

STANDARD OPERATING GUIDELINE

AIR BRANCH

I. DEFINITIONS

- A. THE INCIDENT COMMAND SYSTEM (ICS) ICS shall mean a standardized on-scene emergency management concept specifically known as the National Incident Management System - Incident Command System (NIMS - ICS), designed to allow its user(s) to adopt an integrated organizational structure equal to the complexity and demands of single or multiple incidents, without being hindered by jurisdictional boundaries.
- B. AIR AMBULANCE shall be a rotary-wing aircraft configured, staffed, and equipped to respond, care for, and transport patients. A rotary-wing aircraft must be approved/licensed by a State to do so.
- C. MULTI AIR AMBULANCE INCIDENT RESPONSE shall be defined as the deployment of more than one air ambulance for emergency medical treatment and treatment at a single incident.
- D. AIR BRANCH DIRECTOR Responsibilities will include the overall coordination of all air operations and communications with the Operations Section Chief and or the Incident Commander.
- E. AIR AMBULANCE UNIT LEADER - responsibilities will include the coordination of inbound aircraft for issues related to landing zone challenges and timing for other inbound aircraft landing at the landing zone.
- F. LANDING ZONE / HELISPOT – location where air ambulances land, load and take off at the scene or designated location for patient transport.
- G. HELIBASE – location where air ambulances receive maintenance, fuel and other services when committed to a widespread multi operational period incident.

II. PURPOSE

- A. To implement and manage the air operations branch utilizing a system organized within the guidelines of the ICS / NIMS structure for a multiple air ambulance aircraft incident response.
- B. To establish a communications plan with air ambulance providers when multiple aircraft are assigned to an incident.
- C. To create a safe landing zone that meets minimum standards related to landing zone diameter and obstructions encountered in multiple aircraft incident response.

III. ESTABLISHMENT AND USE OF THE AIR OPERATIONS BRANCH (Ground)

- A. The Air Operations (airops) Branch should be implemented to assist the Incident Commander and his/her staff with the management and implementation of air ambulances. The proper utilization and coordination of these units when requested is essential to the desired outcome of quick and efficient patient care when time is of the essence.

- B. The Incident Commander will provide one member of assigned staff to the position of Air Branch Director. This position will have overall responsibility of creating a landing zone and rapidly remove patients from the scene. In addition, the Air Branch Director will be responsible for the utilization of a helibase / forward operating base when necessary to refuel said aircraft or stage aircraft until the scene is safe for aircraft to land at the landing zone. The Air Branch Director will also be responsible for the development the Air Branch communications plan.

IV. RESPONSIBILITIES FOR INCOMING AIRCRAFT

- A. Incoming aircraft will be responsible to establish communication with the incident commander (IC) or air branch director (formerly called the landing zone contact).
- B. The first aircraft will make contact with the IC or air branch director and accept the responsibility of relaying Landing Zone info to the next incoming aircraft.
- C. Each incoming aircraft will then repeat the process of making contact with the next incoming aircraft to relay Landing Zone info.
- D. In the event that the incoming aircraft is unable to make contact with the next arriving aircraft, communications will shift back to incoming aircraft and IC/Air Branch Director (step A).

V. COMMUNICATIONS

- A. When requesting units in a multiple aircraft incident response the dispatch agency will contact the provider / providers in their area and determine the provider with the closest unit. Once determined that provider will dispatch their units and contact the other requested aircraft and coordinate the Air Ambulance requests with the local dispatch agency.
- B. The organizations operating with the (agency name here) shall operate primarily on the Missouri Fire Mutual Aid Frequency 154.280.
- C. When calling for more than one aircraft primary contact with incoming aircraft will occur on Fire Mutual Aid (154.280) through the established Air Branch Director or his/her designee.
- D. Additional frequencies (listed below) can be utilized based on pre-arranged agreements by the Incoming Air Ambulances as well as the ground units:

- LIST LOCAL FREQUENCIES HERE

VI. TRAINING REQUIREMENTS

- A. It is recommended that all personnel working in the position of Section Chief or greater be trained to meet the ICS National Training Curriculum provided by FEMA or through an approved provider.
- B. It is recommended that annually a tabletop exercise that achieves the basic training objectives listed in annex (insert appropriate section here) of this document occurs with all staff members that could be involved in a multi air ambulance incident response.

