

**TITLE: EMS AIRCRAFT CLASSIFICATION AND AUTHORIZATION** EMS Policy No. **4441**

**PURPOSE:** The purpose of this policy is to establish requirements and procedures for classifying EMS aircraft and authorizing EMS aircraft providers to operate in San Joaquin County.

**AUTHORITY:** Health and Safety Code, Division 2.5, Section 1797.220; 1798 et seq;  
San Joaquin County Ordinance #4231

**DEFINITIONS**

- A. "Advanced Life Support" or "ALS" means any definitive prehospital emergency care role approved by the San Joaquin County EMS Agency, in accordance with state regulations, which includes all of the specialized services listed in H&SC § 1797.52.
- B. "Advanced Life Support Rescue Aircraft" or "ALS Rescue Aircraft" means a rescue aircraft whose medical flight crew has at a minimum one attendant certified or licensed in advanced life support.
- C. "Air Ambulance" means any aircraft specially constructed, modified or equipped and used for the primary purposes of responding to emergency calls and transporting critically ill or injured patients whose medical flight crew has at a minimum two (2) attendants certified or licensed in advanced life support.
- D. "Air Ambulance Service" means an air transportation service which utilizes air ambulances.
- E. "Air Rescue Service" means an air service used for emergencies including search and rescue.
- F. "Air Ambulance Provider" and/or "Air Rescue Service Provider" means the individual, group, or entity that owns and/or operates an air ambulance or air rescue service.
- G. "Authorizing EMS Agency" means the local EMS agency which approves utilization of specific EMS aircraft within its jurisdiction.
- H. "Auxiliary Rescue Aircraft" means a rescue aircraft which does not have a medical flight crew or whose medical flight crew does not meet the minimum requirements for BLS rescue aircraft.
- I. "Basic Life Support" means those procedures and skills contained in the EMT-I scope of practice as specified in Title 22, California Code of Regulation Section 100063.
- J. "Basic Life Support Rescue Aircraft" or "BLS Rescue Aircraft" means a rescue aircraft whose medical flight crew has at a minimum one attendant certified as an EMT-I with at least eight (8) hours of hospital clinical training and ten (10) hours of field clinical experience in the aeromedical transport of patients.
- K. "Classifying EMS Agency" or "Classifying Agency" means the local EMS agency which categorizes EMS aircraft as an air ambulance, ALS rescue aircraft, BLS rescue aircraft, or auxiliary rescue aircraft. The classifying local EMS agency shall be the local EMS agency in the jurisdiction of origin except for aircraft operated by the California Highway Patrol which shall be classified by the EMS Authority.

---

Effective: January 1, 2010  
Supersedes:

Page 1 of 6

Approved: Signature on File  
Medical Director

Signature on File  
EMS Administrator

- L. "Designated Dispatch Center" means an organization which has been designated by the local EMS agency for the purpose of coordinating air ambulance or rescue aircraft response to the scene of a medical emergency within the jurisdiction of a local EMS agency. The designated dispatch center for coordinating EMS Aircraft in San Joaquin County is AMR-LIFECOM.
- M. "Emergency Medical Services Aircraft" or "EMS Aircraft" means any aircraft utilized for the purpose of pre-hospital emergency patient response and transport. EMS aircraft includes air ambulances and all categories of rescue aircraft.
- N. "Jurisdiction of Origin" means the local EMS agency jurisdiction within which the authorized air ambulance service or rescue aircraft is operationally based.
- O. "Medical Flight Crew" means the individual(s), excluding the pilot, specifically assigned to care for the patient during aircraft transport.
- P. "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.

**POLICY:**

- I. The San Joaquin County EMS Agency is the sole agency responsible for classifying EMS aircraft operationally based in San Joaquin County with the exception of EMS aircraft operated by the California Highway Patrol which are classified by the EMS Authority.
- II. The San Joaquin County EMS Agency is the sole agency responsible for approving the utilization of specific EMS aircraft, providers within San Joaquin County.
- III. No person or organization shall provide or hold themselves out as providing EMS Aircraft Service in San Joaquin County unless that person or organization has been authorized by the San Joaquin County EMS Agency to provide such services.
- IV. No aircraft may be used as an EMS aircraft until that aircraft's type has been classified by a classifying agency.
- V. EMS Aircraft service providers including 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 shall adhere to all federal, state, and local statutes, ordinances, policies, and procedures related to EMS aircraft operations, including qualifications of flight crews and aircraft maintenance.

