



## Policy Statement

### **POLICY FOR THE MANAGEMENT OF POLICE, HELICOPTER EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES AND SEARCH AND RESCUE FLIGHT CALLSIGNS**

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#### **1 Introduction**

- 1.1 This document details the policy and guidance for the management of Police, Helicopter Emergency Medical Services (HEMS), and Search And Rescue (SAR) flight radiotelephony callsigns (hereafter referred to as 'callsigns'). This supersedes policy letter DAP/CAS/DJD/Telephony Designators, dated 28 October 2008, and AIC Y009/2014.

#### **2 Types of Flight**

- 2.1 **Police Flights.** A Police flight is a flight by an aircraft operating under a Police Air Operator's Certificate, the purpose of which is to facilitate police operations which includes the following:

- a. Responding to a 'Police Emergency.' The pilot of a police aircraft is likely to declare a "Police Emergency" in situations where an immediate response is required when life is at immediate risk, or a serious crime or major incident is in progress.
- b. Supporting ground personnel in often sensitive and serious operations.
- c. Training, testing, non-standard and other flights.

- 2.2 **HEMS Flights.** A HEMS flight is a flight by a helicopter operating under a HEMS approval, the purpose of which is to facilitate emergency medical assistance, where immediate and rapid transportation is essential, by carrying:

- a. Medical personnel; or
- b. Medical supplies (equipment, blood, organs, drugs); or
- c. Ill or injured persons and other persons directly involved.

HEMS flights may also operate for the purpose of positioning, flight training and testing, non-standard and other flights.

- 2.3 **SAR Flights.** SAR flights operate to and from incidents where a response is required for the safety of life, which might be time critical and may also involve the transportation of casualties to hospital. In addition, SAR helicopters may, on occasion, be required to undertake flights in response to medical emergencies and will continue to use the "British Rescue" callsign whilst undertaking these tasks.

SAR flights may also operate for the purpose of positioning, flight training and testing, non-standard and other flights.

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### 3 Callsigns

- 3.1 In order to highlight the nature of the task, Police, HEMS, and SAR flights are allocated specific callsigns, as follows:
- 3.2 **Police flights.** The callsign for a Police flight consists of three elements:
- The radiotelephony callsign "POLICE" is to be used for all Police Flights; the ICAO three-letter operator designator is 'UKP.'
  - A two-digit individual aircraft identifier, exceptionally, sequential three-digit identifiers will be allocated to units operating two or more aircraft. These will consist of a two-digit individual aircraft identifier-based root followed by single digits to reflect the number of aircraft in a regional operation.
  - The two, or three-digit identifier may be suffixed with a letter indicating a flight priority category, these are detailed in paragraph 4.
- 3.3 The individual aircraft callsign is only to be used by the aircraft and aircraft operator to which it has been allocated by the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA). The Airspace Regulation (AR) department of the CAA's Safety and Airspace Regulation Group (SARG) is responsible for the Police callsign allocation policy, although the day-to-day management of Police callsigns is delegated to the Head of Flight Operations, National Police Air Service who can be contacted at the address below:
- West Yorkshire Police HQ  
PO Box 9  
Laburnum Road  
Wakefield  
WF1 3QP
- 3.4 Exceptionally, and for operational reasons only, a notified discrete radiotelephony callsign consisting of a word plus a numerical flight identifier may be used.
- 3.5 **HEMS flights.** The full callsign for a HEMS flight will consist of three elements:
- The radiotelephony callsign 'HELIMED' is to be used for all UK HEMS Flights. This callsign is registered with ICAO as 'UK HEMS.' The ICAO three-letter operator designator is 'HLE.'
  - A two-digit individual aircraft callsign is only to be used by the aircraft and aircraft operator to which it has been allocated by the Authority. On routine operational, training, or other flights; 'HELIMED 01'.
  - The two-digit identifier may be suffixed with a letter indicating a flight priority category, these are detailed in paragraph 4.
- 3.6 Two-digit individual aircraft callsigns will be allocated in such a manner to prevent, as far as practicable, confusion with callsigns applied to Police flights.
- 3.7 **SAR and Coastguard flights.** Bristow Group operate Coastguard and SAR operations in the UK under contract to the British Government. It should be noted that "COASTGUARD" callsigns can be re-tasked as SAR flights by the Joint Rescue

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Coordination Centre (JRCC); these flights will then adopt the call sign 'BRITISH RESCUE'. Air traffic services (ATS) units in communication with the aircraft at the time of the re-tasking should inform the ATS unit, where one exists, at the departure aerodrome, of the change in callsign.

- a. The callsign for SAR flights consists of the following elements:
- b. The radiotelephony call sign is "BRITISH RESCUE". The ICAO three-letter telephony designator is SRG. Within the UK FIR, after satisfactory communication has been established, the abbreviated call sign "RESCUE" may be used. An aircraft shall use its abbreviated call sign only after it has been addressed in this manner by the aeronautical station. Outside the UK FIR, the full callsign is always to be used to avoid confusion with any other state rescue service.
- c. A three-digit individual aircraft callsign allocated to each SAR Base and aircraft by the JRCC.

