



COUNTY OF VENTURA HEALTH CARE AGENCY		EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES POLICIES AND PROCEDURES	
Policy Title: Air Unit Program		Policy Number 1200	
APPROVED: Administration:	 Steven L. Carroll, Paramedic	Date: July 1, 2026	
APPROVED: Medical Director:	 Daniel Shepherd, MD	Date: July 1, 2026	
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- I. PURPOSE: This policy will establish minimum standards for the integration of Emergency Medical Services (EMS) aircraft and personnel into the local EMS prehospital patient transport system as a specialized resource for the transport and care of emergency medical patients.
- II. AUTHORITY: Health and Safety Code Section 1797.200 and California Code of Regulations Division 9, Chapter 7.
- III. POLICY: EMS aircraft must be authorized by Ventura County (VC) EMS in order to provide prehospital patient transport within Ventura County. Authorized air unit service providers will comply with this and other VCEMS Policies and Procedures relating to provision of air transport for emergency patients.
- IV. Definitions utilized for Prehospital EMS Aircraft: The following definitions will be used when referring to air units in the VCEMS system. These shall be applicable for all VCEMS policies and procedures pertaining to any prehospital aircraft program operating in the County of Ventura.
 - A. Advanced Life Support (ALS) means those procedures and skills contained in the Paramedic scope of practice as listed in VCEMS Policy 310.
 - B. Basic Life Support (BLS) means those procedures and skills contained in the EMT scope of practice as listed in VCEMS Policy 300.
 - C. Medical Flight Crew means the individual(s), excluding the pilot, specifically assigned to care for the patient during aircraft transport.
 - D. Emergency Medical Services 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.
 - E. 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.
 - F. Rescue Aircraft means an aircraft whose usual function is not prehospital emergency patient transport but which may be utilized, in compliance with VC 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.

1. Advanced Life Support Rescue Aircraft means a rescue aircraft whose medical flight crew has at a minimum one attendant who is an authorized Independent Practice Paramedic, a Registered Nurse, Advanced Practice Provider or Physician who has also obtained training and experience in flight rescue operations.
2. Basic Life Support Rescue Aircraft means a rescue aircraft whose medical flight crew has at a minimum one attendant certified as an EMT who is trained and experienced in flight rescue operations.
3. 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 outlined for ALS or BLS rescue aircraft. Examples of this may include United States Coast Guard, California Air National Guard, United States Navy, etc.

G. Air Ambulance Service means an air transportation service which utilizes air ambulances.

H. Air Rescue Service means an air service used for emergencies, including search and rescue.

I. Air Ambulance or Air Rescue Service Provider means the individual or group that owns and/or operates an air ambulance or air rescue service.

J. Classifying EMS Agency means the agency which categorizes the EMS aircraft into the types identified above. For the County of Ventura, the classifying agency shall be VCEMS. For aircraft operated by the California Highway Patrol, the California Department of Forestry or the California National Guard, the Classifying Agency shall be the California EMS Authority. It should be noted that military aircraft outside of the California Air National Guard are not under the purview of VCEMS or the California EMS Authority.

K. Designated Dispatch Center means an agency which has been designated by VCEMS for the purpose of coordinating air ambulance or rescue aircraft response to the scene of a medical emergency within Ventura County.

V. PROCEDURE:

A. VC EMS Policies and Procedures for medical control shall apply to air unit service providers and medical flight crews.

B. The VC EMS Policies and Procedures for record keeping, quality assurance, and continuous quality improvement shall apply to EMS aircraft operations in Ventura County.

C. Any air unit program operating authorized by VCEMS and operating in the County of Ventura shall be subject to the requirements outlined in VCEMS policies and procedures manual.

D. VCEMS Responsibilities:

1. Classify EMS aircraft.
 - a. EMS aircraft classifications shall be limited to the following categories:
 - 1) Air Ambulance.
 - 2) Rescue Aircraft.
 - a) Advanced Life Support Rescue Aircraft.
 - b) Basic Life Support Rescue Aircraft.
 - 3) Auxiliary Rescue Aircraft
 - b. EMS aircraft classification shall be reviewed at 2-year intervals.
Reclassification shall occur if there is a transfer of ownership or a change in the aircraft's category.
2. Maintain an inventory of the number and type of authorized EMS aircraft, the patient capacity of authorized EMS aircraft, the level of patient care provided by EMS aircraft personnel, and receiving facilities with landing sites approved by the State Department of Transportation, Aeronautics Division.
3. Establish policies and procedures to assure compliance with Federal, State and local statutes.
4. Develop written agreements with air unit service providers specifying conditions to routinely serve the County.
- E. No person or organization shall provide or hold themselves out as providing prehospital Air Ambulance or Air Rescue services unless that person or organization has aircraft which have been classified by VCEMS or in the case of the California Highway Patrol, California Department of Forestry, and California National Guard, the California EMS Authority.
- F. A request from a designated dispatch center shall be deemed as authorization of aircraft operated by the California Highway Patrol, Department of Forestry, National Guard or the Federal Government.
- G. Responsibilities of Ventura County Aviation Unit
 1. Respond to all response requests per VCEMS policy and procedures.
 2. Respond to all scenes when ground personnel determine the need for air transport that meets VCEMS policy and procedures.
- H. Prehospital ground personnel may be required to maintain patient care responsibility and fly-in with the patient in situations where patient care warrants and the flight crew is not medically qualified to assume responsibility for care.
- I. If air rescue/transport services are needed and the Ventura County Aviation Unit is not available, a mutual aid request from a neighboring jurisdiction may be required.

- J. Ventura County Aviation Unit may be considered as a last resort option for emergency interfacility transport only when other air ambulance or ground ambulance resources are unavailable, and only in life-or-death situations. All situations where this option is utilized will require EMS Agency Duty Officer Notification
- K. Any air transport service operating in the County of Ventura shall enter into a written agreement with VCEMS prior to integrating into the formal EMS system.