



San Joaquin County

Emergency Medical Services Agency



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EMS Policy Memorandum No. 2020-12 (Revised)

DATE: May 26, 2020

TO: All Prehospital Care Providers

FROM: Katherine Shafer, M.D., EMS Medical Director

SUBJ.: Coronavirus (COVID-19) Emergency Medical Dispatch (EMD) Call Screening

The purpose of this memorandum is to provide direction on emergency medical dispatch (EMD) call screening regarding COVID-19. This memorandum supersedes Policy Memorandum No. 2020-05 issued March 16, 2020, addressing EMD call screening. This memorandum is effective through the duration of the public health emergency, unless superseded or rescinded earlier.

As described in Policy Memorandum No. 2020-05, since January 27, 2020, I have chosen to be proactive and assumed community spread of COVID-19 was present. Accordingly, I directed all personnel to don full PPE (gloves, gowns, NIOSH-certified fit-tested N95 or P100 respirator, and eye protection) with any respiratory illness to get ahead of the curve on exposure. I took this action because I never believed that EMD screening for travel or other exposure information was sufficient to protect personnel and patients when there was an assumed community transmission. My direction has since been updated based on increased presence and spread of COVID-19 to require appropriate PPE on *all* calls, not just respiratory illnesses.

During this time, several prehospital service providers and prehospital care personnel have expressed concern about the proactive approach and want the additional precaution of increased EMD screening to attempt to identify COVID-19 positive patients or positive contacts prior to arrival at scene. I remain steadfast that EMD screening asking about travel or positive COVID-19 testing that is being performed in other counties does not protect prehospital personnel and may create a dangerous false sense of security if the patient does not report a confirmed exposure or test. Screening was being performed only in illness calls and would not achieve the desired screening requested. I also remain steadfast that the best and most effective protection for prehospital personnel is to don appropriate PPE on *all* calls.

That said, I want prehospital personnel to have every possible layer of protection and so I am issuing this updated policy memorandum to reflect EMD changes that I have directed over the weekend.

The San Joaquin County EMS Agency (SJCEMSA) in coordination with the Mountain Valley EMS Agency (MVEMSA) are implementing a standard approach for EMD call screening in

San Joaquin and Stanislaus counties that recognizes the community transmission of COVID-19 in our communities. On Saturday, March 21, 2020, SJCEMSA and MVEMSA authorized and directed the Valley Regional Emergency Medical Communications Center (VRECC) which serves as the designated EMS dispatch for both EMS systems to implement the following EMD protocol.

COVID-19 Call Screening Process:

For all requests for service, the EMD call taker shall follow standard case entry interrogation. For all call determinants, the EMD call taker shall ask the following questions of the reporting party:

1. Have you been confirmed as a COVID-19 positive (+) patient?
2. Have you been in contact with a known COVID-19 positive patient?
3. Are you a person under investigation for COVID-19?
4. Do you have flu like symptoms, such as fever or cough?

If a reporting party answers yes to any one of these questions 1 through 4 then VRECC shall advise responding resources to “use special medical precautions.”

If the reporting party during initial case entry responds with a yes to any of the COVID-19 screening questions, the EMD call taker should skip those questions and notify responding resources to “use special medical precautions.”

The EMD call taker shall then proceed with completing caller interrogation completing key questions finalizing an EMD determinant and providing pre-arrival and post-dispatch instructions.

Responding Resources:

My focus remains on patient and responder safety. I again urge all responders not to be lulled into a false sense of security. At this time, there are a limited number of tests for COVID-19 and many symptomatic patients and exposed persons are not being tested unless admitted to the hospital. **This means all prehospital care personnel must use appropriate proper personal protective equipment (PPE) on all EMS incidents in accordance with EMS Policy Memorandum No. 2020-10 Coronavirus (COVID-19) Personal Protective Equipment (PPE).**

Any requests for PPE and concerns regarding the availability of PPE shall be directed to the SJCEMSA. At this time I expect to have sufficient PPE for responders to comply with my medical directive through this crisis. If it appears a shortage of PPE may affect prehospital personnel, then I will promptly issue guidelines on how to safely and effectively extend the usability of PPE and/or utilize alternatives.

PSAPs and Authorized EMD Centers:

Each authorized EMD Center in San Joaquin County is directed to implement the process specified in this policy memorandum.

If you have any questions regarding this memorandum, you may direct questions to me through Jeff Costa, RN, EMS DOC Director by email at jcosta@sjgov.org or (209) 468-6818.