



**AMBULANCE RULES AND REGULATIONS  
AIR RESCUE - BLS AND ALS AIR RESCUE SERVICE PROVIDER CRITERIA**

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I. AUTHORITY:

*California Code of Regulations Title 22, Division 9, Chapter 8. California Health and Safety Code, Division 2.5, Sections 1797.204, 1797.200, & 1798. California Government Code 26614. County of Orange Ambulance Ordinance.*

II. APPLICATION:

This policy defines the role integration of air rescue service as OCEMS authorized BLS and ALS air rescue service providers and establishes policy for Air Rescue EMS aircraft operations, equipment, and personnel responding to incidents within Orange County.

An air ambulance shall have priority assignment for medical incidents. Air rescue may be called for air search and rescue service or if the air ambulance is unavailable. ("Unavailable" means an estimated time of arrival is more than 30 minutes)

III. DEFINITIONS:

**"Air rescue service provider"** means the individual or group that owns and/or operates an air rescue service.

**"Air rescue service"** means air service used for emergencies, including search and rescue.

**"Coordinating Agency"** means the OCEMS approved communication/dispatch center which maintains aircraft availability, notifies appropriate agencies/providers of air ambulance requests, and collects data as required.

**"Emergency medical services aircraft" or "EMS aircraft"** means any aircraft utilized for the purpose of prehospital emergency patient response and transport. EMS aircraft includes air ambulances and all categories of rescue aircraft.

**"EMS Aircraft Provider"** means air ambulance and air rescue service ALS service providers and includes any company, lessee, agency (excluding agencies of the federal government), provider, owner, operator who provides or makes available prehospital air transport or medical personnel either directly or indirectly or any hospital where an EMS aircraft is based, housed, or stationed permanently or temporarily.

**"ETA - Estimated time of arrival"** means the response time in minutes which is updated by direct communications between the air ambulance or air rescue pilot and the incident commander once direct communication is established.

**"Incident commander"** means the overall scene manager.

**"Medical flight crew"** means those individuals, excluding the pilot, specifically assigned to care for the patient during aircraft transport and who are at least EMT-I certified.

**"Rescue aircraft"** means 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.



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**"Advanced Life Support (ALS) rescue aircraft"** means a rescue aircraft whose medical flight crew has at a minimum one attendant certified or licensed in advanced life support.

**"Basic Life Support (BLS) rescue aircraft"** means a rescue aircraft whose medical flight crew has at a minimum one attendant certified as an EMT.

**"Auxiliary Rescue aircraft"** means a rescue aircraft which does not have a medical flight crew, or whose medical flight crew do not meet the minimum requirements of a Basic Life Support rescue aircraft.

**"Requestor"** means a prehospital care system participant or public safety dispatch agency or coordinating agency authorized to initiate a request for an air ambulance.

**"Stand-by"** means an air ambulance or air rescue is dedicated to the incident and will be prepared for immediate lift-off upon notification of activation.

**IV. CRITERIA:**

Any EMS Aircraft Provider seeking authorization to provide EMS in Orange County will comply with all applicable Orange County Ordinances and OCEMS Polices, applicable sections of the California Code of Regulations Title 22 and pertinent F.A.A. Regulations. Nothing in this policy supersedes or negates compliance with federal regulations.

**A. Operations- Designated Orange County Air Rescue EMS Aircraft shall:**

1. Be classified and authorized by the OCEMS in order to provide prehospital patient transport within the jurisdiction of the local EMS agency.
2. Follow activation procedures per Policy #730.20 "Prehospital Air Ambulance and Air Rescue Service Activation Procedure".
3. Establish at least one base of operations within Orange County. All such locations shall comply with applicable zoning, building and occupational health and safety regulations.
  - a. Each base of operations shall be adequate to house the aircraft crew for the aircraft based at that location. Cooking facilities, rest rooms, showers, beds sufficient for all personnel on duty are required of all bases.
4. Meet all county ambulance ordinance licensure requirements.
5. EMS Aircraft provider shall notify OCEMS verbally and in writing any time the EMS Aircraft provider is not in compliance with any applicable federal and/or state laws, and/or OCEMS policies, indicating the reason(s), dates(s), and time(s) for non-compliance and corrective actions that are being taken.
6. Pass an annual OCEMS inspection for all EMS aircraft operating in Orange County.

**B. Personnel: The medical flight crew of an EMS aircraft shall:**

1. Have training in aeromedical transportation as specified and approved by the authorizing EMS agency including but not limited to:
  - (a) General patient care in-flight.
  - (b) Changes in barometric pressure, and pressure related maladies.



