



EMS Policy Memorandum No. 2020-06

Date: December 29, 2020
TO: All Prehospital Care Providers
FROM: Jeff Fariss, EMS Program Manager
Kris Lyon, Medical Director
SUBJ: EMS System Surge Plan

Due to the impacts of COVID-19 on the prehospital system, the Kern County Public Health/Emergency Medical Services Program is implementing the attached EMS System Surge Plan. Alterations to the normal and customary EMS system of care are designed to provide the best level of patient care as the system becomes further impacted by the current pandemic. EMS will continually monitor the system to determine appropriate level within the EMS System Surge Plan and the appropriate modifications to the system.

As of this date, the EMS system has met the threshold for Level 2 (Yellow) of the EMS System Surge Plan;
12 to 25% call volume increase over an operational period;
Significant increase in units out of service greater than 1 hour for decontamination in a given operational period (322% since November, 677% since October); and
30% increase in ambulance offload times at hospitals.

Due to these factors, the following changes will be implemented, effective Wednesday, December 30, 2020 at 8:00 a.m.:

Enforcement of response times will be temporarily suspended.

Providers should make every effort to comply with the response times and only in the event that call demand exceeds capacity will the county not pursue enforcement actions. Each call should be evaluated individually and there should not be a system wide reduction in effort to meet the response times.

BLS percentage waived.

Mandatory Basic Life Support (BLS) response percentages of 3% are temporarily suspended. The closest ambulance will be required to respond to a call, whether it is Advanced Life Support or Basic Life Support. Ambulance providers shall submit a report to EMS each month of each BLS response to an ALS EMD Code.

Alpha (lowest acuity) responses waived.

Ambulances will only respond to low acuity 911 calls, defined by the International Academies of Emergency Dispatch as Alpha responses, when the largest metropolitan response zone in the EOA has 2 or more ambulances 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. (i.e. contact primary care physician, urgent care).

Unrestricted Mutual Aid.

The closest ambulance shall be dispatched to all Delta and Echo (highest acuity) calls within Kern County, regardless of EOA.

Use of other agencies.

County approved, non-transport, standby agencies will be used for first response and Assess and Refer of lower acuity 911 calls when EOA operator is not available.

These changes to the Kern County Emergency Medical System will remain in effect, as necessary, during the current declared state of emergency. This plan will be continuously monitored by Kern County Public Health/Emergency Medical Services and will be lifted when resources become available. This plan shall not exceed the duration of the declared state of emergency, as stated on March 4, 2020.