ambulance dispatch are 3D1, 3D2, 3D3, 4D1, 4D2, 4D3, 4D4, 4B2, 7D1, 7D2, 7D3, 7C4, 7D4, 7C2, 7C3, 15E1, 15D1, 15D4, 15D5, 15D6, 15D7, 17D1, 17D2, 17D3, 17D4, 17D5, 17B2, 17D5, 21D1, 21D2, 21D3, 21D4, 22D1, 27D1, 27D2, 27D3, 27B3, 30D1, 30D2, 30D3, 30B2, AIRCRA, INJACC, INJACP, INJAB, and INJACM.

2.2 On Request Dispatch

Upon receipt of any public safety field personnel, including dispatchers.

### 3.0 Response Zones

CAD response zones have been preprogrammed to determine which air ambulance provider is closest to the scene of the incident.

#### 3.1 Santa Cruz County

CAD recommendations are based on two response areas: the North Response Area and the South Response Area. The North Response Area is configured to recommend Lifeflight (LIFE) as the primary responder (with CALSTAR 2, 5, and 1 as the second, third, and fourth, respectively) and the South Response Area is configured to recommend CALSTAR2 (STAR2) as the primary responder (with CALSTAR 5, Lifeflight, and CALSTAR1 as the second, third, and fourth, respectively). In addition to Lifeflight and CALSTAR, there are three other Santa Cruz County approved mutual aid contractors. They are Reach (REACH), AirMed (PHI) and Mediflight (MEDI). All air ambulance units are configured in CAD as fire units and will appear on the fire incident.

#### 3.2 San Benito County

Regardless of the location, San Benito uses just one list of contacted air ambulance providers because the base stations of the air units are usually equidistant. The recommendation list is as follows: CALSTAR2 (STAR2H), CALSTAR5 (STAR5H), Lifeflight (LIFEH), Airmed (PHIH), Mediflight (MEDIH), and Reach (REACH3H).

### 4.0 Notifications

In all cases of air ambulance activation, dispatchers will notify the responding Incident Commander (IC) of the activation. The IC has the authority to cancel or decline any activation, and also has the responsibility of coordinating the use of air ambulances.

The fire agency of jurisdiction has the responsibility of establishing the landing zone (LZ) in coordination with the local law enforcement agency. If the scene is not being used as the LZ, a fire unit should be paged to set-up the LZ.

### 5.0 Information Required for Activation

The following information should be obtained from the IC as soon as practical; however, air ambulance activation should never be delayed in order to gather this information:

- Exact location of the LZ, including latitude and longitude coordinates if known. CALSTAR needs degrees minutes and seconds.
- Geographical conditions, including terrain slope, vegetation canopies and canyons.
- Weather conditions, including wind (direction and speed) and visibility (fog, rain, cloud cover).

- Known LZ hazards, including wires, trees, loose debris, bystanders, or other obstructions.
- Tactical and command radio frequencies including the LZ name.

## 6.0 Cancellations or Refusals

### 6.1 Mechanical

6.1.1 the CAD recommended air ambulance is unable to activate (or refuses) due to a mechanical problem or because their helicopters are already committed, dispatchers will query CAD for the next recommended unit. Dispatchers will continue this process to find the next closest available air ambulance including the mutual aid contractors: Reach, AirMed, and Mediflight.

### 6.2 Weather

6.2.1 If the primary contractor refuses to activate due to weather or safety concerns (flight or scene), dispatchers will attempt to activate the opposing area primary contractor (north or south). Dispatchers will notify the second contractor of the first contractor's reason for refusal. If both the first and second contractor refuses due to scene weather, no other attempts will be made and the IC will be notified.

### 6.3 Pilot

6.3.1 Additionally, an air ambulance pilot has the final authority in deciding to cancel or continue a mission, and his/her decision shall prevail.