

2.11 SEARCH AND RESCUE HELICOPTER USAGE

2.11.1 GENERAL

Related Policies:

- 2.02 Task Authorization
 - 2.06 Public Safety Lifeline Volunteer Safety
 - 2.08 Avalanche Search and Rescue
 - 2.10 Class D Helicopter Rescue
 - 2.12 Search and Rescue
 - 5.02 Expense Reimbursement
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2.11.2 DEFINITIONS

See Terms and Definitions

2.11.3 POLICY STATEMENT

- (1) Emergency Management BC (EMBC) may authorize the use of a commercial helicopter in support of search and rescue operations.
 - (2) All persons engaged in helicopter operations must be trained and/or briefed in safe work procedures in and around helicopters:
 - a) Ground Search and Rescue (GSAR) volunteers must successfully complete the relevant modules of the EMBC approved Helicopter Operations Training Program (Awareness, Hover Entry/Exit) prior to engaging in helicopter operations.
 - (3) Only helicopter companies, helicopters, and pilots meeting the minimum requirements as set out in 2.11 Annex: Mandatory Approvals and Certification Requirements shall be utilized in support of EMBC operations.
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2.11.4 CONDITIONS/RESPONSIBILITIES

The use of a helicopter for search and rescue operations may be authorized under these conditions:

- (1) The helicopter and company utilized is the most economical yet capable of performing the task. Aircraft availability, appropriately qualified personnel for aircraft type, and approved equipment must be considered;
- (2) Flights will occur during daytime Visual Flight Rule Conditions only; and
- (3) At least one (1) GSAR volunteer is intended to be on board the helicopter.



Responsibilities of Requesting Agencies:

- (1) Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP), or the police force having jurisdiction, is responsible for all aspects of land and inland water GSAR involving lost, missing, or stranded (uninjured) persons. RCMP helicopters, when reasonably available and appropriate for the assignment, must be used to search by air. Some RCMP helicopters are equipped with Forward Looking Infra-Red (FLIR) capability and should be utilized when available. The operational coordination of such missions is the responsibility of the RCMP through RCMP Air Services.
- (2) BC Emergency Health Services (BCEHS) is responsible for patient transport when a helicopter can land and shut down (rotors stopped) close enough to a patient that ambulance crews, through normal training techniques, can load the patient into the helicopter for transport. The operational coordination of such missions is the responsibility of BCEHS through the Patient Transfer Coordination Center.

Responsibilities of Search and Rescue Group:

- (1) The SAR Manager is required to obtain an Air Services Emergency (ASE) number for all helicopter flights.
- (2) If the GSAR group has an approved Helicopter Usage Preplan registered at the applicable EMBC regional office (updated annually), a SAR Manager may utilize up to one (1) hour of commercial helicopter usage without first obtaining Regional Duty Manager (RDM) approval in the following situations:
 - a) Where the subject has entered a fast-moving river or large body of water;
 - b) Weather conditions are likely to cause severe hypothermia;
 - c) Subject is located in potential avalanche terrain (see Policy 2.08 Avalanche Search and Rescue); or
 - d) GSAR volunteers are requested by the BCEHS to perform a medical rescue in a known or reported off-road/wilderness incident requiring specialized rescue skills to affect the safe and expeditious rescue of an injured subject (see Policy 2.12 Search and Rescue).

NOTE: Helicopter usage in excess of 1 hour or without an approved Preplan requires approval by the EMBC RDM.

- (3) A SAR Manager may request helicopter usage with authorization by an RDM at the time of the task to:
 - a) Conduct reconnaissance of potential search areas to determine risks and actions to be taken;



- b) Conduct an initial search by air (provided an RCMP helicopter is not reasonably available or appropriate for the assignment); and
 - c) Deploy or retrieve GSAR teams and GSAR equipment.
- (4) The EMBC RDM must approve any procedure not expressly listed above.

Any helicopter hired without the authorization provided within this policy or by an EMBC RDM will not be paid for by EMBC and will be the responsibility of the requesting individual and/or agency.

2.11.5 AUTHORITIES

N/A

Stan Bates
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2.11.6 RELATED DOCUMENTS

- 2.11 Search and Rescue Helicopter Usage Procedures
- 2.11 Search and Rescue Helicopter Usage Annex: Mandatory Approvals and Certification Requirements
- 2.11 Search and Rescue Helicopter Usage FAQs
- 2.11 Search and Rescue Helicopter Usage Preplan and Worksheet
- Provincial Search and Rescue Operating Guidelines
- EMBC approved Helicopter Operations Training Program