Iowa Statewide Interoperable Communications System (ISICS)
Standards, Protocols, Procedures

Standard Name:	Air Ambulance Scene Flight Landing Zone Coordination		Date Created:	**07-04-2018**	
Standard Policy #	**1.5.2**	**Section Title:**	Interoperability Standards	Status	Approved
Approval Authority:	**ISICSB**		Adopted:	**4/08/2021**	Reviewed: 12/14/2020

1. Purpose or Objective

The purpose of this standard is to specify the use of the ISICS statewide and regional interoperability talkgroups for establishing and maintaining scene flight air ambulance landing zones.

2. Technical Background

Capabilities

The Iowa Statewide Interoperable Communications System Board (ISICSB) has established a standard for use of the ISICS statewide and regional interoperability talkgroups in ISICS Standard 1.5.0. This standard encourages interoperable communications among first responders and establishes common ISICS statewide and regional interoperability talkgroups to facilitate interoperability.

The ISICSB has also chosen to adopt the 700 MHz Air to Ground Channels via policy 2021-04.

Constraints

Experience has shown that agencies have used many different processes in the past. Through best practices this standard strives for consistency among agencies that utilize ISICS.

Coverage limitations and/or constraints of various resources will have to be accounted for in any interoperable scenario.

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3. Operational Context

This standard works to facilitate successful air-to-ground communications in scene flight landing zones. Communications with aircraft on a trunked network can sometimes be problematic if the aircraft radio does not roam to an appropriate site or if there are other circumstances affecting air-to-ground communication. While the use of ISICS interoperable talkgroups can be highly effective in situations with adequate coverage, simplex (direct radio-to-radio) is the safest method of communication for landing an aircraft.

This standard does not preclude the use of the ISICS regional and statewide interoperable talkgroups during the flight path of the air ambulance. Agencies may find it advantageous to utilize the ISICS regional or statewide interoperable tactical (TAC) talkgroups to establish long-range communications with the air ambulance. However, for the process of landing the air ambulance, simplex (direct radio-to-radio) may need to be considered if coverage is not sufficient. Any use of the ISICS regional and statewide interoperability talkgroups should be focused around using as local of a resource as possible so it is geographically appropriate. A statewide interoperable talkgroup should only be used if no other regional interoperable talkgroups are available or there is some other extenuating circumstance associated with the event. As an example, if the air ambulance will be landing in the Homeland Security Region that it lifts off from, a regional interoperable TAC is the most appropriate geographical talkgroup. In addition, if the air ambulance will not switch to an ISICS interoperable talkgroup until it is in the Homeland Security Region of the landing, a regional interoperability TAC talkgroup would be most geographically appropriate.

Use of ISICS regional and statewide calling (CALL) talkgroups should be limited to only initial contact and coordination of a resource to use for landing zone operations. As soon as a geographically appropriate ISICS tactical (TAC) talkgroup or conventional resource is identified, all landing zone traffic should be switched to that tactical resource.

NOTE: Continued use of a calling (CALL) talkgroup may interfere with communication with the aircraft or prevent another public safety communications such as important announcements or broadcasts, other personnel from calling for assistance, and other instances where immediate contact must be established.

4. Recommended Protocol/ Standard

Coordination regarding talkgroup usage is vital to ensure successful communications. An authority having jurisdiction (i.e. public safety communication center, in-field public safety personnel or incident commander) should be in contact with any aircraft and coordinate with them to select the most geographically appropriate interoperability channel and/or ISICS regional or statewide tactical (TAC) interoperable talkgroup if possible for landing the aircraft. StatusBoard should be updated to reflect what is being used. With respect to the use of an ISICS interoperable talkgroup, the most geographically appropriate interoperable talkgroup in most situations will be a regional tactical (TAC) talkgroup. A statewide interoperable talkgroup should

only be used if no other regional interoperable talkgroups are available or there is some other extenuating circumstance associated with the event.

Though not preferred, in some situations, if the ISICS Platform will be used for a landing, on-scene personnel should be sure that there is sufficient coverage for the air ambulance to maintain contact during the landing. If an ISICS interoperable tactical (TAC) talkgroup will be utilized, it is recommended, depending on the scene, to assign a dedicated interoperable tactical talkgroup for the landing so the air ambulance can have a clear talkpath.

The list below outlines resources available for landing zone coordination. This assumes that specific resources are programmed into radios, coverage is sufficient and coordination has taken place among the communications center, air ambulance and in-field ground personnel.
- 700 MHz air-to-ground channels – highest probability of successful communication during landing zone coordination;
- First available geographically appropriate ISICS regional or statewide tactical (TAC) interoperable talkgroup if there is sufficient coverage. In most cases, this will be a regional interoperable TAC;
- Other available resources outlined in the ISICSB_ICS-217A. Some channels such as VMED28 or VCALL10 should be given some preference in the event an ISICS interoperable talkgroup and the 700 MHz air-to-ground channels cannot be utilized.

