

**A021. Helicopter Emergency Medical Services (HEMS)
Operations**

HQ Control: 11/14/08
HQ Revision: 040

- a. The certificate holder is authorized to conduct helicopter emergency medical services (HEMS)/air ambulance operations in accordance with 14 CFR Part 135 and this operations specification. (HEMS and air ambulance terms are used interchangeably.)
- b. The certificate holder is authorized to conduct takeoff and landing operations provided the site used is adequate for the proposed operation considering the size, type of surface, surrounding obstructions, and lighting. During night operations, the lighting source must provide adequate illumination of the takeoff/landing area and of any obstructions that may create potential hazards during approach, hovering, taxiing, and departure operations.
- c. The flight crew must satisfactorily complete the certificate holder's approved training program prior to commencing HEMS/air ambulance flights.
- d. If the purpose of a flight or sequence of flights includes a part 135 segment, then all VFR segments of the flight, including the tail-end ferry flight, must be conducted either in accordance with the applicable weather minimums contained in subparagraph- e, Table 1- Weather Minimums, or paragraph- h, and the flight planning requirements contained in subparagraph- i, or under IFR.
- e. The certificate holder is authorized to use no lower than the Visual Flight Rules (VFR) weather minimums in Table-1 below when operating in Class G (uncontrolled) airspace for the conditions specified when conducting HEMS/air ambulance work, subject to subparagraphs f, g, h, i and j .

Table 1 – Weather Minimums

Area Condition	Non-Mountainous		Mountainous (see 14 CFR 95)	
	Local	Cross Country	Local	Cross Country
	Ceiling-visibility			
Day	800-2	800-3	800-3	1000-3
Night – Equipped with Night Vision Imaging System (NVIS) or Terrain Awareness Warning System	800-3	1000-3	1000-3	1000-5
Night – Without NVIS or TAWS	1000-3	1000-5	1500-3	1500-5

Note: Refer to Subparagraph G for NVIS utilization

- f. **IFR Operations at locations without weather reporting:** If the certificate holder is authorized to conduct IFR operations, the certificate holder may conduct IFR operations at airports or heliports with an IAP, and at which a weather report is not available from the National Weather Service (NWS), a source approved by the NWS, or a source approved by the Administrator, subject to the following limitations:
- (1). IFR departures made under provisions of this operations specification are authorized only after the pilot in command (PIC) of the affected flight determines that the weather conditions at the departure point are at or above VFR minimums in accordance with 14 CFR part 135.205(b). This may be determined by the PIC's own observation or that of another person competent to supply appropriate observations.
 - (2). The operator must use an approved weather reporting source if located within 15 nautical miles from the destination landing area, or use the area forecast if no such weather reporting source is available. This weather reporting source meets the requirements of the weather reporting source required in paragraph H113 of these Operations Specifications. The PIC will obtain the altimeter settings with any applicable adjustments for the instrument approach procedure (IAP) from the weather facility specified on the instrument approach chart.
 - (3). Flight planning for IFR flights conducted under this operations specification must include selection of an alternate airport that meets the requirements of §§ 135.221 and 135.223 and has an approved weather reporting source in accordance with § 135.213.
 - (4). After completing a landing at the destination airport/heliport that does not meet the weather requirements of the affected sections, the PIC is authorized to determine if the weather meets the takeoff requirements of part 97 or the certificate holder's operations specification, as applicable.
- g. Subparagraph-e, Table-1 NVIS or TAWS minima may be used if either NVIS or TAWS is installed in the aircraft and the pilot is using such equipment. For operations with approved night vision imaging systems (NVIS) / night vision goggles (NVG), paragraph A050 must also be issued.
- h. If the certificate holder is authorized to conduct IFR "Point in Space" (PinS) Special Instrument Approach Procedures, with a "Proceed VFR" transition to the heliport or landing area, or authorized to conduct IFR standard or special instrument approach procedures (IAP), and if the distance from the missed approach point to the heliport or landing area, is 3 nm or less, the following weather minimums will be applied, Day: 600' ceiling / 2 sm visibility, or Night: 600' ceiling / 3 sm visibility, as applicable. If the distance from the missed approach point to the heliport or landing area exceeds 3 nm, apply the VFR minima prescribed in Table-1 above, appropriate to the actual terrain conditions. If an approved VFR segment exists as part of an approved IAP, the associated minimums would apply.
- i. **VFR Flight Planning:** Prior to conducting VFR operations under these Operations Specifications, the pilot must determine the minimum safe altitudes along the planned enroute phase of flight.
- (1) The minimum safe cruise altitudes shall be determined by evaluating the terrain and obstacles along the planned route of flight.
 - (2) The pilot must ensure that all terrain and obstacles along the route of flight, except for takeoff and landing, are cleared vertically by no less than the following:
 - a. 300 feet for day operations
 - b. 500 feet for night operations

- (3) Prior to each flight, the PIC must identify and document, in a manner consistent with the operator's general operations manual, the highest obstacle along the planned route of flight.
- (4) Using the minimum safe cruise altitudes, the pilot must determine the minimum required ceiling and visibility to conduct the planned flight by applying the weather minimum derived from the subparagraph-e Table-1 above, as appropriate to the conditions of the planned flight, and the visibility and cloud clearance requirements of 14 CFR 91.155(a) (as applicable to the class of airspace the planned flight will operate in) and the ground reference requirements of 14 CFR 135.207.
- (5) **This is an additional preflight planning requirement.** Pilots may deviate from the planned flight path as required by conditions or operational considerations. During such deviations, the pilot is not relieved from the weather or terrain/obstruction clearance requirements of the regulations. Re-routing, change in destination, or other changes to the planned flight that occur while the aircraft is on the ground at an intermediate stop require evaluation of the new route in accordance with this Operations Specification.
- j. **Local Flying Areas.** Local Flying Areas are those areas in which the pilot has demonstrated a level of familiarity which allows the use of lower VFR operating minima. Local flying areas used by a specific HEMS program base need not be contiguous.
- (1) Local flying area minima may only be used by pilots who have passed an examination on the appropriate local flying area within the previous 12-months. This examination must be conducted in accordance with the certificate holder's approved local area pilot knowledge testing procedure. Pilots may be qualified for more than one local flying area.
- (2) Any flight outside a local flying area is a cross-country operation. Pilots who have not passed such a knowledge test on a particular local flying area within the previous 12 calendar months, regardless of operational experience in that area, must use the cross-country minima described in the subparagraph-e, Table-1, above when operating in that area.
- (3) The certificate holder is authorized to conduct HEMS operations using the local flying area minima in the following areas listed in Table-2 below, provided the pilot is qualified under subparagraph j (1) above.

Table 2 – Authorized HEMS Operations

Local Flying Area Base	Description	Coordinating geographic FSDO (if outside the CHDO District)
TABL01	TABL02	TABL03

TEXT99

1. Issued by the Federal Aviation Administration.
2. Support information reference:
3. These Operations Specifications are approved by direction of the Administrator.

4. Date Approval is effective:

Amendment Number:

5. I hereby accept and receive the Operations Specifications in this paragraph.

Date:
