



JOINT COMMUNITY MESSAGE

Only Call 911 During a Real Emergency

Bakersfield, CA – January 14, 2022 – Our healthcare and emergency response systems continue to be impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. Kern continues to experience high volumes of 911 calls and emergency room visits that are taxing our entire emergency response system.

The community can help support our local emergency response and hospital teams by calling 911 and only going to the hospital for life-threatening illnesses. If you are experiencing symptoms of a heart attack, stroke or other serious health condition, please seek emergency medical care. Hospitals are here to help, however; Kern continues to see an influx of people seeking treatment in our emergency rooms and calling 911 for ailments that could be treated faster by seeking urgent care or scheduling an appointment with your primary care physician.

Please do not call 911 or visit the ER for minor COVID complaints or to get COVID testing. We understand dealing with COVID can be difficult, but we want to ensure our first responders assist emergencies. Kern County Public Health, local hospitals and first responders continue to work together to provide the best care for patients in Kern County.

Please remember this simple prescription: Get vaccinated and boosted, maintain a healthy diet and exercise regularly, wear a mask while in indoor public settings, stay home when sick, wash your hands often and gather outside or increase ventilation when indoors. Let's work together to end this pandemic and get back to life as it should be.

Statements of Support

“Our first responders and healthcare workers are working extremely hard to provide vital emergency medical services to those in need within our community. Our pre-hospital and hospital emergency medical services system continues to be overly taxed. Please do everything you can to preserve these resources for true emergencies. I want to thank Kern County’s hospital, ambulance, and fire department leadership for their collaboration during these unprecedented times and for continuing to ensure our emergency response and healthcare systems remain strong, resilient and able to serve our community.”

Brynn Carrigan, Director of Kern County Public Health

“The current swell of COVID-19 cases, along with record-breaking 9-1-1 requests for medical aid, has created a perfect storm that is taxing Kern County’s emergency response system, including the availability of ambulances. Hall Ambulance joins with Kern County Public Health, local hospitals, and fellow first responders to implore residents to only call 911 during a real emergency. Ambulance resources are needlessly being taken away from responding to true medical emergencies such as heart attacks and strokes. Non-life-threatening conditions can best be treated at an urgent care, your primary care doctor, or at home via telehealth. It is vitally important that the community do their part to help keep ambulances available by only calling 9-1-1 for a true medical emergency.”

Lavonne C. Hall, President & CEO, Hall Ambulance Service, Inc.

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“The latest COVID surge is severely impacting all of our emergency rooms across Kern County. ERs must care for our most critical patients and it’s important the public understand when to come to the emergency room. If you are experiencing serious COVID symptoms such as shortness of breath, difficulty breathing, chest pain, or a high fever, get to an emergency room immediately. For mild symptoms, please call your doctor or visit an urgent care. If we all work together, get vaccinated and boosted, wear a mask, and stay home when sick, we will get through this together.”

**Ken Keller, President/CEO of Memorial Hospital and
Dr. Hemmal Kothary, Interim President/CEO of Mercy Hospitals**

“Your Kern County firefighters and dispatchers have been bravely on the front lines of this pandemic since it began, almost two years ago. As national health authorities continue to become more educated about the COVID virus and its’ variants, our local authorities remain vigilant in making informed decisions as to what will keep our communities safe. As your local emergency responders, we rely on our citizens to understand and adhere to this practice as well. Please take the time to understand when, and when not, to call 911. This seemingly small act could mean the difference between life and death.”

Aaron Duncan, Kern County Fire Chief & Director of Emergency Services

“As the area’s only Trauma Center, Kern Medical’s Emergency Department works to respond to the most emergent cases daily. Throughout much of the pandemic, our patient volume has consistently held at 25% above what would be normal levels. With these higher levels, we continue to urge the public to seek services appropriate to the level of care needed.”

**Manish Amin, DO
Kern Medical Emergency Medicine Residency Program Director and Vice Chair of the Emergency
Department**