



NON-EMERGENCY AMBULANCE UTILIZATION IN THE 911 EMS SYSTEM

Effective: January 1, 2025
Replaces: January 1, 2020

I. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to identify criteria for the utilization of non-emergency ambulances in the Santa Clara County 911 EMS System.

II. Interfacility Transportation

- A. The County recognizes and permits interfacility ground ambulance transportation at the BLS, ALS and CCT-RN levels. Minimum staffing requirements are identified in *Santa Clara County Prehospital Care Policy 620: Interfacility Transfer-Ground Ambulance*.
- B. A non-emergency ambulance may transport a patient who requires care within their authorized scope of practice. A transferring physician, who shall be responsible for determining the appropriate level of ambulance transportation, must authorize an interfacility transport. If a patient presents with the criteria identified in Section III, the non-emergency ambulance crew shall immediately request the response of 911 EMS responders through Santa Clara County Communications.

III. Emergent Patients Encountered by Non-Emergency Ambulance Crews

- A. An emergent patient is one who has a life or limb-threatening condition, requiring immediate and definitive care. An emergent patient may have respiratory distress, airway compromise, neurological changes from baseline, signs of actual or impending shock, chest pain, or meet "High Risk for Injury Pattern (Red) Trauma Alert criteria as defined in Policy 605. This shall *not* include patients with valid Do Not Resuscitate (DNR) orders.
- B. A patient determined to be emergent shall be transported to the closest, most appropriate emergency department, with red lights and sirens (RLS) if the transport time to the hospital is less than fifteen (15) minutes. In all other cases, the Non-Emergency Ambulance crew shall contact County Communications by radio and request a 911 Advanced Life Support (ALS) paramedic response. In such cases, the Non-Emergency Ambulance crew shall monitor the designated County EMS radio frequency and communicate with responding EMS units as necessary.
- C. If the patient is transported with RLS, the unit shall immediately advise County Communications and request a County EMS Event Number.

- D. If a 911 EMS response is activated, the Non-Emergency Ambulance crew shall transfer care to the arriving 911 paramedic unit. If a 911 paramedic ambulance is not available or the 911 first responder paramedic unit determines immediate transportation is necessary, the 911 paramedic and the ALS equipment from the first response unit shall accompany the patient to the emergency department in the Non-Emergency Ambulance.
- E. *Santa Clara County Prehospital Care Policy 602: 911 Patient Destination* identifies the criteria for the transport of various types of patients and shall apply when a Non-Emergency unit has activated the 911 EMS System.

IV. Use in the 911 System

- A. County Communications may contact Santa Clara County permitted non-emergency ambulance service providers to assist in responding to calls for emergency service when 911 system ambulances are not available.

In such cases, the permitted non-emergency ambulance provider's dispatch center shall inform County Communications of ambulances that are immediately available by responding to EMResource electronic ambulance availability queries or when requested by telephone or radio. The non-emergency ambulance service provider shall assist County Communications in making units available to respond to unusual system call volume.

- B. Non-Emergency Ambulances may respond with RLS when dispatched by County Communications. In the event that a Non-Emergency BLS or CCT-RN ambulance arrives on the scene and finds the patient requires ALS care, the ALS first responder (public safety agency, etc.) shall provide ALS care enroute to the hospital. Once a Non-Emergency Ambulance has been assigned to a 911 EMS System call it shall not be cancelled based on subsequent County Ambulance ALS ambulance availability.

1. If a CCT unit is utilized for a 911 system response, the ambulance shall operate at the BLS level.

- C. Non-Emergency BLS ambulances may transport patients that would ordinarily require ALS care when determined necessary by the Transportation Group Supervisor or County EMS Agency during multiple patient events, local proclamations of emergency or unique circumstances.

V. Still Alarms

If a non-emergency ambulance arrives on the scene of a collision, illness, or injury by coincidence, the non-emergency ambulance crew shall provide appropriate care and immediately notify County Communications by radio and request a 911 EMS response.