

Protocol for Use of Helicopter Ambulance in the Field

Policy

An MDPH licensed and Wayne County Medical Control Authority approved helicopter ambulance may be utilized for patients in critical condition, when air transport will be advantageous because of the distance between the patient and the hospital, or where access to the patient is excessively delayed. Helicopter ambulance should be notified as soon as this service is determined to be necessary by on-scene EMS personnel, in coordination with Medical Control.

Ground transport will not be delayed if the air ambulance is not available or has not arrived and the patient is ready for transport to the nearest appropriate hospital, in accordance with the existing transport protocol. After consultation with Medical Control, on-scene personnel may consider directing the helicopter to continue on to the closest appropriate hospital, to avoid delay of hospital care.

If arrangements are made for the EMS unit to meet the helicopter at a hospital facility to transfer patient care and the EMS unit arrives before the helicopter the EMS unit will transport the patient directly to the emergency department. Communication between the EMS unit and emergency department should be established as outlined in this protocol and in section I of the HEMS only protocol.

Background Information

If unsure of the need, place the helicopter service on standby status to decrease response time if required.

In summoning of helicopter resources, the EMS Provider must weigh patient care needs, timeliness of response and delivery of the patient to the hospital by helicopter or ground ambulance.

Patients may still be transported by ground ambulance at the helicopter Medical Control Physician's discretion.

The patient will be transported to the appropriate medical facility.

The flight team will strive for ground time of less than 15 minutes. Pre-packaging of the patient will minimize ground time.

Approved emergency scene response helicopter services

1. Midwest Medflight
2. U of M Survival Flight

Transport Helicopter Availability, Stand-by, and Activation Procedure

EMS personnel may request availability, stand-by information, or activation of a helicopter service through their service's dispatch agency, in coordination with Medical Control.

After EMS personnel on scene request helicopter stand-by or activation they will then notify all appropriate personnel at the scene of this action.

The helicopter may be activated only by the highest appropriately licensed on-scene EMS personnel, or the designated EMS Medical Commander.

Once the helicopter is activated EMS personnel on-scene will contact the closest appropriate Medical Control hospital to the scene for further patient care direction.

Once put on stand-by or activated, the helicopter may be cancelled only by the highest appropriate on-scene EMS personnel or the designated EMS Medical Commander in coordination with Medical Control.

Guideline for Utilization of Helicopter Transport

Activation of the helicopter is indicated for serious traumatic and burn injuries when the ground transport time to a hospital with full service trauma and/or burn capability is more than 20 minutes (extraction/transport time together).

Post Activation Responsibilities

When a request for helicopter has been made, EMS personnel will continue to follow patient care guidelines and protocols established by the Wayne County Medical Control Authority.

Contact with the closest, appropriate medical control hospital to the scene must be made as soon as appropriate, for further on scene direction.

The contacted medical control hospital will be responsible for the paper work and drug replacement for the EMS crew on the scene.

Patient/Scene Preparation

Landing zone

1. Locate a level, 100 x 100 area clear of obstacles (i.e., wires, trees)
2. Mark landing zone with a marker at each corner and one upwind.
3. Public Safety vehicles should leave on flashers to assist in identifying site from the air.
4. Identify obstacles close to the landing zone and communicate all pertinent information about the landing zone to the flight crew.
5. Landing zone personnel will communicate by radio with the flight crew.

Safety

1. Under no circumstances should the helicopter be approached unless signaled to do so by the pilot or flight crew.
2. Always approach the helicopter from the front. Under no circumstances should the helicopter be approached from the rear due to the extreme danger of the tail rotor.
3. Loading and unloading of the patient is done at the direction of the flight crew.
4. Crews should crouch down when in the vicinity of the main rotor blades.

Patient packaging

1. Essential procedures
 - (a) Secured airway
 - (b) Immobilization – avoid splints that overhang back-board
 - (c) Needle decompression of tension pneumothorax
2. Procedures dependent upon ETA of helicopter
 - (a) IV's established
 - (b) MAST applied per Protocol

Communications

Communications with helicopters from ground dispatch will be done by telephone using the following access numbers:

Midwest Medflight	1-800-922-3050
U of M Survival Flight	1-800-822-2233

Whenever possible, communications between helicopter and ground ambulances will be via the dispatch frequency of the ground ambulance. Alternately, such communication may be made through "HEMS Radio" on VHF 155:340, 155:400, or other frequencies compatible with the services radio system.

On-Scene Ground Crew Coordination Responsibility

The highest licensed on-scene EMS personnel or the designated on-scene Medical Commander will coordinate activities between the flight team and on-scene EMS personnel, including:

- Which patient(s) need flight team care
- Briefing of the flight team

Communication with helicopter dispatch should include information regarding:

- Location
- Identifying marks on vehicles
- Landing sites
- Number of patients and pertinent medical information to relay to flight crew
- coordination of frequency for flight crew to communicate with on-scene Medical Commander
- Ground dispatch will relay to EMS personnel on scene the availability and ETA of helicopter. This information must be included when reporting to Medical Control.

Medical Control

When the helicopter arrives on scene, Medical Control will revert to the physician on the helicopter or the physician at the receiving hospital who is in radio contact with the helicopter.

On-scene ground crew (highest licensed EMS personnel or designated Medical Commander) will utilize the closest appropriate hospital to the scene for medical direction as indicated until the helicopter arrives on scene and Medical Control is turned over to the physician responsible for the helicopter response.

Quality Review Procedures

WITHIN 72 HOURS OF THE INCIDENT, BOTH THE EMS SERVICE RESPONSIBLE FOR HELICOPTER ACTIVATION AND THE HELICOPTER SERVICE WILL FORWARD RUN REPORTS TO HEMS FOR REVIEW BY THE WAYNE COUNTY MEDICAL CONTROL ADVISORY BOARD'S QUALITY ASSURANCE COMMITTEE. RUN REPORTS OF STAND-BY'S AND CANCELLATIONS MUST ALSO BE SUBMITTED.