---

Effective: January 1, 2010

Page 2 of 6

Supersedes:

Approved: Signature on File  
Medical Director

Signature on File  
EMS Administrator

VI. All Air Ambulance and Air Rescue Service Providers, except Auxiliary Rescue Aircraft Providers, shall employ a provider medical director who is a physician licensed in the State of California whose education, experience, licensure and administrative and operational duties conform to the Guidelines for Medical Directors of Air Transport Programs as defined in the position paper of the National Association of EMS Physicians; Prehospital Emergency Care October/December 2002 Volume 6/Number 4.

VII. Classification and Authorization Requirements:

A. Classification of EMS Aircraft

1. All EMS Aircraft operating in San Joaquin County shall be classified by the State of California EMS Authority, the San Joaquin County EMS Agency or by the local EMS agency in whose jurisdiction the aircraft are based.
2. EMS aircraft classifications are limited to:
  - a) Air Ambulance
  - b) ALS Rescue Aircraft
  - c) BLS Rescue Aircraft
  - d) Auxiliary Rescue Aircraft
3. The San Joaquin County EMS Agency shall classify aircraft within its jurisdiction in accordance with the requirements of Title 22,CCR, Chapter 8 et seq.

B. Authorization of Air Ambulance and Air Rescue Service Providers

1. The San Joaquin County EMS Agency shall enter into written agreements and integrate into the EMS system those EMS Aircraft Service Providers that request to be part of the San Joaquin County EMS System and who meet the requirements for authorization, as specified in this policy and applicable federal, state, and local statutes, ordinances, policies, and procedures.
2. In order to remain authorized, EMS aircraft service providers shall comply with the agreement authorizing service and the permit to operate in San Joaquin County issued pursuant to San Joaquin County Ordinance #4231.
3. The San Joaquin County EMS Agency may suspend, revoke or deny the renewal of EMS aircraft service provider authorization for failure to adhere to applicable federal, state, and local statutes, ordinances, policies, and procedures or failure to adhere to the requirements of their authorization agreement or permit.
4. Air Ambulance Providers, ALS Rescue Aircraft Providers, and BLS Air Rescue Providers must possess current accreditation from the Commission on Accreditation of Medical Transport Systems (CAMTS) to be eligible for and maintain authorization.

---

Effective: January 1, 2010  
Supersedes:

Page 3 of 6

Approved: Signature on File  
Medical Director

Signature on File  
EMS Administrator

5. Temporary authorization of Air Ambulance providers may be granted on a call-by-call basis under the following conditions:
  - a) No San Joaquin County authorized air ambulance provider is available to respond; and
  - b) The request for immediate response is made by LIFECOM, in accordance EMS policy, to the next closest and available air ambulance provider authorized by another local EMS agency but who have not been integrated into the day-to-day operations of the San Joaquin County EMS System.

C. Medical Flight Crew: The minimum staffing levels for medical flight crews are:

1. Air Ambulance must be comprised of two crew members; of which one must be a licensed paramedic in the State of California in one of the following configurations:
  - a) Two (2) attendants licensed as paramedics in the State of California and accredited by the San Joaquin County EMS Agency; or
  - b) One (1) attendant licensed as a paramedic in the State of California and accredited by the San Joaquin County EMS agency; and one (1) registered nurse licensed in the State of California who is:
    - i. Authorized by the San Joaquin County EMS Agency; and
    - ii. Trained and authorized to function as a flight nurse by the air ambulance provider's medical director, and
    - iii. Obtain certification as a certified flight registered nurse (CFRN) by the Board of Certification for Emergency Nursing within one year of employment.
2. ALS Rescue Aircraft:
  - a) One (1) attendant licensed as paramedic in the State of California and accredited by San Joaquin County EMS Agency.
3. BLS Rescue Aircraft:
  - a) One (1) attendant certified as an EMT-I with at least eight (8) hours of hospital clinical training and ten (10) hours of field clinical experience in the aeromedical transport of patients.
4. Auxiliary Rescue Aircraft:
  - a) No medical flight crew or a flight crew which does not meet the requirements for BLS rescue aircraft.
5. All Air Ambulance and Air Rescue Service Providers shall ensure that all medical flight crews are provided with training in aeromedical transportation including:
  - a. General patient care in-flight.
  - b. Changes in barometric pressure and pressure related maladies.
  - c. Changes in partial pressure oxygen.
  - d. Other environmental factors affecting patient care.

