

# Hiawatha Fire & Rescue

Policy 702  
Emergency Medical Services  
Patient Transportation by Helicopter  
02/11/04

## I. **Scope**

This policy regulates the transportation of patients by helicopter. It was promulgated to:

- A. Identify those situations that dictated using a helicopter to transport patients.
- B. Establish guidelines for the safe landing, loading, and liftoff of a helicopter used for emergency medical transport.

## II. **When to request a Helicopter**

- A. A helicopter shall be called to transport a patient whenever:
  1. Instructed to do so by Medical Control.
  2. A patient's condition exceeds the capabilities of a local medical facility. i.e. burn patients
  3. Terrain or other conditions prevent the access to the patient by any means other than air.
  4. A mass-casualty incident occurs and there are multiple critical patients, or the magnitude of the incident exceeds local capabilities.
- B. Additionally, call a helicopter to transport a patient whenever:
  1. Traffic congestion would significantly increase transport time to a medical facility to the detriment of the patient.
  2. Then time to extricate a critically injured patient suggests transportation by an alternate means.
  3. The incident scene is of such a remote ground location that the extended transportation time of a critical patient would necessitate a more rapid transport.

## III. **Who may request a helicopter**

- A. All requests to transport a patient by helicopter shall be channeled through Linn County Sheriff Dispatch.
- B. The following individuals are authorized to request a helicopter:
  1. An incident commander.
  2. The first-arriving officer or EMT prior to the establishment of command.
- C. A helicopter may also be placed on standby by the individuals listed in Item III B, above, and by a crew member of the first responding apparatus.

## IV. **General Procedures**

- A. Whenever conditions exist to warrant requesting a helicopter, the incident commander shall notify Linn County Dispatch to make the request.
- B. The helicopter should have the capability to communicate with ground units. Establish radio contact with the responding helicopter as soon as possible.
- C. Relay landing instructions and if possible any pertinent patient medical information.
- D. A helicopter may also be placed on stand-by if there is a potential need for transportation by air but information to warrant an immediate liftoff. Placing the helicopter on stand-by directs the flight crew to the helipad. This reduces the time it takes to be airborne.
  1. The incident commander should contact Linn County Dispatch and request that the helicopter be placed on stand-by.
  2. If the helicopter is subsequently needed, the incident commander may request the aircraft to respond. If the aircraft is not needed, the incident commander should contact Linn County Dispatch and cancel the stand-by.

## V. **Establishing a Landing Zone**

- A. The landing zone shall be as level as possible, open and away from trees and overhead wires, and free of other debris that may damage the aircraft.
- B. A clear zone of at least 100 feet in diameter shall be established and maintained.
- C. At night, use crossed headlights or flashlights to indicate where the helicopter should land.
- D. The final decision to land shall be the pilot's. The pilot may also designate an alternate landing site if he desires.

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## **VI. Safety Guidelines**

- A. Whenever the aircraft is landing or taking off establish a clear landing zone that is at least 100 feet in diameter. This area should be off limits to everyone.
- B. Personnel should not approach the aircraft until signaled to do so by the pilot or a member of the flight crew.
- C. Always approach the helicopter from the front, NEVER the rear. The tail rotor moves so fast that it may be invisible.
- D. Walk, do not run. Always remain in view of the pilot.
- E. Personnel should always wear eye protection near the aircraft. Avoid wearing hats or other articles of loose clothing.
- F. When approaching the helicopter, bend at the waist, and be aware that the main rotor blades can flex as much as four feet. If the aircraft is on an incline always approach from down hill.
- G. Do not smoke within 100 feet of the aircraft.

## **VII. Responsibilities**

- A. The pilot is always in command of his or her aircraft and is the final authority as to the flight. The pilot's decision shall be strictly followed and not questioned.
- B. All personnel shall be responsible for complying with the provisions of this standard and shall commit no act that compromises the safety of the patient, the aircraft and crew, or another member of the department.