



Central California Emergency Medical Services Agency

A Division of Fresno County
Department of Public Health

DATE: February 16, 2011

TO: Ambulance Providers in Fresno, Kings, Madera and Tulare Counties
Fresno County EMS Communications
Tulare County Consolidated Ambulance Dispatch (TCCAD)

FROM: Daniel J. Lynch, EMS Director 

SUBJECT: Ambulance Response

The purpose of this memo is to remind field personnel of EMS Agency policy regarding when an ambulance is considered “enroute” or “responding” to an ambulance request. Ambulance providers should assure that all field personnel receive this information.

EMS Agency Policy #405 states clearly that:

“Prior to an ambulance advising that they are enroute or responding, the ambulance shall be appropriately equipped and staffed with all crewmembers in the unit ready to immediately respond.”

In some instances, ambulances are using the hand-held radio to report that they are responding when, in fact, the ambulance crew is not in the ambulance and ready to immediately respond. There should be no mistake as to when an ambulance is “enroute” or “responding” to an incident. All crew members shall be in the ambulance at the moment the ambulance advises it is “enroute” or “responding.” It is also preferable that the ambulance radio, not the handheld radio, be used. Ambulance crewmembers not in compliance with this policy may be committing fraud, and certification or licensure action may be taken by the EMS Agency.

Chute Times

Chute times are the amount of time it takes the ambulance to advise “enroute” or “responding” after it has been alerted to an ambulance incident. It is extremely important that chute times are kept to an absolute minimum since someone needing help is waiting. EMS Policy states:

“An ambulance must be responding within two (2) minutes of being alerted to a call requiring immediate dispatch (Priority 1 - Priority 4). If the ambulance unit does not notify that they are enroute or responding within a two (2) minute time period, the ambulance dispatch center WILL send a second alert page to the ambulance and consider the dispatch of the next closest appropriate ambulance. After 30 seconds, if no acknowledgement after the second page is sent, the next closest ambulance shall be dispatched and the dispatcher shall continue to attempt contact with original ambulance by radio, pager, and telephone. In most instances, the original ambulance will be the closest ambulance even with the delay in response. For crew safety and/or for the quickest response to the patient, it is important to make immediate contact with the original ambulance. If unable to contact the ambulance and/or no response is received, immediately contact the supervisor for that agency.”

As a clarification, if the ambulance crew takes longer than 2 minutes to respond, and they have not acknowledged the alert, the dispatcher has no idea if the ambulance crew received the page. EMS Policy requires that the dispatcher repeat the alert to the ambulance crew. EMS Policy also allows the dispatcher to consider dispatching the next closest ambulance due to extended response times, if necessary. If the dispatcher can not obtain contact with the ambulance crew after 2 ½ minutes or get an acknowledgment that the alert has been received by the ambulance crew, the dispatcher is required to dispatch the next closest ambulance.

I appreciate everyone's cooperation with these policies. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact me at (559) 445-3387.

DJL:rb