



SPECIAL ORDER



Series	Number	Originating Unit	Originating Date	Expiration Date
2013	06	OFC	January 29, 2012	N/A

Subject:

Change in Transfer of Care Time Procedure

As part of an EMS System performance improvement initiative, the Department has engaged management teams of local hospitals to assist in decreasing transfer of patient care wait times in an effort to reduce “drop time” delays now experienced by a majority of transport units. These delays impact the Department’s ability to quickly return ambulances and medic units to service, ultimately causing response time delays and decreasing EMS System performance.

To address this problem, the Department has communicated expectations for transfer of patient care times to hospital emergency departments. These expectations include patient triage assessment by hospital staff within three (3) minutes, followed by transfer of patient care to hospital staff within ten (10) minutes of patient arrival. To accurately record and track “transfer of patient care” time, Ambulance and Medic Unit crews (including Basic Units and Paramedic Ambulances, hereafter “transport units”) shall now inform a Department ELO, by radio transmission, when the responsibility for patient care is transferred to hospital staff. This notification shall occur for all patient transports. In cases of multiple patient transports by a single unit, this notification shall occur when the responsibility for patient care of the last patient is transferred to hospital staff.

The Department is also implementing new procedures to reduce the amount of time taken by transport unit crews for equipment cleaning, restocking of supplies and completion of an electronic patient care report (ePCR). “Return-to-service” time expectations shall be based on the level of care provided to the patient (using the Priority 1 to Priority 3 transport designations) and shall be monitored by Department ELOs, Battalion EMS Supervisors and Battalion Fire Chiefs.

Combined hospital “drop time” expectations for patient transports shall be as follows:

Table 1: Hospital “Drop Time” Expectations

Patient Transport Event	Elapsed Time
Patient arrival to hospital triage assessment.	< 3 minutes
Patient arrival to transfer of care to hospital staff.	< 10 minutes
Transfer of care to transport unit clearing time (P-3).	< 15 minutes
Transfer of care to transport unit clearing time (P-2).	< 30 minutes
Transfer of care to transport unit clearing time (P-1).	< 40 minutes

Hospital “drop times,” including transport unit arrival, transfer of patient care and transport unit clearing times shall be recorded by CAD. Department ELOs shall be responsible for continuously monitoring “drop times,” checking the status of individual units and directing Battalion EMS Supervisors to hospitals to reduce unacceptable delays. Battalion EMS Supervisors and Chief Officers shall be responsible for reducing “return-to-service” time delays for transport units within their respective commands.

Procedure

1. A transport unit arrives on hospital property. The transport unit crew parks the unit for patient unloading and marks “transport arrived” by MDT to CAD or by radio transmission to communications.
2. The transport unit crew removes the patient from the unit by stretcher or other means and enters the hospital emergency department ambulance patient receiving area, triage area or reception/waiting area. The transport unit crew immediately requests hospital treatment for the patient from a hospital designated triage nurse, technician or registration clerk.
3. The transport unit crew, when directed by hospital staff, physically transfers the patient from the unit stretcher or other equipment to a hospital owned gurney, stretcher or wheel chair, or seats the patient at a hospital emergency department triage area or reception/waiting area.
4. The transport unit crew requests that a hospital designated triage nurse, technician or registration clerk immediately signs the transport unit ePCR tablet computer indicating transfer of patient care to hospital staff.
5. The transport unit crew notifies a Department ELO that transfer of patient care to hospital staff took place, using radio channel zero-14, by stating “ELO: (state Ambulance or Medic Unit Number) transfer of care complete.” The transport unit crew shall make such notification immediately upon recording the signature of a hospital staff member using an ePCR tablet computer.

6. A Department ELO, after acknowledging a “transfer of care complete” transmission, shall status update the transport unit from “transport arrived” to “waiting available” (WA) in CAD. An automated CAD timer will begin to record transport unit WA status time.
7. Immediately following a “transfer of care complete” transmission, one transport unit crew member shall begin unit and/or equipment cleaning and restocking of supplies, if not already in progress. The second transport unit crew member shall complete and print a copy of the patient’s ePCR, followed by leaving the printed copy in a designated hospital record drop box or by submitting the printed copy to a hospital staff member.
8. Immediately following submission of a completed ePCR, the second transport unit crew member shall assist the first crew member with unit and/or equipment cleaning and restocking of supplies, if not already completed.
9. Immediately after unit and/or equipment cleaning and restocking of supplies is complete, and transport unit equipment is recovered and loaded (if applicable), the transport unit crew shall return the unit to service and mark “available” by MDT to CAD or by radio transmission to communications. Once “available,” the transport unit, without delay, shall return to Engine Company quarters by use of the fastest and most direct route, or indicate they are en route to another location if directed by communications dispatch, a Department ELO, Battalion EMS Supervisor or Chief Officer.