3.8 The "Coastguard" callsign consists of the following elements:

- a. The radiotelephony callsign is "COASTGUARD". The ICAO three-letter telephony designator is SRD.
- b. A three-digit individual aircraft callsign allocated to each SAR Base and aircraft by the Joint Rescue Coordination Centre (JRCC).
- c. The two-digit identifier on SAR and Coastguard flights may be suffixed with a letter indicating a flight priority category, these are detailed in paragraph 4.

## 4 Flight Priority Categorisation.

4.1 Flight priority categories are allocated by the CAA dependent on the nature of the flight being completed and reflect the priority required. Flight categories relevant to Police, HEMS and SAR operations are as follows:

### Police operations

Flight Priority	Description	Callsign
A	Police aircraft that have declared a 'Police Emergency'.	"POLICE [number] Alpha"
B	Standard flight priority for all 'Police' callsigns.	"POLICE [number]"
Z	Used for training and testing flights in Police aircraft.	"POLICE [number] Zulu"

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#### HEMS

Flight Priority	Description	Callsign
A	HEMS flights on emergency operational tasks.	"HELIMED [number] Alpha"
E	Positioning HEMS flights.	"HELIMED [number] Echo"
Normal	Routine operational tasks	"HELIMED [number]"
Z	Used for training and testing flights in HEMS aircraft.	"HELIMED [number] Zulu"

#### SAR

Flight Priority	Description	Callsign
A	SAR flights when the safety of life is involved.	"BRITISH RESCUE [number] Alpha" <b>See note</b>
B	SAR or humanitarian flights when priority is required.	"BRITISH RESCUE [number] Bravo" <b>See note</b>
E	Positioning SAR aircraft.	"COASTGUARD [number] Echo"
Normal	Used when SAR aircraft do not require additional priority.	"COASTGUARD [number]"
Z	Used for training and testing flights in SAR aircraft.	"COASTGUARD [number] Zulu"

**Note:** The callsign "British Rescue" may be abbreviated to "Rescue" within the UK FIR by an air traffic service unit after communication has been established.

- 4.2 A table depicting all flight priority categories can be found in CAP 493 – MATS Part 1, Section 1, Chapter 4.
- 4.3 Guidance for ATC tactical handling of these flights can be found in CAP 493 – MATS Part 1, Section 1, Chapter 4 – Control of Traffic and CAP 797 - Flight Information Services Manual, Section 1, Chapter 4, Flight Priorities.

## 5 SSR Procedures

- 5.1 **Police Flights** shall select either code A0032 and Mode C or other such codes assigned to the Police and promulgated in AIP ENR 1.6. (2.6 UK SSR Code Assignment Plan) or within the individual SFNs related to their operation, except when receiving a service from an ATS unit or Air Defence Unit which requires a different setting assigned in accordance with AIP ENR 1.6.
- 5.2 **HEMS Flights** shall select 0020 or other such code assigned to the Air Ambulance unit and promulgated in AIP ENR 1.6 (2.6 UK SSR Code Assignment Plan) except when

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receiving a service from an ATS unit or Air Defence Unit which requires a different setting assigned in accordance with AIP ENR 1.6.

- 5.3 **SAR Flights** shall select 0023 except when receiving a service from an ATS unit or Air Defence Unit which requires a different setting assigned in accordance with AIP ENR 1.6.

## **6 En-Route Charges**

- 6.1 Invoices for en-route charges should be sent directly to the operator of the aircraft that incurred the en-route charge.

## **7 Special Flight Notification (SFN).**

- 7.1 Certain police aviation operations may warrant special air traffic control co-ordination or handling procedures, in which case aircraft operators should consider the need for an SFN. Details of the SFN scheme are found in the UK Aeronautical Information Publication (En Route section 1.1.4 'Arrangements For Particular Types of Flight (Non-Standard, Non-Deviating, Unusual, Royal, Observation, Special, VFR Access to Class C Airspace Above FL 195)'), and aircraft operators should note that callsign details will be included in individual SFNs.

## **8 Callsign Management.**

- 8.1 The AR department Section of the SARG is responsible for the allocation and management of Police, HEMS, and SAR callsigns. Requests for permanent or temporary two-digit individual aircraft callsigns, and changes to or cancellation of these are to be submitted to:

Post: Airspace Regulation Unit  
Safety & Airspace Regulation Group  
Aviation House  
Beehive Ring Road  
West Sussex  
RH6 0YR  
Phone: 0330 022 1500  
Email: [airspace@caa.co.uk](mailto:airspace@caa.co.uk)

## **9 Review of Policy**

- 9.1 The CAA shall review this policy statement on a discretionary basis but not less than triennially from its publication date.

## **10 Point of Contact**

- 10.1 Any queries or further guidance required on the content of this Airspace Policy Statement should be marked for the attention of Airspace & ATM Policy and sent to:

Email: [ats.enquiries@caa.co.uk](mailto:ats.enquiries@caa.co.uk)