

# Solano County Health & Social Services Department

Mental Health Services  
Public Health Services  
Substance Abuse Services  
Older & Disabled Adult Services



Eligibility Services  
Employment Services  
Children's Services  
Administrative Services

Patrick O. Duterte, Director

## EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES AGENCY

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EMS Agency Administrator

## POLICY MEMORANDUM 5800

DATE: September 15, 2010

### REVIEWED/APPROVED BY:

  
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TED SELBY, EMS AGENCY ADMINISTRATOR

**SUBJECT: USE OF EMS AIRCRAFT**

AUTHORITY: CALIFORNIA ADMINISTRATIVE CODE, TITLE 22, CHAPTER 6, SECTIONS  
100206 – 100228.

### PURPOSE/POLICY:

This policy outlines indications for the use of Emergency Medical Services (EMS) aircraft, methods and procedures for dispatch, and assigns responsibility for EMS aircraft destination decisions and for communication with the receiving facility. EMS aircraft are intended to be used in circumstances when patients with traumatic injuries require rapid transport to a trauma center, in accordance with the Solano County Trauma Triage Protocol.

### I. DISPATCH

- A. Dispatch of EMS Aircraft (911 calls) within Solano County shall be initiated by the County's EMS Aircraft "Designated Dispatch Center" (currently Solano County Sheriff's Dispatch Center). The closest available aircraft will be dispatched to the scene. During call scenarios where there is more than one aircraft provider available, a daily dispatch rotation will be applied. This aircraft rotation will occur when aircraft are dispatched from Buchanan Field in Concord. Requests for dispatch of an EMS Aircraft will originate with the incident commander following an assessment which takes into consideration the patient's medical condition along with logistical factors:
  1. Scene safety, which requires a landing zone (LZ) which is located within reasonable proximity and is safe for both air and ground crews.

- 2. Patient weight within aircraft limits, non-combative, free of hazardous materials or fumes.
  - 3. EMS aircraft availability within a time frame which would be estimated to result in a marginally shorter arrival time at the trauma center Emergency Department (ED) of at least 10 minutes over ground response and transport.
  - 4. Medical needs which are either particularly time sensitive or requiring the specialized skills of a flight nurse:
    - a. Deteriorating mental status;
    - b. Unstable vital signs;
    - c. Potential for unstable airway;
    - d. Amputations, excluding digits, with potential for reattachment.
- B. The Dispatcher’s decision regarding which aircraft to send shall be in accordance with the rotational protocol established by the EMS Agency (Attachment A).
- C. Solano County Dispatch will provide the following to the aircraft dispatch:
- 1. Location;
  - 2. Requesting Agency;
  - 3. Nature of Request.
- D. Aircraft dispatch should contact the Requesting Dispatch Agency to obtain additional information which may include:
- 1. Number of patients, type and extent of injuries or illness, estimated weight;
  - 2. Landing site information (if possible);
  - 3. Coordinates;
  - 4. Landmarks identifiable from the air;
  - 5. Terrain and obstacles (e.g., wires & poles in the immediate area);
  - 6. On-scene Unit Designator;
  - 7. Significant on-scene weather conditions.

**II. CRITERIA FOR SIMULTANEOUS DISPATCH**

- A. No ALS Ground Ambulance immediately available such as in some of the remote locations in Solano County.
- B. The Dispatcher at the designated EMS Aircraft Dispatch Center should consider the following criteria in making the decision to simultaneously dispatch EMS aircraft.