---

Effective: January 1, 2010  
Supersedes:

Page 4 of 6

Approved: Signature on File  
Medical Director

Signature on File  
EMS Administrator

- e. Aircraft operational systems.
  - f. Aircraft emergencies and safety.
  - g. Care of patients who require special considerations in the airborne environment.
  - h. EMS system and communications.
  - i. The San Joaquin County EMS Agency policies and procedures.
  - j. Use of onboard medical equipment.
- D. EMS Aircraft providers shall maintain a current roster of medical flight crews on file with the San Joaquin County EMS Agency.
- E. Air Ambulance and ALS Air Rescue providers must submit proof of having an agreement with a base hospital designated by the classifying EMS agency for on-line medical control. Alternate methods for on-line medical control may be considered at the discretion of the medical director of the San Joaquin County EMS Agency.
- F. Flight nurses may perform skills and administer medications, which are beyond the classifying agency's paramedic scope of practice, when those additional skills and medications have been developed by the provider's medical director and approved by the medical director of the San Joaquin County EMS Agency.
- G. EMS Aircraft providers shall submit for approval patient care and/or clinical protocols.
- H. Space And Equipment:
- 1. All Rescue Aircraft shall be configured to allow sufficient space in the patient compartment to accommodate one (1) patient on a stretcher and one (1) patient attendant.
  - 2. Air ambulances shall be configured to allow sufficient space in the patient compartment to accommodate one (1) patient on a stretcher and two (2) patient attendants.
  - 3. All EMS Aircraft shall configured or equipped to meet the following specifications:
    - a. Ensure sufficient space for medical personnel to have adequate access to the patient in order to carry out necessary procedures including cardiopulmonary resuscitation on the ground and in the air.
    - b. Ensure sufficient space for medical equipment and supplies required by the authorizing EMS agency.
    - c. Each EMS aircraft shall have adequate safety belts and tie-downs for all personnel, patient(s), stretcher(s), and equipment to prevent inadvertent movement.
    - d. 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. The requirement may be fulfilled through the use of appropriate kits (cases/packs) which can be carried on a given flight to meet the needs of the patient and/or

---

Effective: January 1, 2010  
Supersedes:

Page 5 of 6

Approved: Signature on File  
Medical Director

Signature on File  
EMS Administrator

- additional medical personnel not usually staffing the aircraft. EMS Aircraft Providers shall submit to the EMS Agency for approval a complete medical equipment and medication inventory for each aircraft.
- e. All EMS Aircraft shall have the capability of communicating with the following agencies on frequencies specified by those agencies:
- 1) LIFECOM (EMS Dispatch)
  - 2) San Joaquin County Ambulance (field communications)
  - 3) San Joaquin County Fire Departments (field communications)
  - 4) San Joaquin General Hospital (base hospital and disaster control facility communications)
- H. EMS Aircraft Providers shall have a mechanism for returning non-expendable medical equipment (i.e. back boards and traction splints) transported with the patient back to their proper owner.
- I. Medical Records, Quality Assurance, Program Evaluation:
1. EMS Aircraft Service Providers shall provide patient care and flight data to the San Joaquin County EMS Agency in a format specified by the agency. Records and data shall be submitted for each scene and inter-facility transfer mission requested by or flown in San Joaquin County.
  2. Air Ambulance Providers shall provide to the San Joaquin County EMS Agency, in a format specified by the agency, hospital emergency department outcome data and hospital discharge data for all patients transported from San Joaquin County.
  3. Upon request EMS Aircraft shall provide information and records to the San Joaquin County EMS Agency for quality assurance and investigative purposes. These records may include but are not limited to dispatch data, dispatch recordings, medical records, medical and operational policies, and records demonstrating personnel training and qualifications.
  4. EMS Aircraft Providers shall participate in the San Joaquin County EMS Agency's Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) program including but not limited to attendance at CQI meetings in San Joaquin County.
- J. Insurance Requirements:
1. EMS Aircraft Service Providers authorized to provide service in the San Joaquin County EMS system shall provide, at its own expense and maintain at all times, insurance with insurance companies licensed in the State of California and shall provide evidence of such insurance to the San Joaquin County EMS Agency.
  2. The types and amount of coverage for such insurance is determined by the San Joaquin County Board of Supervisors.