

LIFEFLIGHT

Several public and private helicopter services are available to the Kemah Fire Department for various purposes, including emergency medical transportation, rescue from inaccessible locations, aerial reconnaissance of emergency scenes and emergency transportation of manpower and/or equipment.

The agencies involved in these services and available for emergencies are:

LifeFlight
Coast Guard

Each agency's operating procedures and equipment limitations present different constraints on their use.

Helicopters may be requested through dispatch for a variety of situations. The unit requesting helicopter support should indicate either a particular 'Unit requested or a particular type of mission, and give any details of the situation to dispatch. The most suitable unit for a particular mission will depend on availability and the details of the situation. Establish a radio frequency for communications, most of the time this will be fire mutual aid.

EMERGENCY MEDICAL TRANSPORTATION

Hospital helicopters are particularly suited to specialized patient transportation and should be utilized for these missions when available. Helicopters belonging to other agencies may be suitable for transportation, but do not have medical equipment or treatment-space.

Helicopter transportation may be indicated for patients within city areas when distance or delay factors effect ground ambulance transportation, when sufficient ambulances are unavailable or when patients are in locations inaccessible to ground units.

While hospital helicopters are capable of carrying two litter patients, only one critical patient can be treated with adequate space. **If necessary use additional helicopters for multiple patient incidents.**

Helicopter transportation should be considered for:

- ✘ Priority 1 or 2 patients.
- ✘ Trauma patients requiring urgent surgery.
- ✘ Patients requiring specialized treatment (*OB, pediatric, burns, neuro*).

The request for a helicopter should include the number and condition of patients, the need for specialized care, the destination hospital and the location of the landing area.

RESCUE

Helicopters are particularly suited to physical rescue of persons stranded in inaccessible locations, whether injured or not. Depending on the location of the victim, a helicopter may be useful in removing the victim or placing rescue personnel in a position to reach the victim.

Since helicopters with hoists are not available, the helicopter must be able to land or hover to complete a rescue. Hospital helicopters are not suitable for most forms of physical rescue, but may be useful in transporting personnel and equipment to a location close to a patient.

Small helicopters are generally more maneuverable and able to work in close quarters, but have limited lifting capacity and limited patient carrying space. The pilot is the best judge of the ability to perform a rescue. When requesting a helicopter for a rescue-mission, a description of the victim's location and condition should be given.

AERIAL RECONNAISSANCE

Aerial observation may be desirable to assist Command in complex situations. This has proven extremely effective in brush fire fighting and complex structural fires involving difficult access. Helicopters may be requested to place a Fire Department observer overhead with communications to Command or to actually Command from above.

A television station or Police helicopter will often be available in the vicinity of a major incident. Command should try to establish direct communication with the helicopter to arrange a pick-up location.

TRANSPORTATION OF MANPOWER AND/OR EQUIPMENT

Helicopter transportation may be requested for transportation of manpower and/or equipment urgently needed at the scene of an emergency, particularly when distance is a factor. The request for assistance should include the number of personnel and the size and weight of equipment that needs to be transported.

Helicopters may also be used to transport men and equipment to the top of a high-rise building or across difficult terrain for fire fighting purposes. In these situations a large landing area is needed in proximity to the staging area.

Small helicopters have very limited lifting capacity in hot weather; National Guard helicopters should be employed if heavy lifts are needed and time permits.

LANDING ZONES

The selection of an appropriate landing zone is of critical importance in a field situation. A suitable landing area must be located and identified for the pilot.

Command will assign personnel to select and identify a landing zone. The assigned personnel must have a portable radio and eye protection.

- The Landing Zone must be free of obstructions for an area approximately 60 feet by 60 feet. Check for overhead wires, poles, towers and similar obstructions.

- ✘ Do not land a helicopter within 150 feet of a Treatment Area, Command Post or any similar activity. The noise and dust will cause serious problems with these areas.
- ✘ Area must be free of small objects that can be blown around by rotor wash. Check-for metal objects, loose clothing or blankets. Avoid dusty locations if possible.
- ✘ If the landing area is very dusty, consider wetting it with a hose line before landing.
- ✘ Keep all personnel out of the landing area. Spectators must be kept at least 100 feet from the helicopter at all times.
- ✘ Approach and take-off are normally made into the wind. This path must be free of obstructions and should avoid flying over treatment area.
- ✘ Landing zone personnel should communicate with the pilot by radio, if possible, or by hand signals. Mark the upwind end of the landing zone.
- ✘ Any nearby obstructions must be indicated to pilot. Use spotlight at night to show wires, poles, etc. The pilot is the best judge of the ability to land in a given location, but personnel on the ground must identify all obstructions and hazards.
- ✘ Mark upwind end and corners of Landing Zone with lights or flares. (*Secure or hold flares to prevent fires*)
- ✘ Shine Spotlights on ground in Landing Zone, and mark upwind with light or flare.

SAFETY FACTORS

- ✘ Do not approach helicopter until pilot signals after landing.
- ✘ Always approach from front.
- ✘ Keep all personnel away from tail rotor.
- ✘ Aircraft crew will direct patient loading and door opening/closing.
- ✘ Keep spectators away.
- ✘ Remove any light objects or debris from landing area.
- ✘ Landing Zone personnel must use eye protection or helmet face shields.
- ✘ Stage patients waiting to be loaded at least 100 feet away.
- ✘ Secure sheets and blankets and cover eyes during landing.
- ✘ Beware rotor wash from large helicopters is very strong, and small objects and clothing (*caps, jackets, etc.*) can be blown around easily.