



FIELD PRONOUNCEMENT OF DEATH

Effective: January 1, 2024
Replaces: January 1, 2023

I. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to define when Basic and Advanced Life Support care may be withheld or discontinued by emergency medical service personnel in order to avoid unnecessary or prolonged resuscitation of persons for whom recovery is not possible or probable.

II. Criteria

In addition to any specific criteria for withholding or discontinuing resuscitation contained within individual treatment protocols, resuscitative efforts may be withheld, discontinued, and/or death determined under the following circumstances.

A. Basic Life Support (BLS) personnel:

1. Obvious Death

- a. Decapitation
- b. Total incineration of the body
- c. Decomposition of the body
- d. Rigor mortis
- e. A pulseless patient with total separation or obvious destruction of the heart, brain, and/or lungs

2. A pulseless and/or apneic patient with a valid Do Not Resuscitate (DNR) directive (refer to *Santa Clara County Prehospital Care Policy 604: Do Not Resuscitate (DNR) / Advanced Directives*)

3. A pulseless and/or apneic patient who has exercised his/her right to die under the End of Life Option Act (refer to *Santa Clara County Prehospital Care Policy 619: End of Life Option*)

B. Advanced Life Support (ALS) personnel:

1. Any of the circumstances listed above; **or:**
2. Provider may consider termination of resuscitative efforts after at least twenty (20) minutes, if all of the following apply:



- a. The patient is in asystole.
- b. Arrest was not witnessed by the EMS provider.
- c. No return of spontaneous circulation (ROSC) prior to transport.
- d. Patient does not have a functioning ventricular assist device (VAD)

III. Actions

If the above criteria are met, the emergency response personnel will:

- A. Discontinue or withhold resuscitative efforts.
- B. Cancel any prehospital personnel still enroute.
- C. Provide appropriate comfort and care to family and bystanders.
- D. Complete the prehospital care report (PCR) documenting care/actions taken, including reasons for pronouncing death and all communications made with necessary times provided.

IV. Notification

Notify the appropriate authorities regarding the death, and remain on scene until released by the local law enforcement or Coroner's Office personnel.

- A. If the decedent is at home or in a public place, contact the local law enforcement agency.
- B. If the decedent is at an acute or residential care facility (skilled nursing facility, etc.) the staff of the facility will make the appropriate arrangements.

V. Exceptions

The Santa Clara County Multiple Casualty Incident Plan (MCIP), including Simple Triage and Rapid Transport (START) triage, will be used at all multiple casualty events.