EMS Information Bulletin- #057

DATE: June 23, 2008

SUBJECT: Air Ambulance Guidelines

TO: All EMS Organizations & Personnel
All 9-1-1 Centers
All Flight Services

FROM: Bureau of Emergency Medical Services
Pa Department of Health
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Given the variables and complexities of EMS and Air Ambulance operations, it has become necessary to provide tools to aid in the decision making processes to help determine the most appropriate mode of transportation for ill and injured patients.

Attached are two guidelines developed by the Air Ambulance Task Force regarding notification that a service has turned down a flight due to concerns about the weather and a guideline for reporting Estimated Time of Arrival for prehospital flights.

Please contact Bob Cooney RCooney@state.pa.us telephone (717) 787-8740 with any questions.

Estimated Time of Arrival (ETA) Guideline

Air Ambulance Communications Centers or Routing Centers (communications facilities that coordinate requests for EMS resources) will include an inherent Estimated Time of Enroute (ETE), to all prehospital flight requests, when providing an Air Ambulance Estimated Time of Arrival (ETA). The ETA will be provided to the requesting organization once the Air Ambulance Service accepts a prehospital flight request.

Air Ambulance Services, once air borne, will provide the requesting Public Safety Answering Point (PSAP) with an updated Estimated Time of Arrival (ETA). This information should then be relayed to the requesting ground EMS units who may use the information to determine the ultimate mode of patient transportation.

Air Ambulance overall ETAs are defined as the combined times of the ETE (pre-flight) and flight time that occurs until the aircraft is overhead at the scene of the identified landing zone (LZ).

Air Ambulance Services shall communicate with the PSAP any unexpected delays, diversions or other situations which will alter the initial ETA. Changes in an Air Ambulance ETA shall be communicated by the PSAP to ground EMS units who may use the information to determine the ultimate mode of patient transportation

Air Ambulances agencies should incorporate Quality Assurance measurement programs into their respective flight programs which strive for a 90% target goal of arriving on scene within Five (5) minutes of the initial reported Estimated Time of Arrival.

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Declination of Flight Due to Weather Guideline

Declination due to inclement weather: In cases in which a Public Safety Answer Point (PSAP) contacts an Air Ambulance Communications Center or a Routing Center (a communications facility that coordinates requests for EMS resources), the Routing Center /Air Ambulance Communications Center will identify the Air Ambulance resource based upon the base of operation and availability. Should the requested Air Ambulance Service decline a request due to inclement weather the Routing Center / PSAP shall:

- Document the declination of flight and maintain agency specific records.
  Proceed to the next due Air Ambulance resource based upon closest base of operation. Advise the second due resource that the first due resource declined the request due to inclement weather conditions.

- In cases in which Air Ambulance agencies have declined the same flight due to weather conditions, the Routing Center / PSAP will follow state approved regional procedures to determine the depth of resource polling, at which point the PSAP / Routing Center will advise the ground EMS unit of the situation. Ground transport should use this information to determine the most appropriate method of transport to a facility using State Approved Regional Trauma Triage Protocols.

- Routing Centers shall maintain and make available to Regional EMS Councils, the Department of Health and participating Air Ambulance Services, agency specific records.

- In cases of Inter-Facility patient transfers, it is strongly recommended that the transfer center, hospitals or other agencies coordinating Air Ambulance transportation logistics, relay flight declinations due to weather to the respective flight programs as they work to secure air transportation.