

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES
Public Health Service
Indian Health Service
Rockville, Maryland 20857

Refer to: OMS/MPSS

INDIAN HEALTH SERVICE CIRCULAR NO. 97-08

INDIAN HEALTH SERVICE POLICY FOR AIRCRAFT SERVICES
USED TO TRANSPORT EMPLOYEES AND
AMBULATORY AND EMERGENCY PATIENTS

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1. **PURPOSE.** This circular establishes standards of quality and safety for air transportation service companies used by the Indian Health Service (IHS) to transport IHS employees and ambulatory and emergency patients.
2. **BACKGROUND.** The IHS uses fixed wing (FW) and rotorwing (RW) aircraft to transport its employees and patients from point to point. During these transports, aircraft disasters have occurred that resulted in loss of life and injury to passengers., Therefore, a policy is needed that would establish standards for the safety of air transportation services obtained **by** the IHS.
3. **OBJECTIVES.**
 - A. To establish standards of quality for air services purchased by the IHS to transport its employees and patients .
 - B. To require Area Directors to establish procedures for passengers to express concerns about the quality of equipment, services, and personnel of air transportation service companies used by the IHS

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4. Policy All aircraft and air transportation service companies used by the IHS to transport employees, IHS patients, and authorized patient escorts must comply with the regulations in title 14 of the Code of Federal Regulations Part 135, which are used by the Federal Aviation Administration. Emergency medical air transportation service companies used by the IHS must also be accredited by the Commission on Accreditation of Air Medical Services (C-S) or provide documentation indicating they are actively in the process of meeting the criteria for obtaining accreditation by the CAAMS.

Air Charter services may only be ordered for IHS employees and ambulatory patients to be transported from point to point. Passengers who are not on official Government business or those who are not IHS ambulatory patients or authorized patient escorts must not travel on an IHS-ordered chartered flight.

5. RESPONSIBILITIES

- A. Each Area Director is accountable for ensuring that all air services for employees and patients within their Areas are obtained in accordance with this circular and applicable Federal acquisition regulations; and that procedures are established and implemented Area-wide for employees and patients to report any concerns they have about a specific air transportation service vendor, and for an IHS response to those passenger concerns.
- B. Area Senior Contracting Officers (SCO) are responsible for awarding and administering contracts with air transportation service companies in accordance with the requirements of this circular and applicable Federal and Department acquisition regulations. Area SCOs must ensure that the requirements of Section 6 of this circular are met by vendors and contractors used by the IHS to transport IHS employees and patients. Reports of faulty or improper equipment or inappropriate actions by contractors' personnel must be forwarded to the Division of Contracts and Grants Policy, IHS Headquarters, by the SCOs.

All standards established in this circular are the minimum requirements of the IHS. They do not preclude any IHS procurement official from obtaining services from air transportation companies that have equipment and personnel that exceed the standards of quality required in this circular.

- c. Air transportation ordering officials must be designated at each IHS facility that routinely uses air transportation services to transport employees and patients. The ordering official is responsible for ensuring maximum coordination of air transportation service requirements between the various departments at IHS facilities. This coordination could include assisting air charter services being ordered in advance of actual service date; assigning as many one-way passengers per air charter flight as possible, and avoiding unnecessary duplication of flights from point to point.

The facility air transportation ordering official ensures that emergency medical air transportation services payable by the IHS are ordered when patients and/or ordering IHS health care providers present a need for patients' continued medical attention during transport. The ordering official must obtain information regarding patients' available and accessible alternate resources for payment of services from the Business Office or Contract Health Services (CHS) staff at the IHS ordering facility. Employee and patient complaints, concerns over aircraft services used, and reports of refusals to fly that are received by the ordering official must be reported to the Area SCO for action.

6. **REQUIREMENTS OF AIR TRANSPORTATION SERVICE** companies All air transportation service companies used by the IHS must be certified by the OAS each year. Companies under contract with the IHS must maintain OAS certification each year that the IHS contract is in effect. The OAS certification standards exceed those cited in Title 14 of the Code of federal regulations Part 135, which are used by the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) to regulate air services.

