

December 30, 2020

NEWS RELEASE

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Public Health Implements EMS System Surge Plan to Help During Pandemic

Due to the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, Kern County is seeing a significant increase in 911 calls and is experiencing a strain on our emergency response system. Therefore, Kern County Public Health's Emergency Medical Services Program is implementing a new Emergency Medical Services (EMS) System Surge Plan. These alterations to the normal EMS system of care are designed to provide the best level of patient care by integrating additional resources and helping to prioritize our responses as the system becomes further impacted by the current pandemic.

This new plan has 4 levels that will determine specific actions based upon thresholds met in some or all of the following areas:

- Volume of 911 calls
- Ambulance availability based on COVID-19 transports
- Patient offload times at hospitals
- Percentage of staff impacted by COVID-19

As of this date, the EMS system has met the threshold for Level 2, or the yellow tier, of the EMS System Surge Plan. Changes to the system will be implemented, effective Wednesday, December 30, 2020 at 8:00 a.m.

Changes to the system that the community may experience are as follows:

- Ambulances will only respond to low acuity 911 calls when there are sufficient resources available. If an ambulance is not available to be dispatched, the caller will be informed of the situation and provided other options for obtaining care by the approved ambulance dispatch center, including contacting a primary care physician or urgent care.
- The County has integrated an additional emergency response agency into the system to respond to low acuity calls when ambulances are not available.

The County will continue to monitor and evaluate the situation and make appropriate decisions to ensure the EMS system continues to provide the best emergency response and care to our residents without interruption.

To view the EMS System Surge Plan visit our website at <https://kernpublichealth.com/2019-novel-coronavirus/>.

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