

## **POLICY #155: EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICE HELICOPTER OPERATIONS**

I.

II. PURPOSE

- A. To establish standardized procedures for prehospital utilization and evaluation of emergency medical service (EMS) helicopters operating in the County of San Luis Obispo (SLO) as a specialized resource providing EMS and prehospital patient transport.

III. SCOPE

- A. This policy **EXCLUDES** EMS helicopter operations limited to search and rescue, and interfacility transfers.

IV. DEFINITIONS

- EMS helicopters: Any helicopter utilized for the purpose of prehospital emergency patient response and transport.
- Expedited Launch Zone: Areas identified as having a 30-minute or greater ground transportation time to a Specialty Care Center with a heliport/helistop, where transportation by EMS helicopter would result in a timesaving of at least ten (10) minutes over the ground transport. MedCom and the County of SLO EMS Agency (EMS Agency) retain and regularly update the County of SLO Expedited Launch Zone (Attachment B and C).
- Heliport/Helistop: An area of land, water, or structure used or intended to be used for the landings and takeoffs of helicopters and includes its buildings and facilities, if any, as approved by the State of California, Department of Transportation, Division of Aeronautics.
- Incident Commander (IC): The highest-ranking representative or designee, on scene, of the public safety agency statutorily responsible for incident or scene management.
- MedCom: The County of SLO Medical Communications Center, which coordinates the response of all EMS helicopters to the scene of all medical and trauma emergencies within the County of SLO.
- Specialty Care Center: A hospital designated and/or approved by the EMS Agency that provides specialized medical services.
- Time: Considerations defined for quality improvement purposes in EMS Agency Policy #100: Continuous Quality Improvement.

V. POLICY

- A. The designated ordering point for all EMS helicopters will be MedCom.

- B. MedCom will coordinate EMS helicopter requests and cancellations.
- C. EMS helicopters must have the capability to communicate and maintain communications with MedCom, EMS providers (responding and on-scene), base hospitals and other appropriate facilities or agencies.
- D. Patient transport by EMS helicopter must meet **BOTH** the time **AND** need criteria outlined in this policy.
- E. EMS helicopter service providers must develop and participate in a QI program in cooperation with the EMS Agency and other EMS system participants as outlined in the EMS Agency Policy # 100: Continuous Quality Improvement.
  - 1. All EMS helicopter medical transports will be reviewed
  - 2. Transports that do not meet the need and time criteria must complete an "EMS Opportunity for Improvement" form (Attachment A) to describe the situation and/or rationale for transport.

## VI. PROCEDURE

- A. MedCom will initiate the dispatch process of EMS helicopters with other EMS responding agencies when an incident is located within an Expedited Launch Zone **AND** there is a credible report of one (1) or more of the following conditions:
  - 1. High-risk motor vehicle accidents.
    - a. Major damage to vehicle e.g. head-on/entrapment.
    - b. Patient ejection (partial or complete) from an automobile.
    - c. Greater than three (3) patients.
    - d. Motor vehicle rollover.
  - 2. Motorcycle or like vehicle, crash with injuries.
  - 3. Other situations not covered, but dispatcher believes condition of patient is critical.
- B. Cancellation of EMS helicopter response.
  - 1. MedCom may cancel an EMS helicopter when:
    - a. The IC, in consultation with the most medically qualified first responder on scene, determines it is no longer needed.
    - b. Once an EMS helicopter has been dispatched, and a second EMS helicopter becomes available that reports an ETA at least five (5) minutes less than the ETA of the first EMS helicopter, Med-Com may cancel the first EMS helicopter.
  - 2. Med-Com will notify the transport provider(s) and/or responding personnel of any cancellation or situational updates.
- C. Responding or on-scene first responders may request an EMS helicopter when it is determined **BOTH** the Time **AND** Need Criteria are met.

1. Time Criteria must meet one (1) or more of the following:
    - a. Transport by EMS helicopter would result in a savings of at least ten (10) minutes over ground transport. (Destination criteria for Specialty Care Centers should be taken into consideration.)
    - b. The scene location is difficult or inaccessible by ground transport, which could result in a prolonged response and transport.
  2. Need Criteria must meet one (1) or more of the following:
    - a. Responding first responders may request with a credible report of one (1) or more of the following conditions:
      - (1) Conditions as outlined under section VI Procedures A. 1- 3 above.
      - (2) Other situations not covered, but the first responder believes condition of patient is critical.
    - b. On-scene responder's assessment determines one (1) or more of the following conditions (some conditions may require advanced life support level of training):
      - (1) Patient assessment meets the criteria of EMS Agency Policy #153: Trauma Patient Triage and Transport.
      - (2) Patient assessment meets the criteria of EMS Agency Policy #152: STEMI Patient Triage and Destination.
      - (3) Patient assessment identifies any of the following:
        - (a) Altered mental status with no response to prehospital treatment.
        - (b) Severe respiratory compromise or respiratory arrest.
        - (c) Complications of childbirth, e.g., breech, abnormal presentation, massive blood loss, neonatal distress.
        - (d) Signs and symptoms of medical hypotension unresponsive to treatment
      - (4) EMS provider judgment
- D. EMS helicopter transportation may not be suitable in the following situations:
- a. Medical or traumatic cardiac arrest not responding to prehospital therapy consistent with EMS Agency Policy # 125: Prehospital Determination of Death/Do Not Resuscitate (DNR) End of Life Care.
  - b. Patients contaminated by hazardous material
  - c. Patients who are violent or have behavioral emergencies
- E. The EMS helicopter medical flight crew must turnover the patient transport to ground transport if criteria for EMS helicopter transport are not indicated by patient condition, unless the patient is assessed, treated, and packaged for transport and the ground transport unit is greater than 20 minutes away.

- F. Patient destination must be in accordance with the EMS Agency destination and triage policies including Policy # 151: Destination, Policy # 152: STEMI Triage and Destination, and Policy # 153: Trauma Patient Triage and Destination.

VII. AUTHORITY

- California Health and Safety Code, Division 2.5, Section 1798.169.
- California Code of Regulations, Title 22, Division 9, Chapter 12 and 8; Section 100300(c) (3).
- California Emergency Medical Services Authority Prehospital Emergency Medical Service Aircraft Guidelines #144, December 1, 2010.

VIII. ATTACHMENTS

- A. Opportunity for Improvement form.
- B. Expedited Launch Zones.
- C. Expedited Launch Zones Map.
- D. Flight Times and Landing Zone Selection.
- E. EMS Helicopter Request and Destination.
- F. County Division Map for H70 and CALSTAR.