Air Operations Branch Director Position Checklist / Guideline

The following checklist should be considered as the minimum requirements for this position. Note that some of the tasks are one-time actions; others are ongoing or repetitive for the duration of the incident.

Task

1. Obtain briefing from Operations Section Chief or Incident Commander.
2. Determine need for subordinate staff and flight crews and order through the Operations Section Chief or Incident Commander.
3. Determine aircraft and support equipment needs and arrange, as necessary.
4. Brief subordinate staff:
 - Incident and work objectives, schedules, mission requirements, priorities, time schedules, and process for briefings and debriefings.
 - Work-site locations, status of aircraft, and crews and equipment assigned or ordered.
5. Assign personnel to utilize skills and qualifications, and make adjustments, as needed.
6. Establish line of authority and procedures for decision making.
7. Debrief personnel and pilots and make assignment and staffing adjustments, as necessary:
 - Identify safety issues and hazards, mitigate them and communicate them to inbound aircraft.
 - Determine aircraft status.
 - Identify patient weights, injury severity.
 - Initiate system to monitor flight/duty hour limitations and ensure they are not exceeded.
8. Collect and process incident reports, gather daily fiscal information for other sections to include:
 - Number of aircraft placed on standby
 - Number of aircraft landed
 - Number of aircraft cancelled
 - Number of aircraft on the scene
9. Evaluate performance of subordinate personnel and make adjustments, as necessary.
10. Inspect and visit areas of operation to insure compliance with agency rules, regulations, and procedures.
11. Ensure necessary organization positions are filled.
12. Provide for the safety and welfare of assigned personnel during the entire period of supervision:
 - Recognize potentially hazardous situations.
 - Inform subordinates and inbound aircraft of hazards.
 - Control positions and function of resources.
 - Ensure that special precautions are taken when extraordinary hazards exist.

Maintain work/rest guidelines.

13. Resolve airspace conflicts between incident and non-incident aircraft through FAA.
14. Gather intelligence and information for planning meeting (development of IAP):
Obtain status and availability of aircraft and personnel for the next and future operational periods.
15. Participate in the planning and strategy meeting:
Advise Operations Section Chief of capabilities and/or limitations to support the IAP.
Determine mission priority.
Identify start/stop times for Aviation Operations Branch.
Make assignments to carry out IAP.
Identify resources that are or will be excess in meeting the IAP.
Prepare Air Operations Summary (ICS Form 220) for the next operational period and give to planning staff.
16. Determine what information Aviation Operations Branch needs to furnish to the Logistics, Planning, and Finance/Administration Sections:
Identify needs for Aviation Operations Branch support from each Section.
Identify what information Aviation Operations Branch needs to provide to each Section and time frame for each item.
17. Coordinate with supporting dispatch office:
Ensure that a Temporary Flight Restriction has been initiated, if appropriate, and is in effect over the incident or operating bases.
Ensure that contact has been established with the military for special use airspace or military training routes in proximity to the incident.
Obtain current information on availability and status of aviation resources assigned or ordered for the incident.
Obtain information on aircraft external to the incident (media, VIPs, others).
Establish procedures for emergency reassignment of aircraft on the incident.
18. Determine need to close airports that are in or adjacent to the incident area of operations:
Contact supporting dispatch office and request closure through appropriate channels.
19. Prepare demobilization schedule of aircraft, personnel, and equipment and coordinate with Planning Section and supporting dispatch.
20. Document all activity on Unit Log (ICS Form 214).