<p><b>INJURY CRITERIA</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Advanced Life Support (ALS) Ground ambulance response &gt;20 min;</li> <li>➤ Victim is unconscious, due to trauma;</li> <li>➤ Penetrating injury chest/abdomen/head/neck/groin/buttock;</li> <li>➤ Falls of ≥15 feet;</li> <li>➤ Explosion or blast injuries;</li> <li>➤ Partial/full amputation, excluding digits;</li> <li>➤ Major Electrocution (lightning strike, high voltage)</li> </ul>	<p><b>Motor Vehicle Accident (MVA) CRITERIA</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ ALS Ground ambulance response &gt;20 min.</li> <li>➤ Unrestrained, crash speed &gt;35mph;</li> <li>➤ Vehicle rollover;</li> <li>➤ Victim entrapment;</li> <li>➤ Victim ejection;</li> <li>➤ Motorcycle victim ejected speed &gt;20mph;</li> <li>➤ Pedestrian struck by vehicle speed &gt;20mph</li> <li>➤ Multiple victims.</li> </ul>
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**III. LANDING SITES**

- A. There are three (3) types of landing sites to be utilized by EMS aircraft:
  - 1. Sites chosen at or near the scene of an incident;
  - 2. Pre-designated landing sites.
  - 3. Heliports and/or airports.

**IV. COMMUNICATIONS**

- A. Equipment:

All EMS aircraft will be equipped, at a minimum, with radio equipment approved by the EMS Medical Director upon recommendation of the Director of Solano County Communications Department. At a minimum, EMS Aircraft must have the capability of communicating with Solano County Central Dispatch and ground units using Fire I, CALCORD 1 and CALCORD 2.
- B. Channels:

EMS Aircraft Providers shall utilize and maintain medical communications with local EMS first responders, EMS providers, and Base Hospitals as specified by the EMS Agency.
- C. Protocol:
  - 1. Requests for EMS Aircraft will be made from responding units to their respective Dispatch Center.
  - 2. Dispatch centers will notify Solano Dispatch of the need for service and include:
    - a. Location of call;
    - b. Nature of call;
    - c. On-scene unit designator.
  - 3. Once enroute, EMS Aircraft Dispatch will notify the requesting agency dispatch (not Solano Sheriff's Office).
  - 4. As soon as possible, responding aircraft will utilize the following communications:
    - a. FIRE 1 for radio communications while enroute;
    - b. CALCORD for on-scene communication;
    - c. FIRE 2 if CALCORD is unavailable.

**V. CANCELLATION OF RESPONSE**

EMS Aircraft Response may be cancelled by the most medically qualified on-scene EMS personnel in conjunction with the scene commander when it is determined that:

- A. The patient does not meet trauma triage criteria and/or their clinical condition doesn't warrant EMS Aircraft transport;
- B. Ground ambulance transportation is more appropriate (e.g. because of delay in air ambulance response, proximity of a receiving hospital, etc.);
- C. A patient refuses to be transported by air ambulance;
- D. A patient refuses medical aid and/or transportation;
- E. Transport of the patient presents a danger to the flight crew;
- F. Pilot determination based on flight operations and/or environmental conditions.

**VI. EMS AIRCRAFT OPERATIONAL DISPATCH**

- A. Each authorized EMS air ambulance/rescue service shall maintain an operational dispatch center 24 hours/day; 7days/week. The dispatch center shall be able to immediately confirm the provider's ability to respond to an EMS incident upon notification by Solano County Dispatch Center. The EMS aircraft operational dispatch center will monitor the status of area receiving trauma facilities. The dispatch center and the responding aircraft will jointly determine the closest (as measured by flying time) available trauma facility, and will communicate patient information to the destination facility.
- B. **Operational Log**  
The EMS aircraft service shall maintain a log and/or records of all EMS aircraft requests from all requests for EMS aircraft originating in Solano County. The minimum data to be recorded and submitted to the Agency on a monthly basis and shall include:
  - 1. Date;
  - 2. Time of notification by the Solano County Dispatch Center;
  - 3. Time the EMS aircraft is enroute;
  - 4. Time of arrival at scene;
  - 5. Time of departure from scene;
  - 6. Time of arrival at receiving facility;
  - 7. Time available and/or time call was terminated when services were not needed;
  - 8. Entity requesting the service and/or cancelling the service;
  - 9. Pertinent factors associated with terminated requests.
- C. EMS Aircraft shall comply with all requirements specified in applicable agreements, contracts, policies, and procedures issued by the EMS Agency.

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