Responsibilities

1. Transport unit crew members shall be responsible for prompt equipment cleaning, restocking of supplies, completion of an ePCR following the transfer of patient care to hospital staff and returning transport units to service within the elapsed “return-to-service” (CAD “waiting available” time) time expectations detailed by this order. Additionally, transport unit crew members shall be continually responsible for monitoring radio communications directed to their units while at hospitals and shall promptly answer all inquiries from communications dispatchers, Department ELOs, Battalion EMS Supervisors and Chief Officers. Transport unit crew members shall promptly notify other transport unit crew members of unanswered radio inquiries while at hospitals, if directed to do so by communications dispatchers or a Department ELO. Furthermore, transport unit crews shall be responsible for immediately leaving hospitals once “available” and returning to Engine Company quarters by use of the fastest and most direct route, unless directed to another location by communications dispatch, a Department ELO, Battalion EMS Supervisor or Chief Officer.
2. Department ELOs, Battalion EMS Supervisors and Chief Officers shall be continually responsible for monitoring the status of transport units at hospitals, including lengthy “transfer of patient care” and “waiting available” times. All such officers shall be responsible for taking prompt action to return transport units to service from hospitals as quickly as possible and for assuring such units return to Engine Company quarters by use of the fastest and most direct route. Individual responsibility for such officers shall include the following:

3. **Department ELOs** shall be responsible for monitoring the “transfer of patient care” and “waiting available” times of transport units at all hospitals. Department ELOs shall make radio or telephone contact with transport units at hospitals for status checks if a transport unit’s “transfer of patient care” time exceeds 20 minutes or if a transport unit’s “waiting available” time exceeds 40 minutes. Department ELOs shall also be responsible for contacting Battalion EMS Supervisors by radio, MDT, text message or cell phone if status update contact cannot be made with any single transport unit at a hospital and for continuous transport unit status updates if more than three (3) transport units are simultaneously located at any hospital (see table, below).

If any transport unit’s “transfer of patient care” time exceeds 30 minutes, Department ELOs shall text message all on-duty Battalion EMS Supervisors and the Battalion Fire Chief responsible for the unit regarding status update. Additionally, Department ELOs shall initiate contact protocol for a hospital’s emergency department Charge Nurse, Nurse Manager and the Hospital Nursing Supervisor. If any transport unit’s “transfer of patient care” time exceeds 45 minutes, Department ELOs shall immediately notify the Deputy Fire Chief of Operations and the on-call Medical Director by text message, cell phone or telephone, directly (see table, below).

If any transport unit’s “waiting available” time exceeds 60 minutes, Department ELOs shall text message all on-duty EMS Supervisors and the Battalion Fire Chief responsible for the unit regarding status update. If any transport unit’s “waiting available” time exceeds 75 minutes, Department ELOs shall immediately notify the Deputy Fire Chief of Operations and the on-call Medical Director by text message, cell phone or telephone, directly (see table, below).

4. **Battalion EMS Supervisors** shall be responsible for monitoring the status of transport units at their assigned hospitals, or as directed by a Department ELO. If a Department ELO cannot determine the status of a transport unit while at a hospital, the closest available EMS Supervisor, when notified by a Department ELO, shall be responsible for traveling to the hospital to check the status of the transport unit. Additionally, if more than three (3) transport units are simultaneously located at any hospital and the “transfer of patient care” time for a single transport unit exceeds 20 minutes or the “waiting available” time for a single transport unit exceeds 40 minutes, the Battalion EMS Supervisor assigned to the hospital or the next closest available Battalion EMS Supervisor shall be responsible for traveling to the hospital to check the status of all transport units (see table, below).

Table 2: Responsibilities of Department ELOs

Transport Unit Time Measurement	Elapsed Time	ELO Required Action
<p>“Transfer of Patient Care” time.</p> <p>The time from when a transport unit arrives at a hospital until the time when the transport unit crew indicates to an ELO that transfer of patient care to hospital staff is complete (status change to “waiting available”).</p>	> 20 minutes	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Contact transport unit. Notify Battalion EMS Supervisors.
	> 30 minutes	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Send Battalion EMS Supervisor to hospital. Notify hospital management team. Notify BFC for transport unit.
	> 45 minutes	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Notify DFC. Notify Medical Director.
<p>“Return-to-Service” time.</p> <p>The time from when a transport unit crew indicates to an ELO that transfer of patient care to hospital staff is complete (status change to “waiting available”) until the time the transport unit returns to service (status change to “available”).</p>	> 40 minutes	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Contact transport unit. Notify Battalion EMS Supervisors.
	> 60 minutes	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Send Battalion EMS Supervisor to hospital. Notify BFC for transport unit.
	> 75 minutes	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Notify DFC. Notify Medical Director.

Table 3: Responsibilities of Battalion EMS Supervisors

Transport Unit Event	Elapsed Time	EMS Supervisor Required Action
ELO cannot verify the status of a transport unit located at a hospital.	N/A	Visit hospital to check transport unit status.
<p>ELO identifies more than three (3) transport units simultaneously located at any hospital and:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> “Transfer of patient care” time for any single transport unit is: “Return-to-service” time for any single transport unit is: 	> 20 minutes	Visit hospital to check status of all transport units.
	> 40 minutes	Visit hospital to check status of all transport units.

5. **Chief Officers, including Battalion Fire Chiefs and the Deputy Fire Chiefs of Operations**, shall be responsible for monitoring and supervising the activity of Battalion EMS Supervisors and transport unit crews within their respective commands in order to continuously reduce “drop time” delays at hospitals. Chief Officers shall work closely with the Medical Director to review “drop time” performance reports, identify and correct problems and assist with solutions until the Department’s expectations regarding hospital “drop times” are met and continuously maintained.


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