



January 8th, 2022

RE: EMS SYSTEM ADJUSTMENTS RELATED TO COVID-19 IMPACTS

Background

The Contra Costa County EMS System is facing unprecedented challenges as a result of the latest wave of COVID-19. Contra Costa County Public Health reported yesterday that there are 14,558 new confirmed cases of COVID-19 in the last 14 days. The average number of new cases per day in Contra Costa County as of January 3rd, 2022, was 1,519. By comparison, there was an average of 447.9 new cases per day on August 15, 2021, and an average of 767.7 new cases per day on January 9, 2021. This latest surge did not onset gradually, but came in an abrupt spike beginning roughly on Christmas Eve, 2021 (coronavirus.cchalth.org). Furthermore, similar scenarios exist across the state and country as well.

This has certainly resulted in system call volumes that are consistent with flu season trends prior to 2020; however, the biggest impact to the Operation is in the amount of people that have been unable to report to work secondary to COVID-19 infection. The amount of people out due to COVID varies on a daily basis, but I am sure you all see the number of open units on the schedule and feel the subsequent impacts during your shift.

As a result of these pandemic related effects on the EMS system, there will be a variety of system modifications occurring in the near future.

Statement of Change

Effective Sunday, January 9th, 2022, the Contra Costa County EMS Agency has authorized ConFIRE First Responder ALS (FRALS) personnel to transfer care to BLS units without an ALS transport unit arriving on scene.

This means BLS units will be able to accept patients from ConFIRE Medics on scene without having to wait for an AMR ALS unit to arrive. Please note that this does **not** apply to other ALS Fire Agencies, and it **only** applies to ConFIRE. All other

aspects of the newly implemented BLS program remain unchanged. Power cars will remain in the system as well.

As a result, you will see a significant increase in the amount of BLS units available in the system moving forward. Look for these units to be paged out in addition to the page outs for ALS units.

Effective Sunday, January 9th, 2022, the Contra Costa County EMS Agency has authorized the use of non-911 system BLS ambulances as needed.

Normally reserved for MCI purposes, we will be able to dispatch these BLS units from locally permitted providers (Falk, NorCal, Eagle, Falcon, etc.) to incidents when we do not have CON-EMS ALS or BLS units available. These units have EBRCS communications, but no AVL or MDC so all statuses will be verbal.

Additionally, an expanded treat and refer policy is being finalized by the LEMSA Medical Director that will hopefully enable our transport medics to refer a low-acuity patient to alternative care rather than transport if there is no medical necessity to transport the patient to the hospital. This should reduce the amount of transports in the system and subsequent wall time commitments, further increasing capacity in the system.

We have asked for additional approvals from the LEMSA for the following:

- Approval to hold 5150 calls until after a low level event has passed
- Sending BLS units to Alpha level calls without need for fire or ALS unit
- Allow EMT's to complete an AMA with base hospital contact

We will provide further updates on EMS system modifications as they evolve.

Thank you all for your phenomenal performance during these historical times. Thank you for showing up to work, thank you for the care you continue to give our patients, and thank you for taking care of each other.

CHAD NEWLAND
Regional Director