5. Recommended Procedure

It is imperative to allow for communication between the responding aircraft and the designated person (law enforcement, fire personnel, first responder, etc.) on the ground that will be coordinating the landing zone (LZ) consistent with any ICS structures in place. The exact location of the LZ, any hazards, wind direction, and any other pertinent information needs to be communicated to the aircraft to allow for a safe scene landing. If it becomes necessary to abort the landing, the individual on the ground will need to be able to quickly communicate this information to the aircraft.

For Aircraft that are equipped with ISICS radios:

If the aircraft and personnel on scene coordinating the landing both have ISICS statewide and regional interoperability talkgroups, and they wish to utilize an ISICS regional and/or statewide interoperable tactical (TAC) talkgroup, they will use the geographically appropriate ISICS statewide or regional interoperability tactical (TAC) talkgroup that has been assigned to them by the appropriate, controlling public safety communication center, in-field public safety personnel or incident commander in coordination with the air ambulance. A statewide interoperable talkgroup should only be used if no other regional interoperable talkgroups are available or there is some other extenuating circumstance associated with the event. StatusBoard should be consulted to ensure an interoperable talkgroup is available. The dispatcher should note the talkgroup used via StatusBoard.

During the landing of the aircraft, personnel on scene should change to a simplex (direct radio-to-radio) during the landing if coverage is not sufficient.

In the event of a technical constraint, the incident may be switched over to other talkgroups or channels as appropriate.

For Aircraft that are NOT equipped with ISICS radios:

If the aircraft does not have ISICS radios, but personnel on scene coordinating the landing do, a simplex (radio-to-radio) channel would offer the highest probability of establishing communication if the radios had the simplex channel programmed into each set of agency radios. If this is not possible, the controlling, primary public safety communications center may assign a geographically appropriate ISICS regional or statewide interoperability tactical (TAC) talkgroup and patch the responding air ambulance operating to an appropriate channel outlined in the ISICSB ICS-217A in coordination with the air ambulance. A statewide interoperable talkgroup should only be used if no other regional interoperable talkgroups are available or there is some other extenuating circumstance associated with the event. Note: Public safety communications centers will patch to conventional resources according to their local protocol.

Note: An announcement on the patched resources will be made at the time of the patch origin AND just prior to the patch removal.

Any talkgroups or conventional resources used should be noted on StatusBoard.

For In-Field Personnel that are NOT equipped with ISICS radios:

If the in-field personnel do not have ISICS radios, conventional resources such as the 700 MHz Air-to-Ground or other interoperability channels as found in the ISICSB ICS-217A may need to be utilized for landing in coordination with the air ambulance.

In some instances the controlling, primary public safety communications center may assign a geographically appropriate ISICS regional or statewide tactical (TAC) interoperability talkgroup and patch the responding air ambulance operating on the regional or statewide interoperable talkgroup to local operational channel or other interoperable resource during the flight in coordination with the air ambulance. A statewide interoperable talkgroup should only be used if no other regional interoperable talkgroups are available or there is some other extenuating circumstance associated with the event. Note: Public safety communications centers will patch to conventional resources according to their local protocol.

Any talkgroups or conventional resources used should be noted on StatusBoard.

Order of Use of geographically appropriate ISICS statewide and regional interoperability tactical talkgroups (per ISICS Standard 1.5.0):

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If a geographically appropriate ISICS regional or statewide interoperable tactical (TAC) talkgroup will be utilized, the use of ISICS statewide and regional interoperability tactical (TAC) talkgroups for PREPLANNED NON-EMERGENCY interoperability events involving LZ coordination use should be consistent with ISICS Standard 1.5.0.

The use of ISICS statewide and regional interoperability tactical (TAC) talkgroups for UNPLANNED EMERGENCY incidents involving LZ coordination should be consistent with ISICS Standard 1.5.0. A statewide interoperable talkgroup should only be used if no other regional interoperable talkgroups are available or there is some other extenuating circumstance associated with the event.

Any talkgroups or conventional resources used should be noted on StatusBoard.

6. Management

Nothing in this standard shall be construed as a limitation of use of the geographically appropriate ISICS statewide and regional tactical (TAC) interoperability talkgroups for incidents other than air ambulance scene flight and landing zone coordination.

Nothing in this standard shall be construed as a limitation of use of any appropriately assigned conventional resource for an air ambulance emergency landing zone coordination by non-ISICS users.

For Management, see ISICS Standard 1.5.0 (*ISICS Regional & Statewide Interoperability Talkgroups*) for additional information.

This standard will be reviewed periodically for efficacy by the ISICSB and its appropriate committees and/or working groups.