



DATE: July 26, 2011

TO: Greater Cincinnati EMS Providers

FROM: University Hospital Air Care & Mobile Care

Notice of Current Operations Affecting University Air Care

Recently, the FAA identified at least 64 helicopter EMS (HEMS) aircraft from across the nation whose aircraft instrument panels were modified for Night Vision Goggles (NVG's) by a company called Ahlers'. Although Air Care has been safely flying with this modification since the fall of 2009, these installations were found to not be in compliance with the aerospace contractor specifications. In response to these findings, and in effort to keep safety at the forefront, the FAA has suspended air medical programs with Ahlers' installations from using NVG's until further notice. This suspension impacts both aircraft that Air Care currently leases from Omniflight, Inc. The time frame for which it will take Ahlers', Omniflight, Inc. and the FAA to rectify the problem is still unclear. However, we expect to be flying under NVG's by **August 15th, 2011**. Please check our website at www.aircareandmobilecare.com for regular updates.

So what does this mean to University Hospital's ability to support the community with Rotor Wing services? University Hospital remains committed to continue providing high quality service with minimal operational changes that will ensure no one's safety is compromised. We will continue to provide all daytime operations as we currently do. At night, Air Care will continue to respond to all hospital to hospital transports and rendezvous with EMS at hospital helipads and airports with or without the use of NVG's. Hospital helipads are FAA inspected and approved. They are safer for a multitude of reasons such as specialized helipad lighting, wind sock, level surface and known flight path obstructions, etc.

One of the greatest risks to helicopter operations is landing at accident scenes, especially without the use of NVG's. Night operations have an increased risk due to limited visibility, hidden wires, unseen towers, unfamiliar terrain, etc. Therefore, in the name of safety for our patients, flight team and EMS partners at the scene, Air Care's night time scene operations will have to be *temporarily* modified as follows. When you request Air Care, our communication center will:

- Ask if you want Air Care to rendezvous with your EMS squad at a hospital helipad or airport. If personnel on the scene determines that doing so is not in the best interest of the patient, then;
- Air Care will collaborate with other air medical programs whose aircrafts are not impacted by this FAA mandate. Miami Valley Careflight and PHI will be Air Care's preferred mutual aid in responding to night time scenes.

Moving forward, with “Operation Safe Path”

Helicopter Emergency Medical Systems (HEMS) best practice recognizes that pre-designated landing zones need to be under the same level of scrutiny as hospital helipads. This involves a landing zone having an initial and annual inspection by the air medical program that supports your community. Even prior to this current FAA mandate impacting our NVG use, Air Care instituted a program which we now call “Operation Safe Path” in which we began reaching out to EMS agencies to identify safe landing zones in their counties. With this initiative, many already identified pre-designated landing zones are now also being visually inspected by pilots from Air Care to assure they meet safety specifications and industry standards. Each landing zone is then classified on a leveling system of 1-5 with corresponding landing guidelines (See enclosure). Since Operation Safe Path is still in its infancy stage, we are requesting your assistance to increase the momentum of this project. We are asking for your EMS agency to review your current pre-designated landing zones in preparation for when an Air Care representative contacts you to provide feedback from the pilot’s visual inspection of your landing zone(s). Once a landing zone has been inspected and registered into a database, Air Care will then be able to land at landing zones that have a Level 1 or 2 designations with or without NVG’s (See enclosure). While this initiative will provide a means in which Air Care can continue to be in a position to support the EMS community during this temporary period, the added safety benefits Operation Safe Path provides deems this initiative to be a long-term solution to any future unforeseen NVG issues as well as provides a significant increase in safety for all levels of flight operations.

In closing, a matter such as this is clearly a test of University Hospital’s integrity and our commitment to upholding and setting the standard for best practice, both clinically and with safety. Our pledge to you today is as it has been for over 26 years which is to never compromise safety or patient care. With that in mind, the University Hospital would like to thank you for your support and being our partners in providing the Greater Cincinnati region with safe and high quality patient care.

Yours in service,

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