A. Aircraft Requirements.

- (1) **Fixed Wing Aircraft** As a general rule, FW aircraft used for transporting employees or patients from point to point must be multi-engine aircraft. Multi-engine, turbocharged FW aircraft must be used whenever available. When landing or take-off conditions dictate, lighter weight or specially configured aircraft may be used. Documentation of the circumstances for using other than multi-engine FW aircraft is to be made available as a part of the air charter record.

(Employees who order other than multi-engine aircraft in the performance of their duties without reasonable justification, as stated above, will be liable for any expenses incurred.)

Single engine turbine powered FW aircraft may be used routinely. These powerplants are extremely reliable and typically are equipped with redundant systems, thereby satisfying the principles of this circular.

- (2) ~~Ar Winac (RW) Aircraft~~ used for transporting employees or patients from point to point may be single engine RW aircraft. Turbine powered helicopters must be used whenever they are available.
- (3) **Emergency Medical Services Aircraft** In addition to the requirement that all aircraft be approved by the OAS, all air transportation service vendors used by the IHS to transport emergency medical patients or other non-ambulatory patients must also be licensed by appropriate licensing bureaus or agencies that are available in the States where the vendors/contractors are based, and must be accredited by the CAAMS. Contractors must obtain CAAMS accreditation within two years after IHS contract effective dates. The CAAMS accreditation must be maintained by contractors each year that an IHS contract is in effect. If CAAMS accreditation is not obtained within two years, and if licensure, as available, OAS certification, and CAAMS accreditation are not maintained by contractors, the IHS must cancel contracts, or portions of contracts, that apply to emergency medical air transportation services. The IHS will not order services from or award contracts to companies whose initial air medical transportation contracts have been canceled because of lapsed appropriate licensure, OAS certification, or CAAMS accreditation until the vendor presents documents to the SCO that confirm renewed licensure, OAS certification, and CAAMS accreditation.

In accordance with CAAMS accreditation standards, the following equipment must be on all aircraft ordered for IHS medical patient transport, or be

immediately available for all critical care or Advanced Life Support in-flight providers:

Cardiac monitoring equipment/supplies
Defibrillator
External pacemaker
Pulse generator pacemaker
Advanced airway and ventilatory support equipment
Two suction-units (One portable)
Pulse oximetry
End-tidal CO2 monitoring capabilities
Advanced Cardiac Life Support medications
Automatic blood pressure device
Devices for decompressing a pneumothorax and performing an emergency, circothyroidotomy available if applicable to scope of care of the air medical service.

- B. Allowable Exceptions to Above Requirements Turbo-charged piston aircraft is the-standard type of aircraft to be used by the IHS for the point-to-point air transport of IHS employees and patients. This is to ensure reasonable redundancy of power plant, electrical, pneumatic/vacuum, and hydraulic systems so as to increase the safety of air transportation for IHS employees and patients. The intent for using turbo-charged engine aircraft is to provide a single engine performance capability consistent with the mission. Air transportation services are required to transport employees and patients from and to airports with a high density altitude and to 'transverse relatively high mountainous terrain. In these conditions a turbo-charged engine usually is required to produce a safe single engine service ceiling or drift down altitude if an engine failure occurs. Exceptions to the turbo-charged multi-engine aircraft requirement are allowed when:

Services are out of short and/or unimproved runways that require specially equipped or STOL (short-takeoff and landing) capable single engine aircraft.

- (2) Services are limited to low density altitude airports and over low terrain so that a normally aspirated piston aircraft presents a safe single engine service ceiling and drift-down altitude.
- (3) Turbine powered multi-engine aircraft may be used.

c. Personnel Requirements.

(1) Pilot Qualifications.

- a. Pilots of all aircraft ordered by the IHS to transport employees and ambulatory patients must have a minimum of 1500 pilot-in-command (PIC) flying hours logged.
- b. Pilots of aircraft ordered by the IHS for emergency medical air transportation must have 2000 RW aircraft hours prior to assignment with an air medical service company: 1000 of these hours must have been as a PIC in a rotorcraft, and 100 of these hours must have been night in-flight hours as a PIC.

