

THE CITY OF SAN DIEGO
REPORT TO THE CITY COUNCIL

DATE ISSUED: July 25, 2007 REPORT NO: 07-128
ATTENTION: Council President and City Council
SUBJECT: Docket of July 31, 2007
Cost Recovery – Air Medical Transportation – SDFD Air Ops Division
REFERENCE:

REQUESTED ACTION:

Authorize the Mayor to approve the billing of patients and/or insurance companies for emergency air medical transportation provided by Fire-Rescue Department Air Operations Division helicopter (Copter 1).

STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Approve the requested action.

BACKGROUND:

In July 2003, San Diego Fire-Rescue Department (SDFD) began staffing and operating a fire/rescue helicopter that included enhanced air rescue and emergency medical capabilities. At that time, it was expected that providing advanced life support (ALS) pre-hospital care and transportation of the sick and injured would be a rare occurrence. This has proven not to be the case.

Below is the number of air medical transports that have occurred since FY2004:

- FY04: 25
- FY05: 73 (SDFD operation of two helicopters this year)
- FY06: 61
- FY07: 54 (as of April 1, 2007)

Factors contributing to an increase in the number of air medical transports include:

- Private air ambulance provider (Mercy Air) not consistently available and/or provides what is to be determined by ground requesting agencies an unacceptable Estimated Time of Arrival (ETA) in terms of providing the best patient care available.

- Increased public safety agency awareness of the SDFD helicopter's unique rescue/advanced life support (ALS) capabilities.
- Immediate patient transportation by Copter 1 to the closest area trauma center for treatment is often determined to be in the patient's best interest.

DISCUSSION:

SDFD Copter 1 is classified by the County of San Diego Emergency Medical Services Division (County EMS) as an Advanced Life Support (ALS) Rescue Aircraft. An existing Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between SDFD and County EMS allows for the air medical transportation of patients to area trauma centers.

Prior to SDFD procuring and operating its own helicopter, contract helicopter rates were used as a basis for cost recovery when the SDFD helicopter was utilized on wildfires occurring outside the City of San Diego. However, as a result of the new helicopter purchase (2005) and operation, a revised cost recovery rate has been developed.

The revised cost recovery rate takes into account the following actual cost factors:

- Helicopter Allowance Cost per Flight Hour
- Rescue Hoist Life Expectancy Remaining
- Miscellaneous Equipment Cost per Hour
- Mechanic Costs per Flight Hour
- Personnel Expenses (PE) per Hour
- Non Personnel Expenses (NPE) per Hour
- Fuel & Lubricants

The end result is a net billable hourly rate of \$3,250.

FISCAL CONSIDERATIONS:


To date, no patient and/or insurance company have been invoiced for air medical transportation services provided by SDFD. Billing for air medical transportation of the sick and/or injured is necessary to minimize the existing and growing fiscal impact to the City that occurs from providing these services gratis.

Rural/Metro, the City's EMS partner in San Diego Medical Services Enterprise (SDMSE), will be responsible for the billing of air medical transports performed by San Diego Fire-Rescue helicopter(s). Actual billing rates are consistent with calculated hourly flight rate for Copter 1 (\$3,250 per hour).


PREVIOUS COUNCIL and/or COMMITTEE ACTION: None

COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION AND PUBLIC OUTREACH EFFORTS: None

KEY STAKEHOLDERS AND PROJECTED IMPACTS: None



Tracy Jarman, Fire Chief
Originating Department



Jill Olen
Deputy Chief/Chief Operating Officer