

**SAN DIEGO POLICE DEPARTMENT
PROCEDURE**

DATE: January 22, 2016

NUMBER: 2.08 – COMMUNICATIONS

SUBJECT: AIR AMBULANCE EMERGENCY CARE SERVICE

RELATED POLICY: N/A

ORIGINATING DIVISION: COMMUNICATIONS

NEW PROCEDURE:

PROCEDURAL CHANGE:

SUPERSEDES: DP 2.08 – MARCH 1, 2013

I. PURPOSE

This Department procedure establishes guidelines for requesting EMS/Rescue Aircraft.

II. SCOPE

This procedure applies to all members of the Department.

III. BACKGROUND

The only approved air ambulance service in San Diego County is Mercy Air. Mercy Air is staffed with a nurse and paramedic. The only approved Advanced Life Support (ALS) rescue helicopter in San Diego County is operated by the San Diego Fire-Rescue Department (SDFD). The SDFD helicopter is staffed with a minimum of one Fire Captain/Crew Chief (EMT) and one Firefighter/Paramedic.

ALS rescue helicopters can be utilized for patient transport. The decision regarding which helicopter to send will be made by SDFD. The highest level medical authority at-scene will determine which helicopter will be requested and the decision will be based on what is medically in the best interest of the patient.

Mercy Air and SDFD helicopters are collectively referred to as “EMS/Rescue aircraft”.

EMS/Rescue aircraft must be authorized by the EMS Division of San Diego County's Health & Human Services Agency in order to provide pre-hospital patient transport within San Diego County. The County of San Diego is required to maintain an inventory of the number and type of authorized EMS/Rescue aircraft, the patient capacity of authorized EMS/Rescue aircraft, the level of patient care provided by EMS/Rescue aircraft personnel, and receiving facilities with landing sites approved by the State Department of Transportation, Aeronautics Division.

IV. CIRCUMSTANCES WHEN EMS/RESCUE AIRCRAFT MAY BE REQUESTED

EMS/Rescue aircraft may be called during a primary response when there are serious medical emergencies, patients are located in areas inaccessible to ground ambulances or when there will be an inordinate delay by transporting via ground ambulance.

They may also be called when there are serious medical emergencies where paramedics or Emergency Medical Technicians (EMT) are treating a patient and they believe transporting the patient by air will be faster and of a medical benefit to the patient. Incident Commanders should request EMS/Rescue aircraft with the concurrence of the highest medical authority at-scene and at the direction of the base station hospital.

A. Special Circumstances

1. EMS/Rescue aircraft may be used for special circumstances, such as:
 - a. Integration with San Diego and Imperial County disaster plans; and,
 - b. Standby response to Lindbergh Field at the request of the Fire-Rescue Department or the head air traffic controller for either actual or imminent air disasters.
2. In Support of SWAT/PRT Missions

NEW

During a SWAT/PRT call-out (Code-10, Code-11 or Code-12) EMS/Rescue aircraft will be notified and placed on a standby status by San Diego Police Communications Division if directed by the Field Lieutenant or Sergeant. EMS/Rescue aircraft will only respond to the scene if directed by the field commander.

B. Request Procedure

1. Unless there is a need for a flight nurse at scene, those requesting service will request the closest, most available EMS/Rescue aircraft, instead of using a company name.

2. San Diego Police Department requests for EMS/Rescue aircraft are generally channeled through Communications Division to the SDFD Fire Communications Center (FCC). However, if SDFD personnel are on the scene, the requesting police unit should contact them directly.
3. EMS/Rescue aircraft do not have the capability of transmitting on all San Diego Police Department radio “talk groups.” Once airborne, EMS/Rescue aircraft will communicate with the requesting San Diego Police Department unit on Mutual Aid 10. This channel is available to both SDFD and SDPD field units.
4. Radio dispatchers will ascertain and provide the following information if it is not given at the time of the request:
 - a. Address, cross streets, and Thomas Brothers map location;
 - b. Nearby landmarks;
 - c. Name of individual or San Diego Police unit requesting service and the appropriate talk group/radio channel (Mutual Aid 10);
 - d. Weather conditions at-scene (wind direction/velocity, rain, visibility); and,
 - e. Aerial flight hazards (wires, light standards, fence posts, etc.).
5. Any officer, or the Communications Division supervisor, may request that an EMS/Rescue aircraft be placed on standby status when there is a high likelihood that air medical transportation services will be necessary.
 - a. All requests for standby status will be screened by a field lieutenant or sergeant.
 - b. Placing EMS/Rescue aircraft on standby will normally cut response time by approximately five minutes.
6. Patients under the influence of PCP are not candidates for transport by EMS/Rescue aircraft. Normal procedures for the transportation of these patients will be followed.
7. Family members of the injured person will not be transported by Mercy Air ambulance due to weight and space restrictions. However, family members may be transported with the SDFD ALS rescue helicopter on a case-by-case basis.

8. Patients will be transported to the nearest trauma center that has a licensed heliport and the capability to treat their particular injuries.

C. Cancellation of EMS/Rescue Aircraft

Requests to cancel EMS/Rescue aircraft must be made by the originating agency.