

	State of Washington - SWIC	
	Standard Operating Guidelines	
	Statewide Air Ambulance Communications	
	Approved: 06/30/2022	Revised:

Statewide Air Ambulance Communications Guidelines

BACKGROUND

On June 30, 2022, the Washington Military Department, recognizing the critical nature of air-to-ground communications between air and ground-based emergency medical services (EMS) and firefighting units, designated the National Public Safety Mutual Channel VMED29 (155.3475) as the default statewide air-to-ground channel for EMS communications.

PURPOSE:

The purpose of this guideline to provide a common method and frequency of radio communications between ground-based EMS and firefighting units and air ambulance providers across the State of Washington. It is important for ground-based EMS providers and/or firefighting units to have reliable communications with air ambulance providers. Having a pre-designated frequency will ensure the effective and efficient exchange of information during an incident, increase the safety of helicopter-based EMS operations, and maximize the chance of a positive patient outcome.

PROMULGATION

It is the intent of the Military Department to coordinate with the Washington Health Authority, the Washington State Fire Marshal’s Office, the Washington Department of Natural Resources, the Washington State Patrol, the Washington Department of Transportation, air ambulance providers, ground-based EMS services, firefighting organizations, public safety communications centers, and other stakeholders across the state to establish and promulgate this statewide communications guidelines for air-to-ground communications between ground-based EMS units and air ambulance services.

GUIDELINE:

1. Air-to-Ground Communications

- a. Ground EMS and firefighting units must be able to directly communicate with an incoming air ambulance provider. Many times, an air ambulance cannot land unless a direct communications link is established with responding agencies on the ground. Direct communications is important for the following reasons:
 - i. Provide patient information to the incoming air ambulance provider

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- ii. Relay any landing zone information
- iii. Provide safety information for incoming unit
- iv. Allow for the air ambulance provider to notify ground units of any changes
- b. It is recommended that direct communications with air ambulance services throughout the State of Washington occur on VMED29. (See Table Below)

Usage	Channel Name	Transmit Freq	Transmit PL	Receive Freq	Receive PL
Primary	VMED29	155.3475	156.7	155.3475	156.7

- c. Use of VMED29 is not mandatory. If an agency or jurisdiction has a preexisting communications plan with an incoming air ambulance, VMED29 may be utilized as a backup option.
- d. During an event where multiple air assets are being utilized for an incident, the Incident Commander or Communications Unit Leader (COML) will determine the operational protocol for air-to-ground communications. Once an Air Branch has been established, all air-to-ground communications shall be coordinated with the Branch Director.
- e. Pre-planned events with an ICS-205 Communication Plan may differ from this guideline. It is important for planners and incident commanders to determine what communication plan work best for their event while also considering incoming resource needs.

2. Radio Programming

- a. The US Department of Homeland Security through the Emergency Communications Division at CISA has developed common frequencies (channels) that can be utilized in an emergency by public safety entities. It is encouraged at all public safety agencies program the frequencies into their radios that they have the capability to. Programming information can be provided by the State of Washington SWIC or by referencing the National Interoperability Field Operations Guide.

LICENSING

The Statewide Interoperability Program through the Statewide Interoperability Coordinator (SWIC) has obtained a statewide license (Call Sign: WRTL218) to support this effort and will authorize any public safety or emergency services organization to operate under the state license. To request use of the state license, agencies should send a request on organizational letterhead to:

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