

SAN DIEGO COUNTY DIVISION OF EMERGENCY AMBULANCE SERVICE
POLICY/PROCEDURE/PROTOCOL

No. A-876
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Date: 07/01/2004

SUBJECT: AIR AMBULANCE DISPATCH CENTER DESIGNATION/DISPATCH OF AIR AMBULANCE

- I. **Authority:** Health and Safety Code, Sections 1797.204, 1797.206, and 1797.218.
- II. **Purpose:** To provide for the coordination of EMS aircraft response within San Diego County.
- III. **Definitions:**

Air Ambulance: any rotor 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 ambulance flight crew has at a minimum of two (2) attendants certified or licensed in advanced life support, one of whom is an RN.

Alert - condition wherein a requesting agency has requested that an air ambulance be placed on standby in anticipation of a response.

Estimated Time of Arrival (ETA) - the estimated sum of scramble, pre-flight, launch, and in-flight response time to a scene.

Launch - condition wherein a requesting agency has requested that an air ambulance respond to an incident.

Responding - condition wherein the air ambulance flight crew is leaving quarters, preparing the helicopter for flight and flying to the incident scene.

Response Time - the actual sum of scramble, preflight, launch, and in-flight response time to a scene.

- IV. **Policy:** All EMS air ambulance service providers operating within San Diego County shall be dispatched by a center designated by the Division of EMS. The County of San Diego, Division of EMS shall select a provider using the customary procurement process.

- A. To be designated as an air ambulance dispatch center, the dispatch agency shall:
 - 1. Be staffed 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.
 - 2. Possess radio capabilities allowing for constant communication with aircraft.
 - 3. Maintain a toll free dedicated telephone line to allow access by all requesting agencies.

Approved:



Administration



Medical Director

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4. Answer the phone " Air Ambulance Service".
5. Provide, upon request, tapes needed for quality assurance purposes, within thirty (30) days of incident.
6. Possess communication capabilities with all receiving hospitals.
7. Maintain a flight log to include, at a minimum:
 - a. time of request
 - b. requesting agency
 - c. location of incident
 - d. time dispatched
 - e. crew on board
 - f. time of lift off
 - g. time arrived on scene
 - h. time of lift off from scene
 - i. time arrived at receiving hospital
 - j. reason for aborted flight.
8. Comply with the Division of Emergency Medical Services in the quality assurance process.

B. The County of San Diego may revoke or suspend authorization of an EMS aircraft designated dispatch center for failure to comply with applicable policies, procedures, protocols and regulations.

V. Procedure:

- A. Dispatch centers requesting air ambulance dispatch designation must submit a written request to the County of San Diego, Division of EMS with the following minimum information:
 1. Communication capabilities with all hospitals, all public safety agencies, BLS and ALS ground units, and air ambulance units.

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2. Documentation of compliance with applicable Federal and State Air Regulations.
- B. County of San Diego, Division of EMS may revoke/suspend designation of dispatch center for failure to comply with applicable policies, procedures, protocols and regulations.

VI. Responsibilities of Agency:

- A. The designated air ambulance dispatch agency provides the following services:
1. Establishes the identity of the caller, confirms the location of the incident, the contact person's name, ground contact, radio frequency and other pertinent information.
 2. Determines the closest most appropriate available air ambulance.
 3. Informs the requesting agency of the ETA of the air ambulance.
 4. Requests launch or standby as appropriate from the closest most appropriate provider.
 5. Maintains an updated list of all landing pads in the county.
 6. Maintains a system status plan approved by the Division of EMS and adheres to the dispatch procedure established in Section V of this policy.
 7. Provides the Division of EMS and participating air ambulance providers with system reports for each month.
 8. These system reports shall illustrate the dispatch times, response times and other patient service times captured by the air ambulance dispatch center.

VII. Dispatch Procedure:

- A. Air ambulance services request:
1. Requesting agencies contact the air ambulance dispatch center on the designated phone line to request an air ambulance launch or standby providing incident address, Thomas Bros. map page, or GPS coordinates and nature of incident, landing zone, ground contact unit, and coordination radio frequency.

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2. The air ambulance dispatch center selects the closest most appropriate unit and advises the requesting agency of the air ambulance agency, unit number, response location and pertinent hospital receiving information.
 3. The air ambulance dispatch center provides information to the selected air ambulance provider and obtains an ETA.
 4. The air ambulance dispatch center tracks helicopter status as (ALERTED) when a standby is requested and (RESPONDING) when a launch is initiated.
 5. The air ambulance dispatch center tracks disposition of the response as (CANCELLED) or (TRANSPORT) as advised by the air ambulance provider at the close of each response.
- B. Air ambulance unit selection for responses:
1. The air ambulance provider contacts the air ambulance dispatch center with each " on and off duty" status of helicopter units, providing unit numbers, hours and location.
 2. The air ambulance provider contacts the designated air ambulance dispatch provider with units "out of service" status or post-to-post moves within the County for various reasons including fueling, maintenance, special events, etc.
 3. The air ambulance dispatch center selects the closest, most appropriate air ambulance provider based on proximity to the incident. In the instance where multiple providers are at the same post, the air ambulance provider not having handled the last response will be selected.
- C. Other communications:
1. Pre-launch communication "requests for service" will be made to the air ambulance dispatch center, which then turns the request over to the dispatch center of the selected provider.

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2. Post-launch communications pertaining to a response in progress should be made directly between the responding air ambulance agency and the requesting agency.

D. Posting locations:

1. Air ambulance provider will contact the air ambulance dispatch center with each "on and off duty" status of helicopter units, providing unit numbers, hours and location.
2. "Move up" locations may also be used at the discretion of the provider for periods of six hours or less provided that they are at a licensed helipad or airport and that appropriate indoor rests and toilet facilities are provided for flight crews. Itinerant units will not be allowed.

E. Disputes:

1. Selection made by the air ambulance dispatch center at the time of service shall be final.
2. Air ambulance providers who believe that a dispatch error has occurred shall present their complaints in writing to the Division of EMS Ambulance Permit Officer or designee, within two weeks of the incident.
3. The Ambulance Permit Officer or designee shall investigate disputed calls within two weeks of receipt and may at his/her discretion compensate an appealing air ambulance provider agency with an "extra turn or turns" in rotation. No other compensation shall be made and the decision of the Permit Officer is final.

VIII. Fees:

A. Dispatch Fee:

1. A dispatch fee shall be assessed for each dispatch resulting in a transport. Air ambulance providers shall be billed monthly. The amount of the dispatch fee shall be determined by the Board of Supervisors and shall reasonably cover the cost of providing the dispatch service.

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2. Fees shall be due and payable to "Division of EMS" or its designee 30 days after the date of invoice.
3. Failure to remit fees within the 30 day period shall result in immediate suspension from the air ambulance dispatch program until fees have been paid.
4. Failure to remit fees within 60 days after the date of the invoice shall result in permanent termination from the air ambulance dispatch program.

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