

EMS Dispatch Regulation and Medical Control

Position Paper and Recommendations

In order to provide for the uniform, orderly and appropriate dispatch of emergency medical services resources and to allow local government agencies (cities and special districts) the following additions should be made to the Sonoma County Pre-Hospital and Emergency Services Ordinance, CVEMSA Regulations and Policies, REDCOM Policies, and any future RFP regarding EMS Dispatch.

1. *All requests for pre-hospital or emergency medical services shall receive, at a minimum, one authorized transportation unit and one paramedic.*

It is a well-established industry practice and a well-reasoned expectation of the public that upon activating the EMS system that they will receive, at their location, a paramedic to perform the highest skilled field evaluation possible and have EMS transportation available to them in a timely manner. To assure that no undue delay is encountered in being transported to a higher level of care, the immediate dispatch of an authorized transportation unit is both prudent and expected by the public.

Determining the exact response pattern to achieve these two standards will be addressed below. The use of term “authorized transportation unit,” is deliberately selected and recommended as to allow for the use of transportation units other than ALS ambulances should the regulatory environment change and allow further use of BLS ambulances as well as alternate transportation units (e.g. mental health transport units, community paramedic units, and other not yet described units).

2. *Local government entities (cities and special districts) shall determine the response patterns for their jurisdiction to fulfil, and in some cases exceed, the minimum standard prescribed in item #1.*

Each community and agency is unique and as such the agencies which serve them need sufficient authority to determine what combination of equipment and personnel best meets the needs, expectations and capabilities of their given community. LEMSA oversight of response patterns, under the medical control statute, serves to determine the compliance with the provisions of the ordinance using the very simple measure listed in item #1.

3. *LEMSA shall provide medical DIRECTION for Emergency Medical Dispatch pre-arrival instructions and coding using vendor provided determinant system.*

Recognizing that emergency dispatchers who utilize an Emergency Medical Dispatch system are EMS providers following a scripted assessment and treatment tool, medical direction is appropriate in the same manner which it is appropriate for EMTs and paramedics working in the same system. The physician-based review and authorization

of the EMD protocols is a necessary step, however, the manner in which agencies choose to use the data collected from that process is prescribed in item #1 and #2 above. For instance, if the Emergency Medical Dispatcher determines, using an EMD protocol authorized by the medical director, that a call is an “alpha call,” that information is to be relayed to the response agencies responding to the call, but any changes to the response pattern will be dictated by the response agency as prescribed in item #2.

4. *Authorized dispatch center(s) shall dispatch response units in accordance with the response patterns as determined by the local government agency responsible for emergency response in the jurisdiction in which a call originates.*

In building on items #1-#3 this provision codifies that the dispatch center(s) must comply with the prescribed response patterns of the local government agency responsible for emergency response in a given area. Failure to comply with the prescribed response patterns would be a per se violation of the codifying ordinance, regulation or policy. This provision ensures that the control of response patterns for a given jurisdiction remains with the agency most accountable to the public, and voters and tax payers, of a given jurisdiction and further ensures that a dispatch center does not unduly interfere with the agency’s ability to meet the expectations of their community.

In short, the purpose of the proposed changes to explicitly protect the authority of a local government agency to determine and deliver a level of service which is directly reflective of the expectations of the voters and taxpayers of the jurisdiction which they serve. It also allows local government agencies to custom tailor the response patterns which maximize the resources of their agency to the deliver the highest level of care to their constituents.