(2) ~~Medical Flight Personnel Requirements.~~

Air transportation service companies that provide emergency medical air transportation services must provide the appropriate number of medical personnel and level of care as ordered by the IHS. All emergency medical air transportation services' personnel must be under the direction of a Medical Director who ensures that flights are staffed in accordance with the CAAMS standards for air medical personnel.

D. Liability Insurance requirements Air transportation service companies used by the IHS must provide the following minimum medical liability insurance:

- (1) \$1,000,000 per passenger for injury or death.
- (2) \$5,000,000 per incident.

Area procurement offices must report any non-compliance of the liability insurance requirements by vendors to the Director, Division of Contracts and Grants Policy, IHS Headquarters, on a semi-annual basis.

7. PROCEDURES.

- A. All air transportation services must be ordered by designated individuals at each IHS service unit/facility. This would ensure use of appropriate vendors, maximum coordination of non-medical flights,

necessary alternate resource approvals/clearances, and timely processing of payments to vendors.

B. **Methods of Paying for Air Services.**

(1) Air charter services for employees and ambulatory patients may be paid under a blanket Government Travel Request (GTR) that covers a defined period of time, or by charging the cost of individual travel on the International Merchant Purchase Authorization Card (IMPAC). The number of one-way passengers must be verified by the IHS ordering official by review of the vendor's passenger log for each flight prior to vendor bills being routed for payment by the IHS.

(2) Part or all of the costs for emergency medical air transportation services may be paid by the IHS when:

- a. Patients are eligible for Contract Health Services (CHS) and are transported to IHS or private sector facilities and all CHS program notification, medical priorities, and use of available alternate resources requirements are met.

Upon determination of any CHS program financial responsibility for emergency medical air transportation services, a CHS purchase order is issued and provided to the air transportation company. All CHS purchase orders are for individual patients, and vendors must submit the purchase order and bill for services to the CHS fiscal intermediary.

- b. Emergency medical air transportation services for patients transferred between IHS and private sector facilities may be paid by the IHS only when alternate resources are not available, and when the order for services was on the request of an IHS physician. Depending on Area policy and procedures, such services may be paid using a CHS purchase order, GTR, or the IMPAC.

- c. **Employees' and Patients' Right to Refuse to Fly**
Employees and patients may refuse to fly on air&aft ordered by the INS. Any employee who refuses to fly on

an IHS-ordered aircraft must submit their reasons for refusing to fly in writing to their immediate supervisor. Refusing to fly does not relieve an employee of his/her responsibilities and duties, unless so authorized by their supervisor. Appropriate travel regulations should be applied to allow for reasonable travel time and reimbursement of expenses for other modes of travel by employees.

Ambulatory patients are not required to board IHS-ordered aircraft. Patients who refuse to fly on IHS-ordered aircraft must be advised by the IHS ordering official that another air transportation service may not be ordered based solely on their refusal. Ordering officials should solicit and report all reasons that patients cite for refusing to fly on IHS-ordered aircraft to the Area SCO immediately.

- D. **Complaints** Supervisors of employees who refuse to fly must forward employees' concerns, complaints, and reported instances of improper-operation of aircraft or inappropriate actions by vendor or contractor personnel to the OAS through appropriate IHS administrative channels. All complaints must be reported on a form OAS-34 and submitted to the Area SCO for appropriate action. Responses to reports will be received by the Area SCO from the OAS.
8. **SUPERSEDURE.** This new issuance will replace IHS Circular No. 96-05, "Indian Health Service Policy for Aircraft Services Used to Transport Employees and Ambulatory and Emergency Patients," dated April 17, 1996, in its entirety and will also cancel Errata Notice No. 97-02, dated April 8, 1997, regarding the same subject title.
- 9; **EFFECTIVE DATE.** This circular is effective upon the date of signature by the Director, IHS.



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