

SAN LUIS OBISPO COUNTY EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES AGENCY
PREHOSPITAL POLICY

Policy Reference No: 125
Effective Date: 05/15/2010
Supersedes: 10/01/2008
Review Date: 11/01/2012

SUBJECT: COMMUNICATION FAILURE

PURPOSE

To establish policies and procedures for Advanced Life Support (ALS) personnel when communication cannot be established or maintained with a Base Hospital or Specialty Care Center Mobile Intensive Care Nurse or emergency physician and a delay in treatment may jeopardize the patient's care.

AUTHORITY

- A. A: Health and Safety Code, Division 2.5, Section 1797.84, 1797.185, 1797.200, 1797.220, 1798, 1798.100, 1798.102.
- B. California Code of Regulations, Title 22, Division 9, Section 100144.

DEFINITIONS

- A. Base Hospital: A hospital in San Luis Obispo County that is designated by contract with the EMS Agency to provide Advanced Life Support (ALS) directions/orders to Paramedics.
- B. Communication Failure: A communication failure is deemed to have occurred when either party in a conversation using radio, telephone, cell phone, or other two-way communication device is unable to hear the other party clearly enough to understand what is being said; or when a Paramedic contacts a Base Hospital or Specialty Care Center and there is no MICN or emergency physician available to take a patient condition report and/or give directions or orders.
- C. EMS Agency: San Luis Obispo County Emergency Medical Services Agency.
- D. EMS QI Coordinator: That individual within a provider organization delegated the duties of QI review for that provider.
- E. Specialty Care Center: A Base Hospital in San Luis Obispo County that is designated by contract with the County to provide advanced or specialized care.

POLICY

When a communication failure occurs, a Paramedic may perform ALS procedures and/or administer medications as identified in SLO County EMS Agency prehospital policies and procedures as “**Base Physician Order Only**” when those procedures/medications are indicated by protocol and patient condition, and to prevent the imminent deterioration of the patient. If a communication failure occurs and a Paramedic believes that unusual circumstances or patient condition requires consultation with a Base Hospital or Specialty Care Center emergency physician, communication may be attempted with a Base Hospital or Specialty Care Center other than the intended receiving facility.

PROCEDURE

- A. In each instance where ALS procedures are initiated or attempted under conditions specified in this Policy, the Paramedic shall:
 1. Utilize the appropriate ALS treatment guideline as described in SLO County EMS Agency prehospital policies and procedures.
 2. Continue to attempt to establish communication with the intended Base Hospital or Specialty Care Center throughout the call utilizing all communications devices available as circumstances and patient care priorities permit.
 3. If contact is established, advise the intended Base Hospital or Specialty Care Center that a communication failure occurred, and what, if any, procedures and/or medications were administered during the communication failure.
 4. Within twenty-four (24) hours following delivery of patient to a hospital, complete a Communication Failure Report detailing information relating to the communications portion of the call, including any contact with a Base Hospital or Specialty Care Center other than the intended receiving facility.

- B. Follow-up actions:
 1. The Paramedic forwards the Communication Failure Report to the EMS QI Coordinator of the provider agency for evaluation and appropriate action.
 2. The provider’s EMS QI Coordinator forwards a copy of the Communication Failure Report to the SLO County EMS Agency to determine whether the incident was an isolated event or requires further investigation.
 3. The SLO County EMS Agency’s Quality Improvement Committee shall review and audit the call in a timely manner.