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An affiliate of the Columbus Medical Association

Number:	COTS-EM-11b
Title:	**REGIONAL HELICOPTER AIR AMBULANCE (HAA) SAFETY REQUEST AND ACTIVATION GUIDELINE FOR INTERFACILITY TRANSPORTS** **This includes EM-11c – HAA Safety Request Tool**
Approved by:	COTS Board of Trustees; COTS Emergency Services Advisory Board
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REGIONAL HELICOPTER AIR AMBULANCE (HAA) SAFETY REQUEST AND ACTIVATION GUIDELINE FOR INTERFACILITY TRANSPORTS

INTENT

The intent of this guideline is to standardize communication processes between hospitals and helicopter air ambulance (HAA) programs when the hospital has the need to transfer a patient by helicopter. The goal is to provide best practice guidelines that aim to maximize the HAA crews' safe response, arrival, and patient transport.

It is COTS expectation that all HAA programs Inbound to/outbound from COTS member hospitals in the Greater Columbus Area will follow the **COTS Regional Aeromedical Transport Communication and Safety Guideline.** This is a separate guideline that addresses HAA flight safety between helicopter crews and hospitals including but not limited to:

- State of Ohio Helicopter Air Ambulance (HAA) Communication Plan
- Identifying Medflight as the Coordinating Communication Center for the Greater Columbus Area
  NOTE: The Greater Columbus Area can be loosely defined as ten (10) nautical miles from the cities center.
- Safety of Helicopter Operations
  - Helicopter Risk Assessment
  - Notice to Airmen (NOTAM)
  - Central Clearing House for hospital operations
- Recommended use of the COTS EMS Timeout patient care hand-off process
- Multi-Agency Radio Communication System (MARCS) Guidance

BASIC TENANTS

- Request for an HAA transport should be consistent and standardized
- Each requesting facility should have an internal standard operating procedure for patient transfer that includes choosing the most appropriate mode of transportation.

PROCESS

- Caller chooses HAA as the mode of transport and calls the HAA's dispatch to request transport
- Caller should be prepared to answer;
  - Has another HAA service turned down this request?
  - Is there any other HAA(s) inbound to this facility?

**Selective Resource Management. The Ohio HAA community is committed to working collaboratively to maximize safety and risk mitigation as well as optimize resource management. If an HAA company declines a flight, the caller can continue to seek out other HAA resources or make the decision to transport the patient by ground. If they do call other HAA resources, the caller must inform the next service that there was a declination from a previous attempt. A requesting facility or agency has no way of knowing whether the factors that caused one HAA operator to turn down a request also apply to another operator at a different location, with a different HAA, and different pilots.

- If the HAA company accepts the flight, the caller should be prepared to answer the following patient demographics;
  - Name and call back number of the requestor?
  - Where is the patient located (hospital name, department, city, and state)?
  - Chief Complaint?
  - Where is the patient going (hospital name, department, city, and state)?
  - What is the patient's weight?
  - What is the patient's age?
  - Medical equipment currently on the patient?
    - Special needs (ventilator, balloon pump, ICP, cardiac monitor, ECMO, oxygen, high frequency ventilation, Nitric Oxide, cooling for in-town/I-270 beltway neonates only, etc.)
  - Is the patient a prisoner?

    An HAA can be started with the above information while the emergency dispatcher obtains the following detailed information:
  - Is an extra rider necessary for the care of the patient? If yes, obtain weight of rider?
  - Is there an accepting physician?
  - Patient diagnosis/chief complaint and current state of the patient (further defined/summarized)
  - The number of drips?
  - Airway status – intubated?
  - Specialty diagnoses:
    - Stroke Alert
      - Glasgow Coma Score (GCS)
      - TPA
      - Last known well
    - Trauma Alert
      - Spinal motion restriction applied
      - GCS
    - Obstetrical Patient – contraindications to HAA include:
      - Contractions less than two (2) minutes apart
      - Active labor with crowning
      - Umbilical cord prolapse
- The accepting HAA resource will give the caller an estimated time of arrival (ETA).
- These safety and patient care questions should be considered for use as a checklist for HAA triage safety.
- Healthcare system transfer centers may have additional questions per their internal standard operating procedures.

SYSTEM IMPROVEMENT PROCESS

All COTS member hospitals and HAA programs are invited to abide by these guidelines for increased safety of patients and HAA crews.
COTS member hospitals and HAA programs will receive an infographic with required safety and patient care questions to use for staff education. The infographic may also be printed from www.cotshealth.org/emergencyservices

Participating hospitals and HAA programs are expected to contact each other within two business days if lapses in communications occur. Similarly, both stakeholder groups are accountable for their own performance improvement related to gaps in communication. System level concerns can/may be brought to COTS via contacting the COTS President.

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At the pleasure of the COTS HAA Subcommittee, COTS member hospital end users may receive a survey to assess the value of this safety initiative.

QUESTIONS ABOUT THIS GUIDELINE

President of the COTS, 1390 Dublin Road, Columbus, Ohio 43215; phone (614) 240-7419.

REFERENCES

Air & Surface Transport Nurses Association, Emergency Nurses Association, & International Association of Flight and Critical Care Paramedics (2019). Responsible "helicopter shopping" through selective resource management. *AirMed Journal*, *38*(3), 143-146. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.amj.2019.02.007

American College of Emergency Physicians (2018). Appropriate interfacility patient transfers: A policy statement. www.acep.org

COTS (2020). Regional helicopter air ambulance communication and safety guidelines. www.cotshealth.org/emergencyservices

COTS (2020). HAA Safety Request Infographic. www.cotshealth.org/emergencyservices

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Acknowledgement is given to Air Evac LifeTeam for their development of a flight necessity card and their willingness to share this work with the COTS region. In addition, thank you to the Ohio Association of Critical Care Transport for partnering with us to meet our mission.

Changes made to document		
Date	**What**	**Person Responsible**
11/17/2020	Created and approved by Board of Trustees	Exec Director
03/26/2021	Replaced Exec director title with President	President
02/18/2022	Updated COTS name and logo	President