

	State of Oregon - SWIC	
	Standard Operating Guidelines	
	Statewide Air Ambulance Communications	
	Approved: 05/20/22	Revised:

Statewide Air Ambulance Communications Guidelines

BACKGROUND

On February 8th, 2022, the Oregon State Interoperability Executive Council, 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 Oregon. 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

The Oregon Statewide Interoperability Program and the Statewide Interoperability Executive Council (SIEC) intend to coordinate with the Oregon Health Authority, the Oregon State Fire Marshal’s Office, the Oregon Department of Forestry, the Oregon Office of Emergency Management, the Oregon State Police, the Oregon 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
 - 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. The SIEC recommends that direct communications with air ambulance services throughout the State of Oregon 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, Communications Unit Leader (COML), or Air Branch Director (AOBD) will determine the operational protocol for air to ground communications.
- 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. The SIEC encourages all public safety agencies to program the frequencies into their radios if they have that capability. Programming information can be provided by the State of Oregon 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: WRPR365) to support this effort and will authorize any public safety or emergency services organization to operate under the state license, subject to the following Conditions of Use. To request use of the state license, agencies should send a request on organizational letterhead to:

William Chapman
 Statewide Interoperability Coordinator
 Email: SWIC.OR@das.oregon.gov

CONDITIONS OF USE

Upon approval, emergency service organizations use of state of Oregon's license on the National Public Safety EMS Mutual Aid channel known as VMED29 (155.3475) is subject to the following conditions:

- VMED29 is a shared, statewide resource, and may be in use at any time.
- The state's license is for portable and mobile operations only. Use of fixed or temporary base transmitters require a separate FCC license.
- Use of the frequency under the state's license is authorized only for the intended purpose of coordination between emergency response agencies and resources.
- Use of the frequency under the state's license shall be prioritized as follows:
 1. Emergency or unplanned operation involving potential danger to life
 2. Special or planned event
 3. Joint training exercises
- Communications on the frequency utilizing the state's license should be consistent with the National Incident Management System (NIMS) and Incident Command System (ICS) including:
 - Utilizing "plain language" without 10-codes or agency-specific codes/jargon;
 - Utilizing the calling format: "Agency-Unit #, this is Agency-Unit #"
(Sometimes known as the "Hey you, it's me" protocol)
 - Example: "County A EMS Unit 1, this is County B Fire Unit 2" or "Incident Command, this is City A Police Unit 3"
- Due to the shared nature of this frequency, some interference is to be expected. Agencies should work together to deconflict whenever possible.
- Intentional interference or jamming should be reported to the Statewide Interoperability Program and the FCC's Enforcement Bureau. If the interference or jamming imminently threatening safety of life, please contact the FCC's 24-Hour Operations Center at 202-418-1122.