



**General updating and review;
flowchart updated,
references to TFTG updated**

**HELICOPTER EMS (HEMS) – STATE POLICY
Operational Policy**

POLICY: Milwaukee County Emergency Medical Services will request air ambulance transport utilizing the Wisconsin Helicopter Emergency Medical Services (HEMS) Guidelines:

- A. HEMS utilization is a medical decision requiring appropriate oversight and should be integrated within regional systems of care.
- B. HEMS may provide a time savings benefit to patients with time sensitive emergencies¹ in reaching hospitals that can provide interventions IF the patient can be delivered during an interventional window² AND Ground Emergency Medical Services (GEMS) are not able to appropriately deliver the patient to definitive care within that interventional window.
 1. Examples include injured patients meeting the **Trauma Field Triage Guideline (TFTG) high risk for serious injury** who are more than 30 minutes of ground travel to the closest American College of Surgeons (ACS) verified Level I or Level II trauma center.
 - a. HEMS utilization for **TFTG moderate risk for serious injury** lacks clear evidence of benefit. Since these patients may not need the resources of the highest trauma level facility in a region, use of HEMS should be carefully considered. Standing protocols or online medical consultation may offer individual guidance.
 2. Patients with acute STEMI or Stroke needing transportation to a regional percutaneous coronary intervention (PCI) capable or **stroke intervention capable hospital** where ground transportation exceeds an interventional window.
- C. HEMS may provide clinical resources to patients needing critical care services if unable to obtain critical care services by ground emergency medical services (GEMS) (e.g., inter-facility transfer).
- D. HEMS may provide a mode of transport for geographically isolated, remote patients independent of emergency medical urgency (e.g., from an island) although this mode should be carefully considered.
- E. HEMS may provide a resource to local GEMS systems during disasters and times of low community resources.
- F. HEMS have unique risks of transport, including economic.
- G. Hospital destination and mode of transport are two separate and distinct clinical issues.
- H. Mode of transport decisions pose unique challenges in developing evidence-based transport guidelines.

¹A time-sensitive emergency can be defined as an acute, life-threatening medical or traumatic event that requires a time-critical intervention to reduce mortality and/or morbidity. Examples include major systems trauma, ST elevation myocardial infarction (STEMI) and stroke.

²An interventional window can be defined as the period of time during which mortality or morbidity is likely to be reduced by the administration of pharmaceutical agents, medical procedures or interventions. An interventional window should be based on available national consensus guidelines such as the American Heart Association's first medical contact, **door to needle time, or door to balloon time**. The "Golden Hour" of trauma refers to the core principle of rapid intervention in trauma cases, rather than the narrow meaning of a critical one-hour time period. There is no evidence to suggest that survival rates drop off after 60 minutes.

NOTES: FFL response time is approximately 20 minutes from request to arrival on scene within Milwaukee County.

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Approved: Benjamin Weston, MD, MPH Medical Director
Approved: Dan Pojar, BSEMS, FP-C, NRP EMS Division Director

Total
Pages 2



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Operational Policy

HEMS (Helicopter EMS) State Policy

Universal Care

ASSESS SCENE AND PATIENT
 Extrication ongoing prior to HEMS arrival?
 Ground transport more than 30 minutes?
 Pt requires critical care skill unavailable at scene?
 Disaster situation with extreme resource limitation?

No to all → EMS ground transport appropriate

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Yes to any

Consider requesting HEMS through FD dispatch
 Monitor FD frequency for notifications and estimated time of arrival

*Refer to
 WI HEMS
 Utilization Guidelines to
 frame discussion about
 HEMS
 utilization*

Designate landing zone
 Smooth, level area ≤ 5° slope
 Clear of wires, trees, debris, obstacles
 100 x 100 ft day, 150 x 150 ft night/windy
 Consider illumination
 Keep crowds > 150 ft away at all times

Scene units
 No vehicles within 50 ft
 No personnel running or smoking
 Anticipate request for tail rotor guard assignment

HEMS Approach
 When signaling, stand with back to wind
 Depart when HEMS is on final approach
 Rotor wash can produce high winds
 – PROTECT YOURSELF –

HEMS Landing
 HEMS will coordinate all load/unloading
ONLY AFTER SIGNALLED TO DO SO BY HEMS:
 Approach from front downhill side
 Do not assist with opening or closing doors
 Carry all equipment below the waist

Transfer patient care to HEMS crew