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Title: COMMUNICATIONS WITH MEDICAL/LAW/FIRE HELICOPTERS AND FIXED WING AIRCRAFT

HELICOPTER COMMUNICATIONS

When Medical helicopter's are utilized by agencies dispatched by Heartland, the RCS 800 MHz radio talk group **MED-AIR** should be utilized whenever possible. When utilizing Law Enforcement Helicopters, the RCS 800 MHz radio talk group **FIRE-AIR** should be used.

VHF White 1, White 3, or San Diego County RED may be used if trunked coverage is poor or the 800 MHz system cannot be utilized, or in the case where an air ambulance from another county is responding.

The Incident Commander at his/her discretion may request the use of an additional TAC channel to communicate with the helicopter. The IC may also elect to use FIRE AIR to communicate with Law Enforcement Helicopters, depending on the nature of the operations.

If the Incident Commander requests the use of another radio frequency (talk group), it is the fire dispatchers responsibility to notify the helicopter's dispatch center of the change. The MED-AIR talk group may be patched with a TAC channel, but only if no other agencies are known to be using MED-AIR for different incidents.

In the event that aeromedical helicopters have an ETA of 30 minutes or longer, Copter's 1&2 from San Diego Fire and Rescue Department may be considered for transport of a medical patient in San Diego County. Copters 1&2 and County Copters 10 & 12 may be used for a hoist rescue for those incidents that require that type of equipment. **County Copters 10 & 12 will only transport patients under exigent circumstances by direction of on scene Paramedics.** It is up to the Incident Commander to decide if he wants to use tactical channels assigned to the incident or FIRE-AIR to communicate with helicopters performing hoist rescue.

WILDLAND FIRE COMMUNICATIONS

Wildland firefighting helicopters may be equipped with both 800MHz and VHF capabilities. It is important to note that Helicopters from outside of San Diego County may not have 800 MHz capabilities. When communicating with helicopters on fires that are Local Response Areas within the zone, units will initially communicate with helicopters using 800 MHz FIRE-AIR. The Incident commander must decide if he wants to use FIRE-AIR for all communications with helicopters or a separate tac channel for air to ground communications. **If the I.C. feels the incident has potential to require a fixed wing response, It may be beneficial for the I.C. to establish Air to Ground communications on a VHF frequency early on in the incident. This will reduce the potential for confusion of critical communications if fixed wing aircraft arrive at scene and a transition to an Air to Ground frequency is necessary.**

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When responding to fires on State Responsibility Areas or Federal Responsibility Areas, all communications with helicopters will be on VHF. On SRA fires, helicopters will be on CDF AIR TO GROUND. On USFS Fires, helicopters may be on CDF Air to ground or USFS Air to Ground. It is the responsibility of the IC to inquire with Dispatch as to which A/G channels the responsible jurisdiction has assigned to their fire.

FIXED WING AIRCRAFT

All communications with fixed wing will take place with AIR ATTACK (ATGS) on the assigned VHF Air to Ground frequency. During initial operations, it is common to communicate with Air Attack on the assigned command channel while determining which Air to ground Frequency will be used. Typically CDF AIR TO GROUND will be used on all CAL FIRE SRA incidents, and may also be used on USFS incidents. It is important for the Incident Commander to dialogue with the ATGS and/or the responsible command center (MVU or Cleveland) and determine which AIR to GROUND frequencies will be used for the incident.

AIR GUARD – **VHF 168.625**

All **CAL FIRE** aircraft **and County Copters 10 & 12** are required to monitor **AIR GUARD** at all times and do not have the ability to turn it off. This channel is to be used in emergencies only. If you find yourself in an emergency situation and you are unable to contact aircraft on other channels, consider using AIR GUARD. **Air Guard is part of the current programming in most VHF HT's.**

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