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- (c) Changes in partial pressure of oxygen.
      - (d) Other environmental factors affecting patient care.
      - (e) Aircraft operational systems.
      - (f) Aircraft emergencies and safety.
      - (g) Care of patients who require special consideration in the airborne environment.
      - (h) EMS system and communications procedures.
      - (i) The prehospital care system (s) within which they operate including local medical and procedural protocols.
      - (j) Use of onboard medical equipment.
    2. Participate in continuing education requirements as required by their licensure, certification and employment.
    3. Adhere to minimum staffing for Air Rescue Service:
      - a. Staffing for each BLS Air Rescue Service will be no less than:
        - One EMT who is licensed in California and accredited as a Air Rescue EMT to work in Orange County.  
  
Alternative Staffing for BLS Air Rescue Service:
          - One AEMT who is licensed in California and accredited as a Air Rescue AEMT to work in Orange County;  
**OR**
          - One Paramedic who is licensed in California and accredited as a Air Rescue Paramedic to work in Orange County.
      - b. Staffing for each ALS Air Rescue Service will be no less than:
        - One Paramedic who is licensed in California and accredited as a Air Rescue Paramedic to work in Orange County.  
  
Alternative Staffing for ALS Air Rescue Service:
          - One AEMT who is licensed in California and accredited as a Air Rescue AEMT to work in Orange County.
  4. Scope of Practice
    - a. The EMT, AEMT, and Paramedic will operate under policies, procedures and protocols as established by OCEMS in accordance with State Regulations and Guidelines.
  5. EMS aircraft that do not have a medical flight crew shall not transport patients.
- C. Equipment /Supplies/Aircraft - Specifications, Space and Equipment:  
All Air Rescue EMS aircraft shall be configured so that:
1. There is sufficient space in the patient compartment to accommodate one (1) patient on a stretcher and one (1) medical flight crew.
  2. There is sufficient space for medical personnel to have adequate access to the patient in order to carry out necessary procedures including CPR on the ground and in the air.
  3. There is sufficient space for medical equipment and supplies required by State regulations or authorizing EMS agency policy/minimum equipment standards as outlined in OCEMS Policy #325.05.



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- a. Each EMS aircraft shall have adequate safety belts and tie-downs for all personnel, patient(s), stretcher(s) and equipment to prevent inadvertent movement.
  - b. Each EMS aircraft shall have on-board equipment and supplies commensurate with the scope of practice of the medical flight crew as specified by the classifying EMS agency. This requirement may be fulfilled through the utilization of appropriate kits (cases/packs) which can be carried on a given flight to meet the needs of a specific type of patient and/or additional medical personnel not usually staffing the aircraft.
4. EMS Aircraft Providers will operate on Aircraft capable of hot loading patients.
  5. EMS Aircraft Providers will implement the use of Night Vision Goggle (NVG) or Night Vision Imaging systems for night operations.
- D. Communications
1. In accordance with authorizing EMS agency policies, all EMS aircraft shall have the capability of communicating with:
    - a. Designated dispatch center(s).
    - b. EMS ground units at the scene of an emergency.
    - c. Designated base hospitals.
    - d. Receiving hospitals.
    - e. Other appropriate facilities or agencies.
  2. All EMS aircraft shall utilize appropriate radio frequencies for dispatch, routing and coordination of flights. This excludes use of Med 1-8 and HEAR (155.340 MHz and 155.280 MHz) for these purposes.
  3. Radio equipment may be inspected to assure compliance with the requirements of the authorizing EMS agency
  4. Provide for direct radio communication capabilities as designated by Orange County Communications (OCC) including but not limited to:
    - biomedical frequencies,
    - fire coordination frequencies,
    - Hospital Emergency Administrative Radio (HEAR) frequency.
  5. Provide the current status on air rescue availability whenever requested by a public safety dispatch agency or coordinating agency.
- E. Data Collection:  
EMS Aircraft Providers will:
1. Comply with OCEMS requirements for uniform electronic record keeping, data collection and electronic submission of all Orange County EMS data system elements to OCEMS and OC-MEDS.
  2. Adhere to minimum Orange County Medical Data System (OC-MEDS) Standards as defined in OCEMS Policy 300.10 "OC-MEDS Documentation Standards"
  3. EMS Aircraft Providers will comply with OCEMS requirements for uniformed electronic record keeping, data collection and electronic submission of all Orange County EMS data system elements to OCEMS and OC-MEDS.
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- F. Participate in special studies as defined by the OCEMS.
  
- G. Provide current business-related information to Orange County public safety dispatch agency or the coordinating agency (e.g., address, telephone number; location, type and number of aircraft available).

**Approved:**

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OCEMS Medical Director

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OCEMS Administrator

Original Date: 4/1/2015  
Reviewed Date(s): 10/3/2022  
Revised Date(s): 10/27/2022  
Effective Date: 4/1/2023