



EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES AGENCY

Jared Bagwell, *Director*

Dr. Katherine Shafer MD, *EMS Medical Director*

July 13, 2026

San Joaquin County EMS Stakeholders
All Interested Parties

RE: Message from Dr. Shafer

Dear San Joaquin EMS Family and Colleagues,

In our line of work, we measure time in seconds, minutes, and the steady rhythm of a monitor. But standing here today, looking back at the journey we have shared since 2015, I measure it in the profound impact we have made together. After more than a decade of shared challenges and triumphs, the time has come for me to step down from my role as Medical Director. As EMS undertakes the search for a new Medical Director, I intend to transition out of my role over the course of the next three months. I have learned much in my years of medicine. One thing is clear, tomorrow is never promised and you must maximize the time you have. Now is the time for me to focus on a vital role: being a more present parent and giving my family the unhurried time they deserve.

They say that EMS is a calling, and for me, it has always been my first love. Leaving this position is deeply bittersweet, but as I look back at what we have built, my heart is filled with an overwhelming sense of pride.

Together, we didn't just maintain a system; we elevated it. We watched our trauma system evolve from a Level III to a robust Level II, transforming the way we deliver critical trauma care. I will forever carry the profound weight and pride of our fight for local pediatric trauma care. I personally pushed that initiative forward, digging into the data to prove that keeping our youngest, most vulnerable patients local for initial stabilization was the right choice. Instead of bypassing our own capabilities and sending them directly to UC Davis—which caused dangerous delays in care—we fought to get them into a local operating room within that golden, critical first hour. That data wasn't just numbers on a page; it represented children's lives saved.

Our collective vision stretched far beyond the standard of care. We built a cardiac arrest protocol from the ground up, consistently pushing our county's survival outcomes past state and national averages. We chose to be pioneers, becoming the first LEMS in California to introduce prehospital ventilators. I have witnessed firsthand the dramatic, breathless relief of CHF patients on mechanical CPAP compared to the traditional methods of the past. We continue to pursue the goal to improve ventilatory dynamics for our ROSC patients after their cardiac arrest.

Then there was COVID—a trial that tested every fiber of our system. Together, we worked tirelessly through an unprecedented crisis to keep our crews and patients safe. We fought to ensure our hospitals and providers had the PPE they required, kept scarce medications available, and maintained a functioning system against all odds, ensuring the delivery of early therapeutics to those at the greatest risk. The gray hairs we collectively gained from the endless hours, the days bleeding

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into weeks of daily emergency meetings, calls, and logistical nightmares, were well spent. We held the line when the community needed us most.

Beyond our county borders, it has been an honor to carry San Joaquin's voice to the state level. Serving as the EMDAC representative on the State Trauma Advisory Committee to EMSA, working on the board for California's chapter of National Association of EMS Physicians and sitting on the EMDAC Scope Committee. These positions have allowed me to help shape and advance the future of prehospital care across all of California.

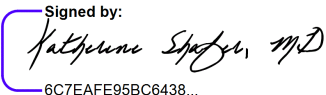
While I am stepping away from the director's chair, I am not going far. You will still find me in the trenches of the Emergency Department, treating our community's patients alongside you and continuing the vital work we start in the field.

Though my role is changing, my commitment to this system and to each of you remains unwavering. Please, continue to say hello when you drop off a patient. Keep asking questions and seeking advice. I remain dedicated to your knowledge and education.

Thank you for the honor of leading you, for your dedication and for making these past eleven years the privilege of a lifetime. Keep moving the needle, keep protecting our community and take care of one another.

With deepest gratitude and respect,

Signed by:

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Katherine Shafer, MD". The signature is written in black ink and is enclosed within a blue rectangular border.

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Katherine Shafer, MD

Medical Director

San Joaquin County EMS Agency