

COUNTY OF VENTURA HEALTH CARE AGENCY		EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES POLICIES AND PROCEDURES	
Policy Title: Helicopter Dispatch for Emergency Medical Responses		Policy Number: 1202	
APPROVED: Administration: Steven L. Carroll, Paramedic		Date: December 1, 2011	
APPROVED: Medical Director: Angelo Salvucci, MD		Date: December 1, 2011	
Origination Date: May 30, 1988		Effective Date: December 1, 2011	
Date Revised: November 10, 2011			
Date Last Reviewed: March 12, 2015			
Next Review Date: March 31, 2018			

- I. **PURPOSE:** To define dispatch procedures for helicopter emergency medical responses.
- II. **AUTHORITY:** Health and Safety Code, Division 2.5, Sections 1797.204, 1797.206, 1797.220, and 1798. California Code of Regulations, Title 22, Division 9, Section 100276.
- III. **DEFINITIONS:**
 - A. **EMS Aircraft:** any aircraft utilized for the purpose of pre-hospital emergency patient response and transport. This includes "Air Ambulances" and all categories of "Rescue Aircraft."
 - B. **Air Ambulance:** 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 a minimum two attendants certified or licensed in advanced life support (ALS).
 - C. **Rescue Aircraft:** 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.
 1. **ALS Rescue Aircraft:** a rescue aircraft whose medical flight crew has at least one (1) attendant licensed and/or accredited to provide ALS.
 2. **BLS Rescue Aircraft:** a rescue aircraft whose medical flight crew has at least one (1) attendant certified as an EMT

3. Auxiliary Aircraft: a rescue aircraft which does not have a medical flight crew, or whose medical flight crew does not meet the minimum requirements established.
 - D. Helicopter Dispatch Center: The helicopter dispatch center is the Ventura County Fire Protection District Fire Communications Center (FCC).
 - E. Automatic Response Area(s): Any remote area where the response time for ground ambulance personnel exceeds 25 minutes as determined by the FCC CAD system.
- IV. POLICY: Helicopters will be dispatched when an incident is located in an Automatic Response Area or when requested by on-scene VCEMS personnel.
- V. PROCEDURE
- A. Helicopters, staffed and equipped according to VCEMS policies and procedures, will be dispatched by the designated dispatch center in the following manner:
 1. All requests for and cancellations of EMS helicopters shall be made through FCC. The authority for requesting the dispatch of a helicopter for patient transport shall be vested with the on-scene public agency or Ventura County EMS personnel. This policy does not preclude the Ventura County Sheriff's Aviation Unit from responding to incidents requiring law enforcement response.
 2. FCC will determine the appropriate aviation resources using information from on-scene public safety/EMS personnel or from the reporting party if the patient is located in an Automatic Response Area.
 3. No EMS helicopter shall respond to an incident without the request of or notifying of FCC. All responding public safety/EMS personnel shall be notified of the dispatch of a helicopter
 4. An air ambulance will be dispatched to incidents when a suitable landing site is available and the victim is accessible from the landing site. If the designated air ambulance is unavailable, the Ventura County Sheriff's Department Search and Rescue (VCSD SAR) helicopter will be dispatched.
 5. The VCSD SAR helicopter will be dispatched to incidents that describe the need for the specialized skills and capabilities of a rescue aircraft. If the VCSD SAR helicopter is unavailable, mutual aid resources will be contacted. Incidents that require a rescue helicopter involve the need for:

- a. Hoist operations: use of a mechanical device (“hoist”; attached to the helicopter) to lift a patient from a location inaccessible to ground personnel, and transfer him/her into the cabin of the helicopter.
 - b. Short haul operations: use of a long line (attached to the helicopter) to lift a patient from a location inaccessible to ground personnel, and transport him/her to a location on the ground a short distance away where care may be provided.
 - c. The need for search capabilities, including the utilization of Night Vision Goggles (NVG).
- B. Helicopter transportation should be considered for all cases that meet criteria per VCEMS Policy 1203 (Criteria For Patient Emergency Transport by Helicopter)
1. Helicopter transportation will not be used for diversion purposes unless the closest hospital is on internal disaster.
- C. A helicopter response may be terminated:
1. By FCC if on-scene VCEMS personnel determine that the helicopter is not needed.
 2. If the helicopter pilot and/or flight crew determine the call should be terminated for safety considerations.