



INLAND COUNTIES EMERGENCY MEDICAL AGENCY POLICY AND PROTOCOL MANUAL

Reference No. 8110
Effective Date: 07/01/25
Supersedes: 05/01/24
Page 1 of 2

EMS AIRCRAFT UTILIZATION (SAN BERNARDINO COUNTY ONLY)

I. PURPOSE

To establish 9-1-1 EMS aircraft utilization and medical transportation criteria for San Bernardino County.

II. POLICY

- All EMS aircraft requests from the field in San Bernardino County will be coordinated by ICEMA's designated EMS Aircraft Dispatch Center (ADC).
- EMS aircraft may be requested by EMS providers when a patient's condition is of a time sensitive nature and where extended transport times may result in a poor patient outcome. EMS providers must contact ADC to request aircraft.
- At the time of dispatch, the ADC shall utilize the closest available EMS aircraft proximate to the scene of the incident using Automatic Flight Following (AFF) as the determining factor.
- If two (2) or more EMS aircraft are co-located and/or within close distance (less than a mile), the ADC shall institute a rotation system of all EMS aircraft.
- The ADC shall determine the closest EMS aircraft and inform the EMS provider which EMS aircraft will be utilized, this will include an accurate Estimated Time of Arrival (ETA). ETA will be determined by time of dispatch until EMS aircraft is over scene, and includes the total amount of time for crew preparation, flight planning, aircraft pre-flight, take-off, aircraft reconfiguration, and flight time to over scene.
- The destination decision will be made in accordance with established ICEMA policies and protocols, and may be changed by the flight crew in conjunction with the pilot in command based on patient or flight safety concerns including weather conditions.
- All air transports will undergo a Quality Improvement (QI) review following dispatch and transport.

III. EMS AIRCRAFT TRANSPORT INDICATIONS

- The determination to utilize a 9-1-1 dispatched EMS aircraft must be made with the use of a thorough and appropriate physical assessment by qualified EMS field personnel on scene, and must be made with careful consideration of the following elements:
 - The injury/illness is of a time-sensitive, critical nature requiring Specialty Care Center services.
 - The benefit of EMS aircraft transport is clearly greater than ground transportation. An acceptable standard is a 15 minute time differential in favor of air transportation.
 - The needs of the patient and scene management supersede all other considerations.

IV. EMS AIRCRAFT CANCELLATION INDICATIONS

- A dispatched EMS aircraft that responds to a scene, prior to ground transport contact with the patient, will be cancelled if the Incident Commander in consultation with the most medically-qualified first responder determines it is not needed.
 - If ground transport is the first to arrive on scene, and it is determined that air transport is not needed, ground transport may cancel a dispatched EMS aircraft.

V. SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS

- Transport stable snakebite patients from the field by ground to the closest hospital.
- Mechanism of injury alone is not criteria for transport by air.
- Patients with unmanageable airways shall be transported to the closest hospital for airway stabilization and, on its own, does not constitute an indication for EMS aircraft utilization.
- If a request to transport is denied by the initial dispatched aircraft, the second aircraft shall be notified of the denial, and the reason for the denial.
- If the patient is combative due to suspected traumatic injury, communication with flight personnel is essential.
- Patients with exposure to hazardous materials must be decontaminated on scene before utilizing EMS aircraft.
- Medical transport by EMS aircraft may not be suitable in the following situations:
 - Cardiac arrest when the patient is not responding to prehospital therapy.
 - Patients who are violent or have behavioral emergencies.